Translation and transcreation of *Salomé*
Oscar Wilde's strategies of (self-)estrangement in French

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Abstract

Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1893), written in French and then translated in English by Lord Alfred Douglas, created quite a stir when it was first published in France and then banned from the English stage. In this tragedy in one act based on a Biblical theme, Wilde departs from the familiar setting of his witty comedies of manners (*The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*) to focus on a favourite icon of French Symbolist artists and writers. Wilde's choice of a foreign language deliberately heightens the artificiality of the exotic setting, bizarre atmosphere, and stilted style of this decadent play. Self-estrangement through self-translation indeed offered new creative possibilities and allowed Wilde to reinvent himself as a writer. As the comparison of the first manuscript with the published version shows, Wilde's idiosyncratic French highlights the *translational* nature of the project. Considering *Salomé* through the lens of translation thus troubles commonplaces about original writing and authorship, as well as the authority attached to the source text and language.

Keywords

Self-translation, transcreation, translational poetics, *Salome*, interlanguage

"The tendency of creation is to repeat itself" (Wilde, 2003, p. 1119). In "The Critic as Artist" (1891), Wilde exposes his idea that creation necessarily stems from the reproduction of previous works and that "it is the critical faculty that invents fresh forms" (Wilde, 2003, p. 1119). Published the year he started working on *Salomé*, his essay – and these aphorisms in particular – hint at the *translational*[1] nature of any creative work and encapsulate Wilde's complex take on the figure of Salome. Written in French in 1891 when Wilde was staying in Paris, *Salomé*[2] was published in 1893 and then translated by the author's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. The English translation revised by Wilde with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley was published in 1894. In this tragedy in one act based on a Biblical theme, Wilde departs from his usual setting and tone by choosing an exotic figure that had become a favourite icon of French Symbolist artists and writers after Heinrich Heine's poetic adaptation in *Atta Troll* (1841). Famous re-interpretations include Flaubert's *Hérodias* (1877), Huysmans's *À rebours* (1884), and Mallarmé's poem *Hérodiade* (published in 1887), all of which inspired Wilde's dramatic take on the myth. In their influential study of *Salome*, William Tydeman and Steven Price explain that "Wilde's aim in *Salome* [was] to embody the literary principles evolved and espoused by that anti-realist group of influential French writers and theorists known as the *Symbolistes*, several of whom Wilde knew personally" (Tydeman & Price, 1996, p. 3). This may partly explain why Wilde chose to write *Salomé* in French, as a way to embrace these admired authors' language. But Wilde's own hybrid status as a Catholic Anglo-Irishman may also have encouraged his sense of linguistic, literary and cultural estrangement. Donohue reports Wilde's statement about his mixed sense of identity: "'Français de sympathie', he described himself in a letter to Edmond de Goncourt written while he was composing *Salome*, 'je suis Irlandais de race, et les Anglais m'ont condamné à parler le langage de Shakespeare'" (Donohue, 1994, p. 87). This identity was made even more complex by his homosexuality and queer posture.

Choosing to write *Salomé* in French thus stems from a deliberate process of self-estrangement – or self-translation – that offered fresh creative possibilities. As my comparison of the first manuscript of 1891 with the published version will show, Wilde writes in an idiosyncratic French that highlights the translational nature of the play. I will demonstrate how the playwright's language sheds light on issues of self-translation as an essential part of Wilde's creative process. I will then turn to the effects produced by Wilde's *foreignization*[3] of French in the published version and what they bring to the play itself. I argue that Wilde's style in both the Bodmer manuscript that I consulted and the published French version of *Salomé* self-consciously mixes languages in order to create a strange atmosphere and an unusual rhythm that fits the Oriental theme of the play. Following the recent creative turn in Translation

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[1] Translational refers here to the movement and resulting transformation of texts and ideas as they circulate between languages and cultures. The concepts of translational poetics and transcreation across genres and media have been theorized by Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère (2013, in press), who I would like to thank for her insightful reading and comments.

[2] I will refer to *Salomé* when I discuss the French version and to *Salome* when I focus on the English translation. In order to avoid confusion, the protagonists will be referred to by their 'English' name throughout the article. For the same reason, I will refer to *Salome* when I discuss the text in general. When I quote from the published editions, the page numbers refer to Pascal Aquien's bilingual edition of *Salomé* (2006).

[3] In *The translator's invisibility* (1995), Lawrence Venuti defines foreignization as such: "[f]oreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). By letting English show through his French words, Wilde thus foreignizes the language of his *Salomé*, thereby emphasising its strange and Oriental atmosphere.

Studies[4], literary translations are now more and more considered as rewritings of an 'original' text. Reading *Salomé* through the lens of translation as creation allows for a re-examination of Wilde's complex and manifold project: rather than a compilation of previous adaptations of the Salome myth, *Salomé* revisits existing artworks to create a unique and subversive play. This project allows the playwright to push back the expected boundaries of a literary work by challenging the Romantic authority of the 'original' text and by experimenting with literary forms and genres. Wilde is thus a case in point of Bassnett's conception of the translator as "a creative artist mediating between cultures and languages" (Bassnett, 2014, p.10).

1. Salome and intertextuality: Translation, borrowing or plagiarism?

A great number of artists have represented the Biblical figure of Salome, especially in fin-de-siècle France (Dottin-Orsini, 1993, p. 134)[5]. Maurice Krafft has listed no less than 2789 French poets who wrote about Salome (Décaudin, 1967, p. 109), and famous painters such as Gustave Moreau also shaped her image as sexualised and a deeply ambivalent (both dangerous and fascinating) muse. As such, the figure of Salome can be considered as a metaphor for translation. Indeed, those many *transcreations*[6] through different media build a new image of the Princess that varies according to each interpretation. The turn-of-the-century representations thus transform Salome into an object of intersemiotic translation, i.e. a translation between verbal and non-verbal sign systems (Jakobson, 2004, p. 139).

Scholars have identified various sources of inspiration for Wilde's *Salome*, starting with the Bible, which is quoted almost verbatim in some of the protagonists' lines. Besides the passing mention of Herodias's daughter in the Bible, Wilde also relied on Heine's *Atta Troll* (1841) and J. C. Heywood's *Herodias: A Dramatic Poem* (1884) to create a Salome figure enamoured with John the Baptist (Dottin-Orsini, 1993, p. 135 and Daniel, 2007, p. 2). The playwright was also greatly inspired by Flaubert's short story *Hérodias* in *Trois Contes* (1877). Critics, such as Aquien and Dierkes-Thrun, also consider Flaubert's *Salammbô* (1863) and *La tentation de Saint Antoine* (1874) as possible influences. Huysmans's artistic treatment of the mythical figure interestingly combines pictorial and literary representations, as it conveys the reflections of *À rebours*'s character, des Esseintes, on his newly-acquired paintings of Salome. These two pictures are Gustave Moreau's *Salomé dansant devant Hérode* (1871) and *L'Apparition* (1876), both familiar to Wilde (Aquien, 2006, p. 16). Huysmans's ekphrasis participated in Salome's reputation as a *femme fatale*, which probably inspired Wilde for the construction of his deeply ambivalent heroine. Mallarmé's poem entitled *Hérodiade* had also a great influence on the Symbolist movement in France and on Wilde's heroine in particular. Instead of Huysmans's sensual temptress, Hérodiade is pictured as a contemplative woman who finds echoes in Wilde's portrayal of Salome "as an existentially lonely, misunderstood lover of ideal beauty" who presents "contradictory character traits, and [a] symbolic scenic counterpart in the play, the moon" (Dierkes-Thrun, 2014, p. 17)[7]. Finally, Wilde also borrowed from his contemporary Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949). Like the Anglo-Irish author, Maeterlinck chose to distance himself from his mother-tongue, Flemish, to write in French. The sharp syntax and repetitive

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[4] See for instance works by Bassnett (2011, 2014) or by Lefevere (1992).
[5] Other studies include Djikstra (1992) and Showalter (1990).
[6] A term theorised by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère in her recent work about Angela Carter (see above).
[7] For more details on Wilde's sources of inspiration, see Aquien (2006) and Dierkes-Thrun (2014).

structures (Aquien, 2006, p. 21) of *Salomé* create the same form of bizarre dialogues and atmosphere found in Maeterlinck's symbolist plays[8].

By referencing (whether explicitly or implicitly) a wealth of adaptations of the Salome story in different genres and media, Wilde is already engaging in a process of translation that challenges the authority of the 'original' Biblical text. Aquien argues that if the playwright chose Salome, it was notably because so many artists had contributed to developing the myth, encapsulating thus Wilde's aesthetic theories about "la suprématie et … l'autonomie parfaite de l'art" (Aquien, 2006, p. 19). Moreover, I argue that selecting such a theme is already an act that troubles expectations about artistic creation conceived as the original work of a single author. Drawing from many previous artworks, Wilde's play illustrates the idea that "nothing is ever new" (Lefevere, 1982, p. 17). This echoes contemporary theories of translation which draw attention to the activity of translation as a complex process of reworking, adaptation and transformation. As such, the role of translation is to transpose and recreate a work in another language, cultural context and period in order to make it speak to a new reader or audience in the interplay of repetition and difference. Andre Lefevere, among other Translation Studies scholars, has argued against the sacralisation of the original text, observing that "the new is a combination of various elements from the old, the non-canonized, imports from other systems … rearranged to suit alternative functional views of literature" (Lefevere, 1982, p. 17). In *Reflections on Translation*, Susan Bassnett sums up this idea of translation as a creative act by stating that

> [a]ll writing is in some way a rewriting or retelling of other writing, in other words it could be argued that whatever a writer writes is to some extent a kind of translation, because that work will be the product that has emerged out of readings of other people's writing. Sometimes that rewriting will be unconscious, while at other times it will be a deliberate choice. (Bassnett, 2011, p. 164)

Artistic works are inevitably influenced and shaped by an author's literary experiences. In the case of Wilde, Salome is "a deliberate choice" that inscribes his project in a chain of rewritings and as such Wilde's adaptation sheds light on this first modality of translation as intralingual recreation.

Nevertheless, Wilde's borrowings raised the issue of plagiarism when *Salomé* was published. While artists such as James Joyce admired the play (Aquien, 2006, p. 25), the reception of *Salomé* was far from being unanimously positive. Susan Owens notes that "the criticism of Wilde's first French edition of *Salomé* consistently alleged that it was a plagiaristic patchwork of ideas and quotations from different authors rather than an original work" (Owens, 2013, p. 75). A caricature by Aubrey Beardsley mocks the author's long list of sources by representing "Oscar Wilde at Work" reading Gautier and surrounded by piles of books, such as Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, a *Family Bible* and several manuals of French. In her discussion of the caricature, Owens reads the subtitle "Il ne faut pas le regarder" as "a near quotation from *Salomé* and in this context an allusion to Wilde's covert literary plagiarism" (Owens, 2013, p. 76). Hiding from the public eye, Wilde culled from various sources, but the subtitle of the caricature implies that these problematic borrowings should remain secret, for fear "something terrible may happen" just like when Salome is looked at too much (Wilde, 2006, p. 46). More generally, these accusations illustrate the problem of

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[8] For more details on Maeterlinck's influence, see also Salbayre (2009).

authority and authorship posed by his self-conscious reworking of previous texts, and the thin line between rewriting and plagiarism.

It was not the first time Wilde was accused of plagiarism, however, and his attitude towards these allegations proved as witty as could be expected from the Irish dandy. Joseph Bristow reports one of Beerbohm's conversations with Wilde:

> Speaking of plagiarism the other day, Oscar said: "Of course I plagiarise. It is the privilege of the appreciative man. I never read [Gustave] Flaubert's *Tentation de St. Antoine* without signing my name at the end of it. *Que voulez-vous?* All the Best Hundred Books bear my signature in this manner". (Bristow, 2004, p. 12)

In this quotation, the playwright highlights the subjectivity of his reading and the creativity of interpretation. Reading literary works already entails a unique and creative act of translation and re-interpretation. In *Salome*, it is reflected as a creative response to Wilde's admired predecessors. Kees de Vries explains that "Wilde believed that the subject was made interesting not by the subject itself, but by his personal artistic treatment of it" (de Vries, 2011, p. 239). Seen through the lens of translation as rewriting, I argue that Wilde's borrowings can be considered as transcreations in his own words of a literary and visual material characterising his time. Francesca Coppa recalls "Wilde's epigram, 'The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it'" and argues that "[a]ll of Wilde's life was a 'production' in these terms – since a production takes the textual past and makes it mean anew, makes it newly relevant to *us*, makes it speak to *us*, in our terms" (Coppa, 2004, p. 87). This is precisely what translation does when it re-actualises an earlier text in another language and in someone else's words. By troubling the authority of the original text, the creative turn in Translation Studies also allows for a re-evaluation of Wilde's overt textual appropriations as a creative compilation of different media to produce a new and 'original' work of art, moving between languages and genres.

2. Wilde's self-translation: Creating a hybrid French

a. Translation and self-translation

Beyond compiling some of the most famous adaptations of the Salome myth, Wilde's language in this play sheds light on some important aspects and issues of self-translation. In recent decades, scholars have begun to pay attention to the role of translation as a creative process that several writers have resorted to[9]. In a recent collection on *Self-translation: Brokering originality in hybrid culture*, Elin-Maria Evangelista focuses on "Writing in translation" and she argues that "[w]riting in a second language would then be a process of both specific and generic translation, a translation process where the writer translates both language and self" (Evangelista, 2013, p. 178). By adopting a foreign language, authors such as Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett or Vladimir Nabokov also took on another identity, reshaping their world-view and discovering new creative possibilities. Referring to exile literature, Aurelia Klimkiewicz claims that a second language "will always remain more functional and less emotional, a tool of communication and exchange with others" (Klimkiewicz, 2013, p. 194). Along these lines, Evangelista explains that "[w]riting from this distance, a writer might find that not only do perspectives and characters shift but also the ability to create narratives which might not otherwise have found an expression" (Evangelista, 2013, p. 184). Both scholars underline thus that authors turning to a second language indulge in new experiments, because

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[9] See for instance Friedman, Rossman and Sherzer (1987).

"[p]aradoxically, the limiting factors might allow for a sense of being unrestricted and inventive when writing in a second language" (Evangelista, 2013, p. 181). The more distant language offers not only a new vocabulary and syntax but also a different conception of the text and of reality itself.

Wilde was aware of these possibilities and he commented on his choice to turn to French for *Salomé* as follows:

> My idea of writing the play was simply this, I have one instrument that I know I can command, and that is the English language. There was another instrument to which I had listened all my life, and I wanted to touch this new instrument to see whether I could make any beautiful things out of it. (Wilde, as cited in Zagona, 1960, pp. 122-123)

The new "instrument" that is French is perceived by Wilde as a creative opportunity to explore new aesthetic and 'musical' perspectives related to the formal, rhythmic and phonic dimensions of language. A foreign language is also particularly appropriate for a story located in an Oriental and remote setting. Moreover, adopting French was a way of affiliating himself with French writers and artists and "of establishing himself as a European man of letters" (Bird, 1977, p. 61). Elizabeth Richmond-Garza also links Wilde's choice of French to his status as a "national minor voice" (Richmond-Garza, 2011, p. 27). Besides being an Irish Catholic in England, Wilde was also homosexual and Richmond-Garza states that "[t]he need to move beyond English and the parameters of Anglophone metropolitan culture are at least as pressing for Wilde's more scandalous, and ultimately criminalized, sexual alterity" (Richmond-Garza, 2011, p. 27). In addition to escaping the conservative sexual norms of Victorian England, French becomes a means to trouble language norms and thereby express textually the author's "alterity" and subvert Victorian conventions and values. Wilde's decision to write in French is thus motivated both by artistic and political reasons and it allows him to find a creative freshness that Evangelista describes as "a voice speaking from an in-between space, where one is allowed to go deeper, to find something new, something that is more, created from a distance, although with what feels like a much lighter language" (Evangelista, 2013, p. 185).

b. The 1891 manuscript as a first self-translation

The 1891 autograph manuscript kept at the Bodmer Foundation in Geneva is considered as the earliest draft of *Salomé*. This incomplete text outlines the frame of the play in the pencilled pages of a black notebook, but some episodes (such as the homoerotic relation between the Young Syrian and the Page of Herodias) will only be developed later. In this early version, the manuscript highlights the language difficulties faced by Wilde when he was putting his ideas down on paper in a foreign language. The majority of his errors have been corrected between the first draft and the published text thanks to the help of some of his friends, notably Pierre Louÿs and Marcel Schwob (Aquien, 2006, p. 20), as well as Stuart Merrill and Adolphe Retté (Tydeman & Price, 1996, pp. 17-19). Even though the manuscript contains mistakes and awkward formulations, the text shows a relatively good *oral* command of the French language. Besides spelling mistakes and Anglicisms, syntax and grammatical (agreement) errors are characteristic of an English speaker moving between his mother-tongue and French and, as such, they are also indications of what gives the play its foreign tone and peculiar rhythm.

Scholars who worked on Wilde's manuscripts usually focus on the copy held at the Rosenbach Foundation Museum in Philadelphia, which contains Pierre Louÿs's corrections and comments

on his friend's French. In his 1959 article on "Oscar Wilde's *Salome*", Clyde de L. Ryals studied the difference between this corrected draft and the published version in order to establish what Wilde retained from Louÿs's advice:

> Ryals states that where Louÿs's alterations concerned points of grammar, and in particular the use of the subjunctive, Wilde accepted them. Wherever his friend proposed other changes, "Wilde in nearly every case refused to adopt them, and he crossed out Louÿs's interlinear emendations… What remains, therefore, is *Salome* almost entirely as Wilde wrote it". (Tydeman & Price, 1996, p. 17)

Ryals's findings underline Wilde's determination to keep the foreign touch of his idiosyncratic French, albeit in a grammatically correct language. More recently, MacDonald also referred to the Philadelphia manuscript when he explained that "[t]he corrections reveal that Wilde did occasionally resort to anglicisms in French that are typical of intermediate or advanced, but not native language users of French. Many of the anglicisms are corrected by Louÿs and absent in the published French edition" (MacDonald, 2011, p. 2). Richmond-Garza consulted the manuscript held at the University of Texas to signal that it presents "not only … stylistic and artistic edits, but also … syntactic and idiomatic adjustments" (Richmond-Garza, 2011, p. 25). The mistakes found in the manuscripts testify to the author's difficulties to write in a second language. But his editing choices – focused mainly on spelling and syntactical errors – suggest that he aimed at a grammatically correct French that nevertheless displayed a bizarre tone. The author was thus aware of the strange quality that his *interlanguage*[10] could create and exploited it in the construction of his play.

The only scholar who worked on the first manuscript I consulted at the Bodmer Foundation is Sylviane Messerli who, in her introduction to the facsimile edition published in 2008, traces the history of the composition of the play, from Wilde's choice of writing in French in a Symbolist context to the first performances of *Salome* on stage. Regarding the study of the manuscript, she mainly signals elements left blank and crossed out by the author (Messerli, 2008, p. 42). Her comments aim notably at nuancing Wilde's legendary claim that he wrote *Salomé* in one day (Messerli, 2008, pp. 19-20), by noting that "deux brefs passages écrits à l'encre laissent du moins supposer une relecture" (Messerli, 2008, p. 42). I will expand these genetic comments to focus on the playwright's movement between French and English and show that the contamination of Wilde's English syntax and vocabulary, as well as his oral knowledge of French shaped not only his first draft but also the published version of *Salomé*.

A first clue to Wilde's *interlinguistic* creative mode appears in the last pages of the manuscript, on the left side of the notebook which the author usually kept blank to add notes and modifications. As Salome is kissing the head of Iokanaan, Wilde scribbles next to her monologue "? acre saveur here?" as a question to himself regarding an element he would later on add to the monologue, when Salome exclaims "Il y avait une âcre saveur sur tes lèvres" (p. 165). This occurrence of code-switching between French and English underlines an instinctive distinction between the language he is writing in and the language that is more spontaneous to organise his thoughts. Besides this isolated instance of an English word in the manuscript, some Anglicisms or English formulations can be found throughout the text. At the

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[10] An interlanguage is a term coined by linguists to define a second language mixed with linguistic elements from the speaker's mother-tongue (Vogel, 1995, p. 21). Wilde seems to turn what is usually considered as a defect into a creative literary strategy consistent with the de-naturalizing poetics of the decadent "art-for art's sake" movement.

beginning, Wilde refers to a "donjon" to describe a *prison* although, unlike "dungeon", it does not have the double meaning of a prison cell and a fortified keep in French. A bit further down, the author writes about "une toute petite piece" of fruit instead of a "morceau". Similarly, Wilde transposes later the English word "pavement" into French to state that there was "de sang sur le pavement", misled by another 'false friend' that has a different meaning in French.

Not only are words impregnated by Wilde's Anglophone mind-set, but some syntactical structures are also modelled on English grammar. In French, Wilde often transposes the neuter English pronoun "it", whereas it needs to agree with the gender of the noun in French. At the beginning, during one of Salome's tirades about Iokanaan's body, Wilde writes for instance "C'est horrible, c'est infect ton corps". The impersonal pronoun "ce" is transformed into "Il est horrible, il est horrible ton corps" in the published version, hence correcting the lack of agreement between the neuter "ce" and the masculine "ton corps". A similar example occurs on the next page where Salome describes Iokanaan's mouth with relish, stating that "C'est comme la fleur de grenade qui fleurit dans les jardins du roi de Tyr". Here again, the pronoun is neutral as it would be in English, but the French "bouche" requires a feminine grammatical agreement. Even though these failing agreements are corrected in the final version, Wilde's English grammar shapes his perception in a way that may have influenced the sexual politics of the play. By neutralising 'inanimate' features, the English language does not mark the differentiation between genders as clearly as French. As Sherry Simon explains in *Gender in Translation*, "English has 'natural' gender rather than grammatical gender. This means that gender is attributed not by form but by meaning" (Simon, 1996, p. 17). Consequently, Wilde's linguistic mind-set offers him more flexibility to exploit the androgynous representation of his characters. Both Salome's and Iokanaan's bodies can thus be described and set as objects of fantasies, disregarding the usual dichotomy between the "woman as image" and the "man as bearer of the look" (Mulvey, 1999, p. 837).

Prepositions are another problematic area of French and English grammar. English turns of phrase show through the prepositions used in the manuscript, notably after transitive verbs that Wilde spells as the intransitive English equivalent. The author adds for instance a preposition in "Parlez a moi" and "n'écoutez pas a vôtre mere", both occurrences of intransitive verbs followed by the preposition "to" in English. When faced with two pronouns completing a verb, Wilde shows a similar tendency to follow English logic and adds a preposition before the pronoun that refers to the indirect object. He thus writes "le demandant de vous" and "le delivrer a nous" according to the English structure, but this does not correspond to the French rule that states that both pronouns should appear before the verb without any preposition. These various grammatical elements suggest that the rules of his mother-tongue still shape the playwright's use of French when he moves between English and French. Although these mistakes have been corrected, the published version still presents an example – already found in the manuscript – of an English preposition 'translated' literally in French. The Cappadocian recounts "Moi, j'ai passé trois nuits *sur* les montagnes" (p. 53, my emphasis), using the French equivalent of "on", whereas a native speaker would have said "*dans* les montagnes". Although this does not strike the reader as wrong, it underlines the bizarre tone and style created by Wilde's imperfect command of French. Having been retained for publication, this example further highlights the fact that the author was aiming at creating strange effects conveyed by his idiosyncratic French.

As an English speaker used to the pronoun *you* to refer to both the informal and the polite second-person singular, Wilde also navigates freely between the informal *tu* and the more

formal and distant *vous* in French. The manuscript shows numerous occurrences of such exchanges within the same sentence or phrase. In the published texts, however, the author plays purposely with the second persons in both languages by swapping between *tu* and *vous* or *you* and *thou* when referring to the same person. The draft rather highlights a difficulty caused by the more complex French distinction between the formal *vous* and the familiar *tu*, whereas it produces a deliberately special effect in the final version of the text where the inconsistencies have been corrected. Instances in the manuscript such as "venez t'asseoir", "Tu vois ce qu'elle pense de vous" or "vous n'avez pas voulu me laisser baiser ta bouche Iokanaan" illustrate Wilde's tendency to confuse *tu* and *vous*, especially when moving between subject and object pronouns. Nevertheless, these mistakes may have encouraged Wilde to exploit this distinction between formal and informal pronouns in the published version, hence highlighting power relations between the characters.

Finally, the manuscript displays marks of orality and spelling mistakes throughout, which shows that Wilde was used to speaking more than writing in French. The author often uses the pronoun "ça", the oral contraction of "cela". Wilde writes for instance "je ne crois pas ça" following the English word order that would place the object pronoun "it" after the verb. He also uses some typically oral constructions, such as "C'est curieux ça" or "Cela me semble ridicule, ça", which give an informal tone to the dialogue. This feature disappears in the final version, which suggests that some external reader corrected them, usually in favour of the more formal "cela". In the manuscript version, the author also avoids the inversion between subject and verb for questions in written French, which tends to disappear orally or to be replaced by the more conversational formula "est-ce que". This phrase appears several times as in "est-ce qu'il y a du sang" or "Qu'est-ce que ça fait ici?". Some are modified to fit a more literary standard in the published version, although Wilde kept several "est-ce que" questions. This choice gives a conversational and informal tone to the dialogues, thereby desacralizing the solemnity of the Tetrarch's court and disrupting the reader's expectations about court language.

Studying the manuscript alongside its published version therefore sheds light on Wilde's creative process as an author writing in a second language and on a work of art in the making. Although Wilde received help from native speakers of French, he was proficient enough[11] to self-correct some of his errors or inconsistencies already in the first draft, to exploit the innovative effects produced by his interlanguage and to select the strange elements he wanted to keep for creative purposes in French. The choices noticed by Ryals in his study of the Philadelphia manuscript that was corrected by Louÿs, as well as the calques of English syntax that I have identified in my study of the first manuscript, show that Wilde was aiming at a grammatically correct but nevertheless idiosyncratic French. Therefore, the process of estrangement goes both ways: while alienating Wilde's usual style, it also displaces French where no native speaker would have dared to go.

More generally, the manuscript of the first version calls into question the notion of original creation. Which of the French texts do we consider as 'the original' in comparison to the English translation? Although the Bodmer manuscript is the first version of the play that we know of, there may well have been earlier drafts that were not kept. Are these first ideas about

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[11] Norbert Kohl quotes André Gide, Henry-D. Davray and Gustave Le Rouge who all gave evidence of Wilde's very good level in French. Stuart Merrill's opinion was less enthusiastic, however, which "need not be taken as a total refutation of the others, but simply shows that Wilde's French was not perfect" (Kohl, 1982, p. 377).

the play more 'original' than the manuscript? Such questions underline the complexity and the multiplicity of layers in a creative process and add to the challenge posed by Wilde's *Salome*. Genetic editing argues for a more global study of a literary work, and explores the different creative steps, notably by comparing the manuscripts with the published text, in order to better understand how an author develops his/her artistic production[12]. In their introduction on "Genetic translation studies: An emerging discipline", Anthony Cordingley and Chiara Montini explain that "genetic critics sought to challenge the sacrosanct authority of the published text by showing how it is but one phase in a continuum of textual creation" (Cordingley & Montini, 2015, p. 2)[13]. The study of manuscripts thus demonstrates that translation is always already at work in any act of creation. The author necessarily operates an act of translation when he/she puts his/her ideas down on paper, and revising drafts may be considered as part of this translational process too. Therefore, self-translation destabilises even further the authority of the 'original', as well as the usual binary opposition between source and target texts in translation.

c.   The strange French of the published *Salomé*

Wilde considered French as a language that would allow him to stimulate his usual creative self and explore new literary perspectives through linguistic, cultural and artistic estrangement, and this process also reverberates on and reshapes French itself. The playwright was aware of his intervention in the language and he observed that

> [o]f course there are modes of expression that a Frenchman of letters would not have used but they give a certain relief or colour to the play. A great deal of the curious effect that Maeterlinck produced comes from the fact that he, a Flamand by race, writes in an alien language. (Wilde, as cited in Zagona, 1960, p. 123)

Citing Maeterlinck, Wilde recognises that the stylistic effects he was looking for are created by his use of French as a foreign language. Using an "alien language", he is able to experiment more freely with it than native speakers. A second language that is not mastered perfectly by the speaker is referred to as an interlanguage and it is defined by Klaus Vogel as "la langue qui se forme chez un apprenant d'une langue étrangère à mesure qu'il est confronté à des éléments de la langue-cible, sans pour autant qu'elle coïncide totalement avec cette langue-cible" (Vogel, 1995, p. 19). An interlanguage typically emerges from the interaction between a speaker's mother-tongue and the target language (Vogel, 1995, p. 21). As such, Vogel notes that "[u]ne interlangue n'est pas seulement composée de formes correctes et de règles conformes au système et à la norme de la langue-cible, mais aussi de formes grammaticalement incorrectes et de règles non-conformes à la langue-cible" (Vogel, 1995, p. 19). The mixed, "alien" tongue thus created by an individual speaker reveals a unique medium of creation on the threshold between two languages.

Richmond-Garza notes that "Wilde's self-translation into the French of Parisian fin-de-siècle Symbolism is not merely … a linguistic and idiomatic transformation of an Anglophone self; it also potentially alters the French into which it enters" (Richmond-Garza, 2011, p. 24). Even if there are fewer occurrences of English blending with French compared to what can be found in the manuscript, the published version of Salomé still presents several Anglicisms, notably as far as syntax is concerned. For instance, the pronoun "cela", which I mentioned earlier, is not

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[12] For more details on genetic editing, see De Biasi, (2011).
[13] On the growing field of genetic translation, see also Durand-Bogaert (2014).

used as often as "it" or "this/that" in French. In sentences like "Je ne peux pas comprendre cela" (p. 53) or "Je vous ai déjà dit cela" (p. 125), the "cela" is usually transformed into "le" to be put before the verb, unlike the English "it" or "that" which closes the sentence. Furthermore, Wilde often uses the phrase "il y a" or "il y en a qui disent" (p. 53, p. 67), which transposes the English "there is/are" or the formulation "there are some who say". However, such presentative sentences are used less commonly in French. Wilde probably retained these transpositions to give an oral tone to his play, but they also create stylistic effects that echo the action and that Wilde may not have anticipated. Presentative structures act as deictics and, as such, they anchor their object in the situation of utterance. When a Jew states for instance that "Et par conséquent il y a de grands malheurs dans le pays" (p. 107), it creates a gap between his discourse and the story he refers to, which is set in a different context. Instead of referring to an object present in the situation of utterance, the speaker points to a more global problem. Such different use of presentative phrases appears also when Herod says that "Aussi il y a des raisons d'Etat" (p. 111) and when the Second Nazarene reports "Aussi, il y a le miracle de la fille de Jaïr" (p. 115). Consequently, a gap is created between the characters and what they say, emphasising the surreal and dreamy atmosphere of the text.

These last examples are also representative of another characteristic of Wilde's interlinguistic usage of French. The author tends to place adverbs at the beginning of a sentence, even though their position is more flexible in French. The two instances above of "Aussi" opening a sentence do not sound 'natural', and as such this ties in with Wilde's efforts to 'denaturalise' language and style by writing in an idiosyncratic French. When the Tetrarch states "En effet, j'ai trouvé qu'il l'avait un peu trop regardée" (p. 99), the causal conjunction sounds more formally argumentative and contrasts thus with the oral construction of the following discourse sentence in the passé composé. Other similar occurrences of adverbs, such as "Au moins, c'est possible" (p. 153) or "elle est tout à fait monstrueuse" (p. 163), stand out as unusual. These various English touches give the text a foreign tone and contribute thus to setting the play in a blurred, hybrid and mixed linguistic zone.

Although corrected by native speakers, Wilde's French Salomé still presents phrases denoting the playwright's imperfect command of the language, sometimes to the point of sounding child-like. For instance, when Herod says "En effet, je trouve que guérir les lépreux est une bonne action" (p. 117), the expression "une bonne action" denotes an innocent perspective on what the Messiah is reported to do here. Later, the Tetrarch again uses a rather simple formulation to refer to Iokanaan's words: "Il a dit des choses très blessantes" (p. 139). The word "choses" in French already hints at a limited vocabulary to describe the Prophet's sayings, which is accentuated by the adverb "très" to reinforce "blessantes". While hinting at Wilde's limited lexical range in French, these constructions participate in depicting the Tetrarch, who should be in power in the play, as an overwhelmed monarch who appears as helpless as a child in front of this newly emerging religion. In my opinion, Wilde exploited here his own linguistic limitations to simplify Herod's language and question his authority.

To conclude, Salomé is coloured by the author's mother-tongue. But far from being merely the mark of Wilde's limited command of French, it shows a deliberate strategy to denaturalise language and create ironic effects. This explains why Richmond-Garza observes that "[w]ith its simplicity and sparseness, its antiphonic repetitions, and its parataxis, at first glance it seems neither particularly characteristic of Wilde's oeuvre nor of French writing of the 1880s and 1890s" (Richmond-Garza, 2011, p. 25). This linguistic and stylistic displacement is precisely what Wilde was aiming at. Indeed, his hybrid and idiosyncratic language creates stylistic effects

that reflect the strange and dreamy atmosphere of the play, as well as its action situated in a distant Orient. Wilde writes in a language that is neither his mother-tongue nor formal French. The strangeness resulting from this 'denaturalising' process participates then in highlighting the geographical displacement of a play set in the Orient, and written in Paris by an Anglo-Irish playwright. The author may not have been able to grasp all the stylistic effects created by his idiosyncratic French, but his editing choices prove that he was aiming at this strange, dreamy and oral quality that characterises his Salomé. Moreover, by revisiting a long tradition of textual and visual representations of the Biblical myth, Salome reflects the conception of the artistic work as a necessary re-interpretation or translation that questions the Romantic cult of the author's 'originality'. Not only does Wilde's work anticipate the creative turn in Translation Studies and its understanding of translation as a creative act, but it also suggests that any creative production is always already a kind of translation. For Wilde, creation was therefore inseparable from the idea of self-translation as transcreation.

3. References

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