

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF ALTERATIONS IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ASTÉRIX

From the first pages of *Asterix the Gaul*, it is possible to see innovations in the translated text. In both French and English, the standard syntax and spelling are changed to suggest a foreign speaker, but the Goths in the English translation use a different typeface to indicate a different language that is unintelligible to the Gauls. This convention is incorporated by Underzo in subsequent books:



Figure 46 Different typeface used to indicate the Gothic language



Figure 47 Convention of using a different typeface for different languages introduced to canon.

Although Bell and Hockridge claim to follow the principle of maintaining the same number of jokes as the original, this is not strictly maintained and many times a free translation strategy is employed for humorous effect, to add cultural references or other purposes.

Names

While the names of the central characters Asterix and Obelix are preserved, others are changed while maintaining the suffix -ix to indicate a male of Gaulish nationality. This is derived from the defeated Gaulish warrior Vercingetorix, whose name actually has the royal suffix -rix. Other nationalities have their own suffices: -us for Romans, -

os for Greeks, -af for Normans, -ax for English. Gaulish women have the suffix -ine in French, but -a in English.

In the French and English, the names *Asterix* and *Obelix* have multiple meanings. Like the asterisk, Asterix is diminutive and the star of the series. In turn, Obelix is large and often seen with the menhirs that he produces. In addition, an obelisk or dagger (†) is a typographical symbol usually used to indicate a footnote if an asterisk has already been used. While the original names are generally a wordplay on a word that may not have any relation to the character themselves, many names have been changed in the English to link the pun to the character's occupation or personality.

- Panoramix the druid becomes Getafix; again, this involves multiple wordplays where the *fix* could refer to potions that he produces or to the astronomical study that druids engaged in.
- The fishmonger Alfabetix and his wife Ielosubmarine become Unhygenix and Bacteria, referring to the stale fish that they sell.
- Obelix's pet Idefix, whose name comes from a fixation on one topic (*idée fixe*) becomes Dogmatix, thus using a name with a similar meaning while incorporating a wordplay connected to his species.
- The Roman centurion Caius Bonus, whose name becomes Crismus Bonus. This retains a similarity to the original name while adding a pun that alludes to his ambition.
- The Gallo-Roman chief Aplusbégalix who challenges Chief Aplusbégalix (Vitalstatistix) to a duel becomes Cassius Ceramix. This name incorporates both Roman and Gaulish endings to indicate his divided loyalties, and is a wordplay on the name Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali), well known for his boxing prowess and self-aggrandisement:



Figure 48 Asterix and the Big Fight, p. 36

- The Gothic chief Téléféric [téléphérique; a cableway] becomes Metric. Téléféric is a caricature of the Prussian Otto von Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany and the person responsible for unifying the country. Under Bismarck, the Reichstag unified the weights and measurements and introduced the metric system.

This follows the example set by the British translators of Tintin, although it is perhaps more sophisticated and involves more layers of meaning. The character names in Tintin sometimes lose subtlety in translation: Professor Tournesol becomes Professor Calculus, taking a name with the direct meaning of sunflower, but secondary scientific meanings relating to litmus paper (and possibly astronomy, i.e. facing the sun and other stars), and turning it into a very direct word association. The butcher Boucherie Sanzot (li. “butcher without bones”) also takes a word association hidden within the surname and replaces it with a straightforward surface wordplay – Cutts the Butcher. In contrast, the translators of Asterix are more successful at innovating while reproducing the ‘feel’ of the original that appeals to the mixed target readership.

Gender

From the start, women have a marginal role that expands slowly throughout the series, but that is often in conflict with the contemporary and even traditional cultural values. In part this is due to a 1949 French law intended to regulate the moral standards of children’s reading material (and protect French publications from the economic influence of American comics), but this does not explain the extent to which women are absent. Asterix the Gaul features no women at all, including as background characters, dance partners or at the village feast. The following book

(Asterix and the Golden Sickle) improves slightly on this, but features no recurring female characters.

The status of women is evident in the feasts celebrated in many of the books, where women are relegated to servers and the seated guests are usually exclusively male. There are a few exceptions to this, such as where a woman is a central character (Asterix and the Magic Carpet; Asterix and Cleopatra) or during a reunion of characters from other books in Asterix in Corsica, a reference to the Flemish painting "Peasant Wedding Feast" (c. 1568) by Pieter Brughel but in Asterix in Belgium removes almost all of the female characters from the original painting.

While the women in the village often disagree with their husbands and the other men, they are generally restricted to domestic roles. At a few points, women come from Lutetia or elsewhere who challenge the provincial and traditionalist gender roles through their words or actions, but most seek to control their husbands rather than directly challenging their authority. The chief's wife Impedimenta is proud of her husband's position, but deflates his ego by sending him on errands, calling him pet names and not responding to his assertions of authority as a man or as the chief. Several central female characters have no first names, such as Mrs. Fulliautomatix and Mrs. Geriatrix, who nevertheless shows some dominance over her husband. The women often show bemusement at their husbands' pettiness and violence, but also gossip and fight between each other. They demonstrate obsession with their weight, clothing and appearance, and are more susceptible to fear and superstition (which can be seen in books like Asterix and the Soothsayer and Asterix and the Secret Weapon).

In response to a request by the magazine Elle to provide a story on a women's subject, Goscinny and Uderzo created the short episode Mini, Midi, Maxi in 1971. Similarly to other subplots involving the women in the village, this episode relates to Gaulish clothing, status conflicts and offense-taking. The women perceive their status in terms of their appearance and sex appeal as well as their husbands' status and ability to defend their wives' honour. They are more likely to use snubs and appeals to their husbands than physical violence, although it is clear that they are as petty as the men. The episode ends with a fight involving both men and women, but Mrs. Geriatrix, one of the main instigators of the conflict, escapes without harm. This

story was compiled with other shorts in the book *Asterix and the Class Act*, published in 2003. The translation shows some reference to modern reality TV:

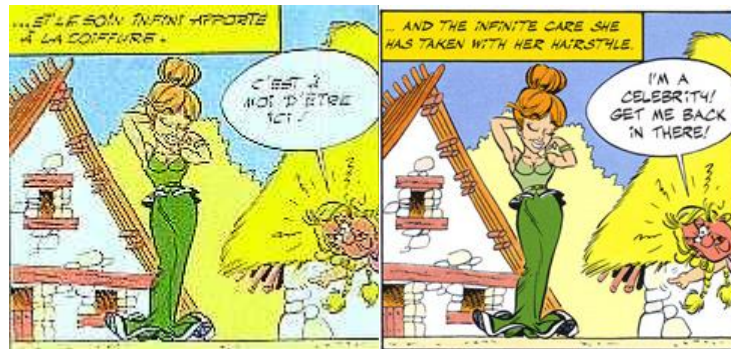


Figure 49 *Asterix and the Class Act*, p. 28

While the women are generally less violent than the men and accept their apparent subservient role, this quickly changes where they are given magic potion or encouraged to seek liberation. Young women in particular also have the power of seduction and the immunity granted by Gaulish gallantry, which is viewed with unease by some of the villagers.

Since the images are not changed in the translation, most interactions remain similar to the original. However, some subtle changes soften the sexism to some extent; Unhygenix's son's statement about all girls becomes a more specific criticism of little girls:



Figure 50 *Asterix and the Secret Weapon*, p. 5

On p. 9, the translators take advantage of a visual joke that may have been accidental in the original:



Figure 51 Asterix and the Secret Weapon, p. 9

This label is repeated later in the book along with an added joke about the music 'getting him down'.



Figure 52 Asterix and the Secret Weapon, p. 12

Race

While Asterix is set in ancient Rome, it is clear that many jokes satirise modern society. Spain is already a holiday destination, and ancient cottages on ox-drawn carts are used to depict the more modern phenomenon of package holidays and foreign travel. Attitudes to city and country living, nationalism, culture, stereotypes, gender and other issues are explored in different adventures. While the status of black people seems informed more by contemporary attitudes than ancient culture, this attitude is received differently at different times and in the cultures of languages having translations of these books. The presence of black servants in popular culture is still seen in the Netherlands, where St. Nicholas (Sinterklaas) arrives by boat with several black Moors from Spain.

Unlike Tintin's British and American translators and publishers, Bell and Hockridge did not have the freedom to edit images and panels. For this reason, all depictions of black people are preserved. However, black characters like the pirate crew member

use standard English rather than the non-standard French dialect of the source text. This removes some of the stigma of the black character as less cultured than white characters.

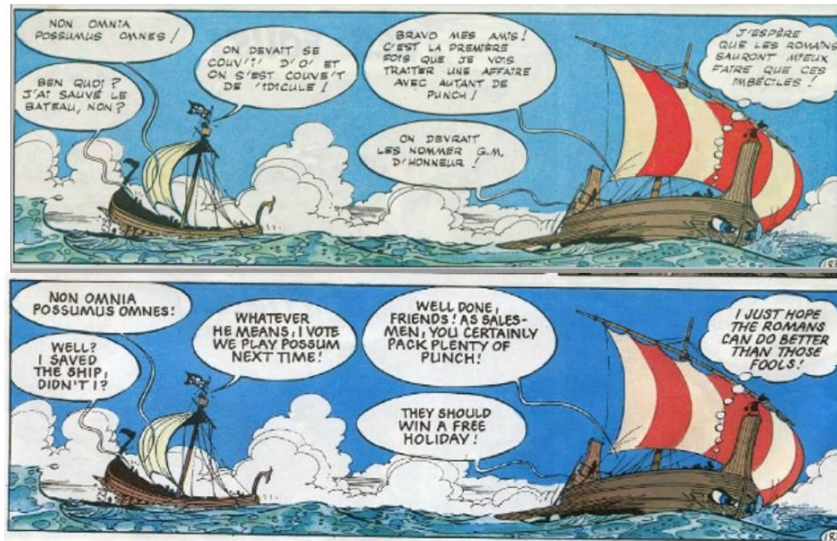


Figure 53 Pirate dialect changed to standard English; from *Asterix and the Black Gold*.

Asterix and the Black Gold was the second book to be published after the death of René Goscinny, who was of Jewish stock, and includes a visit to the Kingdom of Judaea. Unlike the Jews in Hergé's works, Underzo's Jews are sympathetically portrayed as allies in the shared resistance against Rome. Jewish characters are portrayed as Yemenite Jews in tribute to the Jewish painter Marc Chagall, and there are several references to Jewish culture and contemporary Jewish personalities. One of the main characters, Saül Péhyé, is a wordplay on Ça eut payé, a comedy skit by the Jewish French comedian Fernand Raynaud, who died in a car accident eight years prior to the book's publication. The character himself is a caricature of René Goscinny. This character name is translated to Saul Ben Ephishul (it's all beneficial), analogously to another character (Joshua Pazihalé/j'osais pas y aller), whose name becomes Joshua Ben Zedrin (Benzedrine).

While in Jerusalem, Asterix and Obelix meet a merchant named Samson Pludechorus (plus de chorus/more choruses), whose real name is Rosenblumenthalovitch. Samson is a name of Jewish origin, while Rosenblumen + ovitch suggest a Russian/German Jewish name. This could refer to the British spy of the late 19th - early 20th Century, Sidney Reilly, who was reputed to be the

illegitimate son of a married Russian woman and a Viennese Jewish doctor, Dr Mikhail Abramovich Rosenblum. Reilley's birth name was Salomon or (Sigmund/Zigmund), and he was a major inspiration for the fictional character James Bond. Reilley was associated with early British oil exploitations in Persia, and was also known for the many disguises and aliases he would use.

Other characters are also based on French personalities: Caius Soutienmordicus (soutient mordicus) is a caricature of the French actor Bernard Blier, while Ponce Pénates was modelled on the French actor Jean Gabin, who played Pontius Pilate in the 1935 film *Golgotha*.

While some of the specific Jewish personalities referenced are not well enough known in the UK to allow them to be transferred, this is compensated for by using more general Jewish references. The surname [Ben + name] is a Jewish formation meaning [son of + name], and is more likely to be recognised as a Jewish reference by readers. Caius Soutienmordicus is renamed M. Devius Surreptitius, in reference to the character M from the James Bond series. The name Rosenblumenthalovitch is retained by Bell and Hockridge, but the name Pludechorus becomes Alius. This retains the Roman-sounding pseudonym noted by Asterix, but adds a wordplay on the character.



Figure 54 References to René Goscinny and Sidney Reilly; *Asterix and the Black Gold*, p. 34.

A final difference between the original and translated content is the reference to kosher law forbidding pork. The source text explains the kind of meat that is and is not permitted under kosher law, while the English translation refers to the law and the prophets, with a Bible reference in the note. In both cases, Obelix misunderstands the statement and makes a retort about the cost of pork

(cachères/pas chères in the original, but the law and the prophets/can't make a profit in the translation).

As with Tintin, Asterix meets people from the British Isles and some jokes make cultural references that are more familiar to British readers than French ones. Asterix and the Black Gold is one example of this: One of the main characters, Dubbelosix (Zérozerosix), is a caricature of Sean Connery as James Bond (007). Several jokes and other elements play on this connection: an infatuated messenger fly plays the role of Moneypenny, and introduces several wordplays on *mouche* as a bug, spy or fly on the wall, or in the sense of bugging or bothering someone. In most cases, these can be translated directly or closely approximated due to the common associations between flies and unnoticed observers or annoyances. The following altered references appear in the English translation:

- The secret service in the original is called the “police secrète”, but Julius Caesar calls it “my secret service, M.I.VI (MI6)” in the English translation.
- In the original, Zérozerosix gives Panoramix some whiskey, which he describes as a grain liquor distilled in Caledonia* (*Ancient Scotland). The alcohol is too strong for Panoramix, so Zérozerosix muses whether it would be better diluted with water and ice. In the translation, Dubbelosix calls the drink “a grain spirit called Caledonian* (*Ancient scotch)”. He suggests that “it may be a bit strong neat” and that “it may be better diluted with a spot of soda.” While this may be localisation, suggesting Dubbelosix’s familiarity with scotch whiskey, it could also be an attempt to correct the implausibility of finding ice in ancient Armorica.

Translation of Asterix in Britain

Asterix In Britain presents an interesting problem for a translator, since the humour is based on French stereotypes of the English, including the differences between English and French culture. Several cultural references are familiar to French readers, but would not be known by an English readership. An example is the phrase “Mon tailleur est riche”, which is the first phrase of a 1929 textbook for English language learners, “L’anglais sans peine”. This phrase has been referenced several times, mainly in parody as the phrases in the textbook were chosen to be easy for French speakers to understand rather than for their usefulness in everyday

conversation. The solution (“my tailor makes a good thing of it”) uses a wordplay based on quality and cost, in keeping with the register and expressions of the characters.

The Britons’ language is marked by using English syntax in the original French. Misunderstandings and wordplays are an important element of the humour, but the English translation uses standard English for the Gauls. This is resolved by using an upper-class dialect for the English, with the word “what” used in place of many of the syntax-based jokes. Other colourful expressions are used to accentuate the oddness of the language: the nonstandard “Il est, n’est-il pas” becomes “I say, rather, old fruit!”. This same adaptation is reused later in the book to add an extra pun:



Figure 55 "Trop cher" changed to "bad" to allow the pun "rather old fruit". Asterix in Britain, p. 20

During the book, Obelix misunderstands English speakers on several occasions and begins to speak using ‘English’ syntax. Some references in this book are changed to allow for the communication difficulties and wordplay involved: Anticlimax is Asterix’s first cousin (cousin germain), and introduces himself by offering to shake hands (using the non-standard “Secouons-nous les mains!” rather than the standard “Serrons-nous la main”). Obelix shakes him up and down by the hand, and excuses himself by saying that “mais c’est ce Germain qui m’a dit...” [but it was this German who told me...]. Bell and Hockridge resolve this by changing the relationship to first cousin once removed, and Anticlimax asks Obelix to shake him by the hand, thus making the misinterpretation more understandable.

On page 5, we see an adaptation of a joke about Anticlimax’s odd language. Unlike other characters in the Asterix series, Anticlimax uses the formal vous to address Asterix and Obelix. He also places adjectives before the noun (magique potion,

romaines armées) and uses calque to translate common English expressions (Je serai ravi, j'en suis sûr). Obelix finds this curious and later mimics his style (ironically by placing the adjective after its noun). In the translation, Anticlimax is surprised that Obelix doesn't know "what's what, what", which Obelix echoes later in the page. Anticlimax's statement of gratitude for the invitation to Asterix's house becomes a reference to Thomas Hardy's poem My Garden, which contains obscure words (lovesome, God wot) and a new wordplay on 'what', which is picked up on by Obelix as an echo to the earlier joke.



Figure 56 Asterix in Britain, p. 5

While abandoning the literal meaning of the text (even in localised form), the translators maintain the fidelity of the interpersonal interaction, the oddity of the language and the humour. They also maintain the appeal to a variety of readers; the calque of “charmed, I’m sure” might seem obscure enough to appeal to a more educated French reader, but the humour would be lost in a direct translation.

Literary and cultural references

While wordplay and cultural references are seen in the original texts of the Asterix series, these are generally more common in the translations and come from a broader range of sources. Goscinny and Underzo are more likely to use contemporary references from the arts and popular culture, while Anthea Bell’s background of English literature from university and cryptic wordplays from her father’s crossword writing influence her own choices. The following are some examples of literary references introduced into the English translation:

Songs

An analysis of the songs used in the 24 books written by Goscinny and Underzo before Goscinny's death revealed the following sources, many of which were written by Charles Trenet in the late 1930s and early 1940s (Richet, 2004):

Popular songs	19	Charles Trenet (18 May 1913 – 19 February 2001), Luis Mariano (13 August 1914 – 14 July 1970), Mistinguett (3 April 1875 – 5 January 1956), Maurice Chevalier (12 September 1888 – 1 January 1972)...
Variety songs	7	Sheila, Dalida, Nicoletta, Annie Cordy...
Children's songs	11	No reference to particular interpreters
Drinking songs	4	
Miscellaneous	6	

In several examples, the referenced song itself is not immediately connected to the events of the scene, but rather seems to be used order to reference a popular artist from recent decades. However, lyrics are changed in order to place them within the culture and time of the singer and to introduce wordplays. In contrast, the translations reference traditional and modern songs, and are often more closely connected in context to the characters or events. Sailors sing navy songs, soldiers sing military songs and the bard and druid sing songs about their current activity.

Only two examples exist where the same song is used: In *Asterix and the Mansions of the Gods*, Gothic slaves sing *Silent Night* (*Ô douce nuit*) loudly while working on apartments near the Gaulish village. In *Obelix and Co*, the villagers sing *Happy Birthday* to him while he beats up some Roman soldiers outside of the village. In both cases, the song is common in both languages and there is a strong relationship to the events in the panel.

In other cases, several possible strategies are taken, mainly by preserving the function and wordplay by choosing a similar song. This can include changing names and other elements to fit the function of the song:

Asterix and the Banquet <i>An innkeeper sings a lullaby to a Roman centurion who he has just knocked out with a rolling pin</i>	Dors mon p'tit Quinquin, mon p'tit quinquin, mon p'tit Quintilius... <i>Le p'tit Quinquin</i> <i>A. Desrousseaux (1855)</i>	Goldenslumbus, kiss thine eyes... Sleep, little Roman, do not cry... <i>Golden slumbers</i> <i>T Dekker (1603)</i>
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The song referenced in the original is in the Picard language, which is spoken in in the French regions of Picardy and Nord-Pas-de-Calais as well as in parts of the Belgian region of Wallonia. It has been named as the unofficial anthem of the region, so the connection would be evident to educated French readers. English speaking readers would not be expected to be familiar with these regional characteristics, so the inclusion of the wordplay on the name, the use of a common lullaby and the addition of the reference to pain preserve the majority of the functional elements of this text.

This is often reinforced by a greater association with the surrounding events, as in the change from *Je chante* to *The Armorican line*. In the French text, the association is made between the Roman soldiers and their language, while the English text references the legionaries' current activity of hanging out washing, as well as their happiness at returning to Armorica:

Je chante Je chante soir et matin Je chante Sur mon chemin	Je chante Je chante tout en latin Je chante Je suis romain...
---	--

A similar effect is produced in the translation of *La marche des jeunes*:

Y a des cailloux sur les chemins, Y a du vent qui court dans la plaine Y a des cailloux sur les chemins Mais à l'auberge y a du vin! Y a du bon vin!	Asterix and the Goths: Sur toutes les routes il y a des cailloux ! Il y a des cailloux sur toutes les routes ! Asterix and the Belgians: Il y a des menhirs sur toutes les voies... Sur toutes les voies il y a des menhirs
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While the French texts reference the rocks/menhirs along the road, the English translations add a reference to soldiers marching and to their particular nationality.

<p>Oh the grand old Duke of York, he had ten thousand men. He marched them up to the gates of Rome, and he marched them down again</p>	<p>O-oh grand old Alaric, he had ten thousand men... He marched them up to the gates of Rome, and...</p>
<p>When Gaius comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah</p>	<p>When Gaius comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah... Menhir a new day will come my way... [possible allusion to <i>Many a new day</i> from the musical <i>Oklahoma</i>]</p>

Alaric I was the first King of the Visigoths and is best known for his sack of Rome in A.D. 408, while Gaius was a young heir of the Roman emperor Augustus. Gaius led several military expeditions into Syria, Arabia and Armenia, where he suffered a physical wound and a mental breakdown. Gaius died the following year in Lycia without returning to Rome. While both Alaric and Gaius lived after the time of the Asterix series (set during Julius Caesar’s reign), this anachronism is in keeping with Goscinny and Underzo’s willingness to include characters and cultural elements from after this period.

In Asterix and Caesar’s gift, a song that is unrelated to the events in the original is changed to add more humour. Faced with a challenge to his leadership, Vitalstatistix asks Cacofanix to find out the general opinion in the village. On Cacofanix’s claim that he is just like the others and doesn’t like his (political/singing) voice, Vitalstatistix claims to love his voice. Cacofanix responds by singing a song he recently composed, which in the French is a song to the tune of *Oh when the saints*. A note in the panel comments that the tune has been preserved to this day, although the words are changed. In English, Cacofanix sings the political protest song *We shall overcome*, and the note comments that the words have been preserved while the tune has been extensively revised. This makes the offer to sing more understandable, since Cacofanix is expressing political solidarity with the chief. It also helps to explain the violently negative reaction, since the original tune and

singing are considered bad enough to reject Cacofanix and his support. The following panel continues the wordplay on the song:



Figure 57 Asterix and Caesar's gift, p. 21

In Asterix and the Goths, Asterix and Obelix march behind Gothic soldiers, while disguised as two of them. The Gothic soldiers sing one song, but Obelix sings a different one. In the original, Obelix sings a drinking song or possibly an advertising jingle, which may identify him as a Gaul due to his love of the good life rather than military order. In the translation, he sings a marching song that more explicitly identifies his place of origin. This matches the context and Asterix and Obelix's actions better, since Obelix is singing a marching song like the Goths, but is unable to speak or understand their language.



Figure 58 Asterix and the Goths, p. 27

Songs are also referenced elsewhere, such as in the names of different characters. In Asterix in Corsica, we meet the character Ocatarinetabellatchitchix, whose name comes from the Tino Rossi song O Catarinetta Bella Tchi-Tchi. On hearing the name, Assurancetourix suggests that the name inspires him to write a song. Asterix mistakes his name as Omarinella, after the Tino Rossi song *Marinella*, while the pirate captain mistakes it as Ocatarinetabellaploumploum (after the 1947 film *Ploum*,

ploum, tra-la-la) and a legionary mistakes it as *Ocatarinetabellatsointsoin* (after the 1937 song *Tsoin-tsoin* by O-Dett).

In the English translation, the name is changed to *Boneywasawarriorwayayix*, a reference to the 19th century sea shanty *Boney was a warrior*.

Boney was a warrior,
Wey, hay, yah
A warrior, a tarrier,
John François

Like the French shanty that inspired it, Jean Francois de Nantes, this was intended to be sung while raising the topsail. The chanty-man would sing the solo while sitting on the topsail halyard block, and the chorus lines gave the timing for pulls on the halyard line. The song tells the life story of Napoleon Bonaparte, who was born in Corsica. During the book, Cacofanix comments that the name inspires him to write a sea shanty, and later the name is mistaken by the pirate captain as *Boneywasawarriorpomtidldypom* and by the legionary as *Boneywasawarriotheynonnyno*.

In some cases, the translation adds a new reference to a song where the original contained none:



Figure 59 Asterix in Corsica, p. 24

This is another reference to a World War I military song, titled *Oh it's a lovely war*, which was sung to the tune of the bugle call summoning soldiers to their meals. In

these panels, the praetor is actually looking for volunteers for a patrol rather than offering food, so the trumpet call mirrors the expectations of the soldiers who rush to be first to respond.



Figure 60 Asterix and Cleopatra, p. 34

The original text of the above panel alludes to the statement of the French revolutionary leader H.G. Mirabeau in 1789: “Go tell your master that we are here by the will of the people, and that we shall retire only at the point of the bayonet” (Allez dire à votre maître que nous sommes ici par la volonté du peuple, et que nous n’en sortirons que par la force des baïonnettes)³. There is no strong indication that this is a literary allusion, but in the English translation Asterix gives a more defiant response whose rhyming sequence and note indicate that this is an allusion to a poem,

*We don't want to fight but by Jingo if we do...
 We've got the ships, we've got the men, and got the money too!
 We've fought the Bear before... and while we're Britons true,
 The Russians shall not have Constantinople...*

Macdermott's War Song by G. W. Hunt (1878), which inspired the term “jingoism”:

From the hindsight of the 21st century, it is arguable that the replacement of contemporary songs by more traditional ones is an improvement on the original. Almost 60 years after the publishing of the first book, many of the specific references to songs and personalities will be lost to younger readers. In contrast, major events and personalities such as World War I, Shakespeare, Napoleon Bonaparte and others remain in public consciousness. By linking songs to the events of the narrative, the English translators open Asterix up to a more general audience.

³ Dumont, Etienne (1832) Recollections of Mirabeau

Contemporary political commentary becomes more general social commentary, and becomes more accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds and times.

In many cases, the use of songs and wordplays intended to fit the facial expressions and reactions of the characters as well as the events of the narrative makes the translation a better fit than the original text. Particularly in this area, it is clear that the translators consider fidelity to the reader's response to be more important than the transfer of bare semantic meaning. In several examples, the translators make the reference to a real life song more explicit through notes or other means, which allows readers to find out more if they are unfamiliar with the reference. References to historical figures and events and the use of a genre used by similar persons in the modern era (such as the sea shanty or military songs) make the songs more credible within the context.

The Battle of Waterloo

In *Asterix in Belgium*, a final battle with Caesar's army is paralleled with Napoleon and the Battle of Waterloo. This is done visually, e.g. through a reference to the painting "Napoleon in the campaign in France" by Ernest Meissonier:



Figure 61 Asterix in Belgium, p. 39

However, an extended reference begins in the panel immediately preceding it:



Figure 62 Asterix chez les Belges, p. 39

This is the first line of the second movement of Victor Hugo's poem *v*, which is referenced in banderoles throughout the battle scene along with a reference to *La mission de Jeanne d'Arc: chronique en vers* by Jean George Ozaneaux (1835) and General Pierre Cambronne, who was wounded at the Battle of Waterloo. The quotation "La garde meurt et ne se rend pas!" is placed on a placard at the base of a statue of Cambronne in Nantes, in which his pose is similar to the panel. These references are often adjusted to suit the context, or for comedic effect:



Figure 63 Asterix chez les Belges, p. 41

The referenced lines are:

*Comprenant qu'ils allaient mourir dans cette fête,
Saluèrent leur dieu, debout dans la tempête.
Leur bouche, d'un seul cri, dit: vive l'empereur!*

This scene presents a particularly difficult problem for the translators, since the images and text closely allude to a specific cultural memory. However, the translators use a similar strategy by structuring the text around the poem *The Eve of Waterloo* by Lord Byron. In some cases a panel referencing *l'Expiation* is translated using additional wordplay and referencing a different element in the image (in this case, the sound of catapults rather than the retreat to the forest):

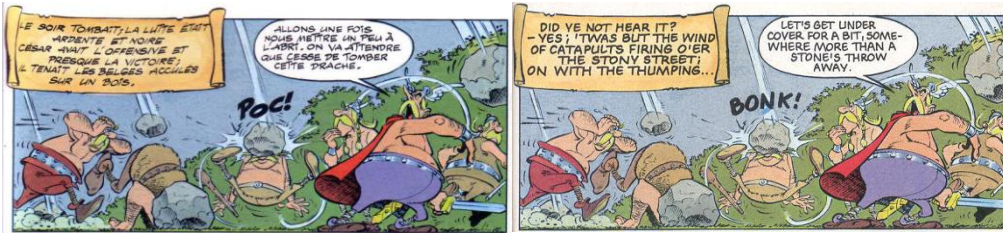


Figure 64 Asterix in Belgium, p. 39

The original text of The Eve of Waterloo refers to the sound of cannons firing and reads:

*Did ye not hear it? -- No; 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance!*

Lord Byron (1788-1824), *The Eve of Waterloo*

The title of the celebratory feast with the Belgians after the battle references The Eve of Waterloo, and links the theme of the battle, the country and the painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The absence of women in the adapted painting is an unfortunate omission, as both the poem and the original painting depict a wedding or wedding-like atmosphere with both men and women present:

***There was a sound of revelry by night,**
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men.*

Other literary references include as well as John Milton's poem *Chaos* ("Chaos umpire sits") and *Paradise Lost* ("ruin upon ruin, rout on rout, Confusion worse confounded") and Shakespeare's *Othello* ("Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone") and *Julius Caesar* ("But yesterday the word of Caesar might Have stood against the world."; "Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war"):



Figure 65 Asterix in Belgium, p. 41

Other quotes in this scene reference Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington: “Up guards and at ‘em” and “Publish and be damned.” This changes a panel containing a common retort in the series to one that is more related to the events of the scene:



Figure 66 Asterix in Belgium, p. 41

Artistic references

Some panels throughout the series pay homage to famous art, such as the *Raft of the Medusa* by the French painter Théodore Géricault (Spark, 2012). The original text alludes to the painting by using the word *médusé* [dumbfounded]. Bell and Hockridge add a wordplay and a note to facilitate readers who are unfamiliar with the original painting:



Figure 67 Asterix the Legionary, p. 31

Latin quotes

Latin quotes are common in the French text, but are often developed using wordplay in the English translation. Additional Latin quotes may be added or alternative quotes used. At times the translators use grammatical humour



Figure 68 Asterix the Gaul, p. 5

The French text references the expression ‘perdre son Latin’, roughly meaning to get overwhelmed. The English translation adds wordplay on grammar: accidence is the part of grammar that deals with the inflections of words, while “Vae victo vae victis!” means “Woe to the conquered one, woe to the conquered ones!” Victis is the plural declension of the singular victo. The word ‘decline’ also has an association with the book “The decline and fall of the Roman Empire”.

A similar strategy is used in Asterix and the Golden Sickle, while retaining the original Latin quote:



Figure 69 Asterix and the Golden Sickle, p. 38

In Asterix and the Big Fight, Felonius Caucus suggests that patrols should go into the forest to capture the druid and therefore neutralise Vitalstatistix before the fight. Cassius Ceramix is less convinced and responds using the initials of the Latin expression:



Figure 70 Asterix and the Big Fight, p. 15

Among the pirates, Pegleg (and occasionally Baba) uses Latin phrases in most scenes where he appears. While these can be relevant to the events, often In this panel, the French text links the three comments by referencing Brivates Portus [Brest]. The original Latin phrase “Non licet omnibus adire Corinthum” refers to the hedonistic lifestyle reported to exist there, and the cost of enjoying this lifestyle. Baba’s song is a reference to the Jacques Prévert song *Barbara* (1946): “Rappelle-toi Barbara/ Il pleuvait sans cesse sur Brest ce jour-là”. In the translation, the Latin phrase has been changed to allow a wordplay on “Sic! Ad nauseam!”, as well as to link the three comments. Redbeard’s comment makes another pun on Brest/breaststroke, while Baba’s song may be a variation on AC/DC’s *A Whiter Shade of Pale* (1967).

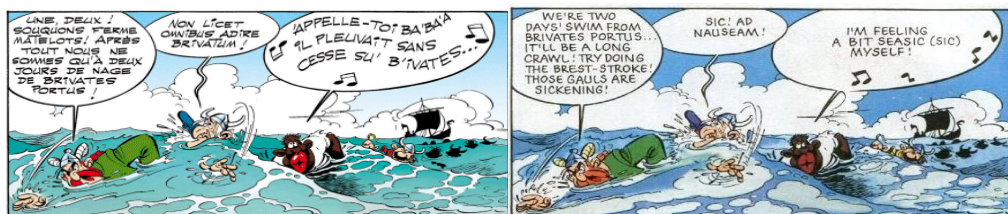


Figure 71 Asterix and Son, p. 42

Conclusion

While translation theorists at the time of Bell and Hockridge favoured a deference toward the original text, part of the reason for the enduring success of their translation was their willingness to make decisions that were in keeping with the intentions of the original writers. This required a thorough understanding of French and British culture, as well as the skills gained through study of English language, literature and history.

Word count: 15,053 words

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the text of this dissertation is substantially my own work.

Signature:

Date: 06 October 2017