



# MONASH University

## **Reading literature of the Vietnamese diaspora in translation: A 'transdiasporic' approach**

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## Abstract

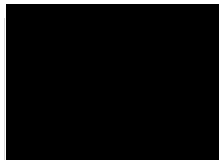
This thesis introduces “transdiasporic” analyses of translated literary texts. Transdiasporic readings draw on an interdisciplinary framework, including translation studies, world literature studies and diaspora studies, to counter the tendency among scholars and readers to homogenise the categories of “source culture” and “target culture”, and to read translations via a direct comparison of two “single” cultures. In contrast, by relating the source and target cultures to one another through a critical “triangulation” with a mutually-related third culture, transdiasporic analysis allows the reader to access the heterogeneous qualities that these source and target cultures have developed through their engagement with the networks around them. The circulation of diasporic literature provides a clear context for observing this engagement; when two diasporic “hosts” play the role of source and target culture in the translation of diasporic literature, the process is influenced by their mutual relationship to the diasporic “home”. By considering what their respective home-host relationships tell us about the source-target relationship, the reader can approach the translation as a product of that diaspora and as a distinctive representation of its network of relations.

A transdiasporic analysis may follow a two-step process. Drawing from the discipline of world literature studies, it may begin with close textual analysis to identify key sites at which there is “translational” interaction. It then pursues distant contextual research that interprets these sites within their network of cultural relations. In this thesis, I apply transdiasporic readings to three translated works of short fiction, written originally in the context of the post-1975 Vietnamese diaspora, by Linda Lê, Nam Le and Kim Thúy. Lê’s and Thúy’s texts have been translated into English from their original French, while Le’s text has been translated into French from its original English; these translations allow for an exploration of Vietnamese diasporic relations between the host cultures of France, the USA, Australia and Canada. The findings are used to outline a framework upon which further studies can build. While this framework focuses on diasporic literature, it also identifies how transdiasporic readings can be applied to translated literature outside diasporic contexts, and to the process of translating literary texts.

## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:



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Jessica Trevitt (Griffiths)

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## Introduction

Whenever we approach a work of translated literature, a range of factors determine the method we employ to read it. The everyday reader, for example, might read a translation for pleasure, perhaps even without any knowledge that the text has been translated. There are times when the “target” context of the book is the point of focus, such as when publishers commission translations of literary works that meet the needs of a target literary market. At other times, understanding the “source” culture is a primary objective, such as when scholars translate or read texts to gather information on source-culture traditions. However, we live in a world where concepts such as the singular nation, language, and culture are at odds with the increasing visibility of multilingual practices and the more fluid conception of identity that can accompany these practices (Yildiz 2012: 3); in this context, a conscientious reading of a literary translation should require an acknowledgement that neither its source nor its target culture can be considered a singular or isolated entity, independent of cultural fluidity. Yet, even in contexts such as academia, where readers are at their most critical, the idea persists that the translated text is the product of an unproblematic engagement of one language-culture with another, and can therefore be analysed through a simple source-target comparison. This limits the extent to which we can grasp translations for the unique literary products that they are. It is certainly possible to locate criticism of the source-target binary within translation studies, for example in discussions of self-translation (Cordingley 2013), translingual writing (Wilson 2011) and the translation of exophonic writing (Wright 2010); however, the practices of “transdiasporic” analysis that are introduced in this thesis extend this critique beyond the realm of particular forms of writing, offering a means of accessing the heterogeneity of source and target cultures within any given work of literary translation. To do this, transdiasporic analysis recognises that translations are always constructed through a series of negotiations within a complex network of cultures and heterogeneous global formations; as such, the source and target cultures of these texts must be understood via their relation to other cultures. I argue therefore that this form of analysis allows us to better understand a translation by interpreting it through a critical “triangulation” of its source and target cultures with mutually-related cultures in its global network.

Transdiasporic readings draw from the disciplines of translation studies, world literature studies and diaspora studies, and make significant contributions to each. The chief value of transdiasporic analysis to translation studies is its potential to critique the assumption that source and target cultures are clearly definable linguistic and (often) nationally-defined entities, between which inter-lingual translation occurs as a process of one-to-one transfer. In the context of world literature, transdiasporic analysis works with the idea that the cultural networks that shape a literary text are fluid and interlinked, and that this range of influences can be accessed by reading the translation through specific

interpretive strategies. In diaspora studies, the transdiasporic builds on the idea that an understanding of a “diasporic” network, or a network of people dispersed across multiple “host” cultures from a shared “home” culture, is not limited to recognising the relationship between the home and host cultures; rather, that it should recognise that a host culture is influenced by its relations with other host cultures within its network. Diasporic literature is often translated between dominant host languages; when these translations are pursued through conventional analysis, the hosts are treated as homogeneous source and target cultures, and the influence of the home culture in the process may be ignored. A transdiasporic analysis, however, recognises that the home culture to which both hosts are connected has an important influence on their identity and on how they contribute to the writing and translation of a text.

A transdiasporic reading proceeds in two stages. First, it begins with a textual analysis of the translation to identify key points at which there is “translational” interaction. This refers to any interaction between linguistic, cultural or national identities associated with the source host culture, target host culture and shared home culture; these can manifest, for example, in linguistic play in the language of the text, multilingual engagement within the world of the narrative, or thematic ideas pursued on various levels of the literary work. Having identified these points, the analysis then uses them to guide extra-textual research into the global network in which those interactions participate. This process gives insight into how the source and target language-cultures relate to one another in the context of that network and, as a result, in the process of translation. Ultimately, this research establishes a reading of the translated text that accounts for the broader relations of its source and target. These two steps can be understood as a) “close” textual reading followed by b) “distant” contextual reading. These terms are taken from world literature studies, where they roughly align with two contrasting approaches to engaging with the circulation of literary texts, the first championed by David Damrosch’s model of reading as outlined in *How to Read World Literature*, the second by Franco Moretti’s mapping of global literary movement as outlined in *Conjectures on World Literature*. While in the context of a transdiasporic analysis they do not indicate the same methodological processes as followed by Damrosch and Moretti, they retain their methodological contrast. Thus, they serve to mediate between two reading practices whose respective value has been acknowledged by Laurence Venuti in *Translation Changes Everything*, who observes that they essentially complement one another, one allowing insight into the historical relations between traditions and the other maintaining the text as a unit of analysis (199). By combining the idea of close and distant practices, a transdiasporic analysis therefore offers a unique means of accessing translated literary representation.



Transdiasporic analysis also demonstrates that translation is not an attempt at facsimile, but rather an extension of the complex dialogue that shapes literary text, and thus it proposes an argument for the singularity, or unique representational possibilities, of translated literature. While this is an idea that has circulated in translation studies for some time, it has been inhibited by the tendency to focus on the source and target cultures in isolation from other influences, but its evolution is a key background context for this thesis. On one hand, a transdiasporic reading acknowledges the importance of the relationship between source and target cultures, but it does not place the source culture in a dominant position. While the close reading of the translated text may take account of the source text, the relevant factors of the source-target relationship need not be established through systematic comparative analysis; rather, they are pursued through the distant contextual research that follows the initial identification of translational sites in the translation. This approach must be situated within a history of thought that even today is critical of any reading of a translation that does not reference its source text, and yet claims to be able to access the singular or independent nature of the translation. Ultimately, transdiasporic readings move beyond the comparison of target text with source text: instead it focuses on our understanding of what constitutes the source and target cultures, underscoring their heterogeneous nature and their mutual connection to broader world networks.

This thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapters one and two explore the discourses and methodologies that point to the development of transdiasporic analysis. Chapter one provides an historical overview of methods of reading translations, and a context in which transdiasporic readings can be situated as a new development; it then looks at how the concepts of transnationalism, diaspora and the translational are drawn from its interdisciplinary framework to structure this reading approach. Chapter two examines the global network of the Vietnamese diaspora, from which the thesis draws its textual case studies. It begins with a discussion of “global networks” as the term is understood in the discipline of world literature, and a discussion of “diaspora” as an element of these networks. It then considers the different contexts for literary circulation within the Vietnamese diaspora, and identifies key factors in its dominant host cultures, namely the United States, France, Australia and Canada. The Vietnamese diasporic network provides a stable context for demonstrating transdiasporic analysis, as it is based on a clear pattern of dispersal from a home culture to multiple host cultures, and there has been extensive literary and translational circulation between these host cultures. Moreover, it offers a range of case studies that represent different combinations of host culture contexts, allowing for an exploration of different types of transdiasporic relations.

The second chapter ends with an outline of the texts that will be drawn from this network as case studies. These are Linda Lê’s “Parlez-moi”, translated as “Speak to me”, Nam Le’s “Love and honour

and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice”, translated as “L’amour, l’honneur, la pitié, l’orgueil, la compassion, le sacrifice”, and Kim Thúy’s *Ru*, translated as *Ru*. Each is a work of short fiction written in the context of the post-1975 diaspora, and translated either into English from their original French or into French from their original English. Chapters three, four and five are each dedicated to exploring a case study, beginning with a discussion of the historical and cultural contexts of the relevant host cultures, before providing an overview of the text and finally a transdiasporic analysis with some initial findings. Chapter six draws on the combined findings to outline a framework upon which further studies can build. It then considers a range of extended applications for this framework; while the focus here is on applying transdiasporic readings to translations of diasporic literature, it also considers how it can be applied to translations of literature outside diasporic contexts, and to the process of literary translation itself.

## Chapter 1: The interdisciplinary framework of the transdiasporic approach

### 1.1 Engaging with methods of reading in translation

#### 1.1.1 Historical background

The historical development of attitudes toward translated texts has shown a slow evolution from the idea that a translation is subordinate to its source text, toward wide-ranging consideration of its singular or independent nature. According to Hermans' overview of translation practice as outlined in "Renaissance Translation between Literalism and Imitation", medieval approaches emphasise the translator as a figure who holds no personal view on the text they translate, but rather restricts themselves by necessity to the simple communication of the source text (98). Thus, the translator eschews the pursuit of a target-oriented style to produce a text that leaves unobstructed the word-for-word meaning of the source text. In other words, the translation is not considered independent of its source. Renaissance approaches, however, introduce the idea of translation as a gloss, which might explicitly present the translator's own understanding of the source text message (99-100). From here emerges the notion of "philological translation", which serves to underscore the authoritative status of the source text but which presents the translation as an important "stepping-stone back to the culturally superior" (104). In both cases, the translation is a text with a certain amount of independence, whether by virtue of the subjective understanding that it carries of another text, or by virtue of its singular capacity to bring one toward that other text. Romanticist approaches in Germany further develop the notion of a translation as an independent entity via a nationalist agenda, acknowledging that a translation is uniquely capable of enabling a culture to explore the strengths of other nations and thus enrich its own. As Martin notes, this allows for the understanding of a translation no longer as "derivative or subordinate, as slavish imitation or rough paraphrase... [but] a new creative force" (2).

Over the course of the twentieth century, the idea of translation as a creative force develops in multiple directions. For example, according to Benjamin's influential theory, first published in 1923, a translation is a "form" of text that represents the "afterlife" or "survival" of a source text, indicating its original "translatability" (Benjamin 2012: 76). Scholarship over the course of the twentieth century goes on to investigate systematically the ways in which the "form" of the translation can be considered different from or independent of its source text. From the 1950s, linguistic and so-called scientific approaches investigate linguistic or textual shifts between source and target texts. This leads to the establishment of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) in the 1970s, in which an important contribution is Toury's assertion that translations are "facts of one system only: the target system" ("A Rationale" 19); this is based on the acknowledgement that "it is the *target or recipient culture*... which serves as the *initiator* of the decision to translate" and the process is "conditioned by the goals it is designed to serve"

(18-19). It is also conditioned by the target culture “norms”, a social concept that refers to “regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type” (*Descriptive Translation Studies* 55). By drawing on the strategies used in the translation process and by relating them to the social norms and target context at which the translation is aimed, DTS allows the analyst “to comment on translations with the same terminology we use for commenting on literary texts” (Lambert 44). It thus allows for the possibility that we can not only recognise the translation as having an independent identity and purpose from its source, but we can analyse and critique it independently of its source text altogether. This is extended further through the cultural turn of the 1990s, an interdisciplinary consideration of translation that focuses on the extra-textual factors of translational production. As Bassnett puts it, the interest in translated texts from other disciplinary perspectives, particularly postcolonial and world literature studies, allows for the development of new approaches to reading and critiquing them (*Translation Studies* 12). For example, scholars of world literature including Damrosch (*How to Read*) and Hrach have proposed that a comparative reading of multiple translations of the same source text can serve as an alternative to source-target comparison. On a more academic level, others including Venuti have proposed non-comparative readings in which unique aspects of the translation are identified through a theoretical framework and discussion of the various social and cultural elements involved. This brings us to contemporary discussions and debates that focus on the respective merits of different methods of reading and analysing translated texts.

### 1.1.2 Comparative and non-comparative methods

Tensions between comparative and non-comparative approaches to reading translations have, to some extent, been acknowledged and explored. For example, Koster presents a systematic model to approaching the translated text which is premised on the idea that it is “a representation of another text and *at the same time* a text in its own right” (26, emphasis in original). He claims that in approaching the text, “one has to choose whether the initial focus is on the status of a translation as an independent text or on the status as a derivative text”. This model is reminiscent of Christiane Nord’s distinction between “documentary” and “instrumental” translation, whereby a documentary translation, like Koster’s “derivative” text, is “explicitly marked...as transferred from another culture”, and an instrumental translation, like Koster’s “independent” text, is not marked so that it “will thus be interpreted as [a] target-culture [text] by the receivers” (1997: 49). Nord’s model is intended to help guide the translator in their decision-making (1997: 49), serving to *produce* translations that appear objectively as either one type or the other; Koster’s model, on the other hand, gives a reader the power to *choose* how they approach an existing translation. Koster implies that if a reader chooses to treat a translation as an

independent text, they are aware that they are reading it *as if* it were an original, and thus they must discard any knowledge of how its connection to a source creates a textuality that is inherently different to that of non-translated texts. However, Koster states that “the textual presence of the translator...is not a textual property in itself (a style, an actantial role, etc.), but an effect of the decision to compare” (33), and thus he disregards the possibility of reading a translation using a non-comparative method, and instead pursues a model that is clearly premised on source-target comparison. This form of comparison has generally been utilised in pedagogical and academic contexts where both source and target languages are accessible. It can allow one to better understand the perspective put forward by the translator (for example see Alvstad 2007), or to understand how a translated work within a scholarly context might represent the original author’s ideas in a specific way (Wright 98-9).

Wright’s *Literary Translation* addresses the tension between comparative and non-comparative methods; in fact, one third of her book is devoted to “how we read translations”, a testament to the prominence of this question in contemporary discourse. She lists three types of translation reader: “book reviewers ... students and scholars and ... ‘everyday’ readers”, highlighting the fact that translations can be read “for critique, for study and for pleasure” (83). She asserts that the motivation for the student or scholar when reading a translation is to seek “information or ...evidence that supports a particular argument or bolsters a theory [about the literary work]”, and she views translated textuality as a “complicated beast” that makes “constructing an argument ... less straightforward” than when a text in its original language is being used (98). One criterion that scholars must fulfil to access and utilise the value of this textuality is that they “are sufficiently familiar with the source text to know that [the changes which have come about through the translation process] belong to the translation alone” (100); in other words, scholars cannot utilise a translated text in all confidence as part of their research unless they have compared it with its source text. Given Wright accepts, elsewhere in her book, the viability of reading translations as independent works of literature (85), her insistence on using the source text for scholarly purposes wherever possible suggests there is a distinction to be made between *different* academic motivations for reading translations: for Wright, scholars are primarily using translations to gather information, and thus must be sure they understand how the representation of that information has been affected by the translation process. In this context, a comparison with the source text is necessary to ensure a certain level of empirical knowledge. However, a scholar may use a translation for another reason, namely to perform an analysis of a text that is intended to highlight how its nature as a translation makes possible certain readings of it that cannot be reached in its non-translated form.

This alternative academic motivation can be found in some methods of reading translations that are used in world literature studies. While the traditional discipline of comparative literature prioritises

the scholar's access to the source text, from the study of world literature that emerged in American academia in the 1990s (D'haen et al. *World Literature Reader* 176) came the idea that translations can be interpreted in a reliable and critical manner without directly consulting their source (Damrosch *What is World Literature?* 6-7). As Spivak has said, this challenged "the best of the old Comparative Literature: the skill of reading closely in the original" (*Death of a Discipline* 6), and yet she argues it was necessary in a context where distinct linguistic and national areas were becoming increasingly less distinct, and where "dwindling resources" in the discipline meant that specialised study in the literatures of languages and cultures was becoming harder to maintain (6). One method of reading translations put forward by world literature studies was Damrosch's model, based on a comparison of two alternative translations as a means of illuminating aspects of their source (Damrosch 2017: 89). As Hrach (2013) explains:

Reading multiple English translations ("triangulation," as Damrosch calls this method ... ) allows us to study a text from various vantage points, each perspective illuminating some aspect of the text's original features — or some sense of what Anton Popovič (1976) has called the "invariant core." (Hrach 455)

If reading multiple translations gives us access to elements of the "invariant core" of the source, we might say that this reading is being performed *as an end in itself*. However, it still assumes that the translation is always linked to its source, rather than it being a singular literary text. We can move one step further with Venuti's method, put forward in *Translation Changes Everything*. His hermeneutic model of translation analysis views the translated text as an "interpretative act" (Venuti 4). He contends that any reading of a translation must be considered an individual interpretation of its source text, and he applies certain interpretants during the process of reading to "disclose the interpretation [of the source] inscribed by translation" (230). While Damrosch's model enables the reader to access a source text they cannot read directly, Venuti's enables access to new ways of thinking about that source text, regardless of whether it can be read directly or not, and thus he pursues the idea that a translation represents a "transformation" of it (228). Venuti goes on to say that no single understanding of that translation and its interpretation should necessarily be the right translation, valorised above the rest, but rather, by reading a translation *as* an interpretation of a source, we are approaching it simultaneously as a translation *and* as a text in its own right. Thus, while Koster recognises this duality in the translated text, it is Venuti who is able to reconcile that duality within a method of analysis. Moreover, Venuti enacts a subtle shift from reading the translation to understand the source, as in Damrosch's approach, to reading a translation *in relation* to its source to understand the translation as a text in itself.

Pym, however, in his “Spirited Defense of a certain empiricism in Translation Studies”, takes issue with Venuti’s point that his translation analyses are not meant to be judged, tested and valorised; for Pym, we *can* and in fact we *must* apply empirical methods of testing to hermeneutic readings to determine which are more valid than others. Otherwise, this method remains nothing more than a means of producing personal reactions to texts, as opposed to producing readings that are methodologically repeatable and thus represent some objective form of knowledge. At this point in time Pym’s argument remains a call to action and an unresolved issue, interestingly one that is reflected in other disciplinary areas. In the field of narratology, for example, scholars responding to non-comparative methods of reading translations (Hermans “Positioning Translators”; Alvstad “The Translation Pact”) fall back on the idea that the insight they produce cannot necessarily be supported with empirical evidence. Overall, the current discourse suggests that we either analyse translations comparatively to understand how they are different to their source texts, or we analyse them non-comparatively to understand the unique perspective they represent as literary texts; the former represents a more empirical method, but in the end, both approaches can produce an understanding of the independent nature of the translated text.

### 1.1.3 Moving towards transdiasporic analysis

The preceding overview of methods of reading translations illustrates that there has been some support for their analysis as texts independent of their sources. However, each method considered seems to identify a source and target context for the translation in question without critiquing the extent to which these contexts are assumed to be static and homogeneous. This may be the result of the ongoing focus on the question of whether we compare source and target texts; by moving beyond this question, transdiasporic readings instead rely on understanding how the source and target texts relate to one another via a third, mutually-related entity. This allows for the analysis of translated literature through a more complex understanding of the global influences that have constructed it.

Turning again to the discipline of world literature studies, we can draw on approaches to reading non-translated literary texts that underscore a similar understanding of complex global influences. For example, Moretti’s analysis of the novel makes use of a tripartite model that recognises novelistic style as a combination of “foreign form, local material and local form” (“Conjectures on World Literature”); in this model, Moretti acknowledges that the text is not composed out of homogeneous cultural elements, constituted as a singular “source” language or culture. Extending this idea, we can argue that as a consequence, when a literary work is translated, the traces of this “foreign form” act as a pivot to pull the translation into its own engagement with them. The translation therefore not only

reflects a relationship between the source and target, but it also reflects the relationship that both source and target have with this third culture or language, which may then be made the focus of analysis. In this context, the translated text simultaneously reconfigures the source text's relationship with this third culture while at the same time establishing its own.

To understand this series of relationships, it is necessary to identify first the representation of each of these cultures in the text, and then to stand back from the text and account for the complex historical forces that structure their network. This requires a combination of close and distant reading practices. The first practice is exemplified in Damrosch's approach to world literature, put forward in his *What is World Literature?* which locates the traces of a text's global and transcultural progress in the deepest recesses of its language; the second is exemplified in Moretti's approach, put forward in his "Conjectures", which draws on large bodies of historical and social data to trace global literary flows. The exact methods employed by these scholars need not be retained for a mediation between their two reading practices to form a unique method in itself. In fact, by pursuing a *type* of close reading followed by a *type* of distant reading, we respond to Venuti's observation that while the latter "is essential to understanding world literature as an intricate, historically developing ensemble of cross-cultural relations among major and minor traditions", it can also run the risk of "allowing the text to disappear as a unit of analysis", meaning we might miss the connection between "the small features and the large structure" of a text (199).

## 1.2 Engaging with theoretical concepts

The transdiasporic approach builds on these ideas about methods of reading by drawing from an interdisciplinary framework of translation studies, world literature and diaspora studies. Three key concepts discussed in these areas are instrumental to the approach. First is the concept of transnationalism, through which we can critique the homogeneity of source and target cultures, and its relevance to translation analysis. Second is the concept of diaspora, using which we can model a triangulation between home cultures and multiple host cultures that can be applied to the networks producing translations. Third is the concept of the translational, through which we can develop a system for identifying transcultural interactions, or unique sites of source-target engagement in translated texts.

### 1.2.1 Transnationalism

The critique in this thesis of the homogeneity of source and target cultures draws primarily on an intersection between theories of translation and transnationalism. The study of transnationalism



requires the scholar to question the understanding of groups of people, particularly as they relate to the concept of a nation, as homogeneous entities. According to Vertovec, transnationalism is the study of the “economic, social and political linkages between people, places and institutions crossing nation-state borders and spanning the world” (1). His overview of the field, however, identifies multiple premises that indicate the need to question the proposition that there can be any static form of distinction between people, places and institutions based on nation-state borderlines. For example, his premise of “type of consciousness” acknowledges an individual “awareness of decentered attachments” to different places around the globe (6); this highlights how a given group of people collected within a national space will constitute heterogeneous perspectives on connections between that nation and other sites. Meanwhile, his premise of a “model of cultural reproduction” acknowledges a “fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices” in that national space, which are “often described in terms of syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation and hybridity” (7); this highlights how a given group of people collected within a national space will constitute heterogeneous practices of thought and creativity. When we consider the intersection between translation and transnationalism, these perspectives that highlight heterogeneity in the nation state can be related to the need to highlight heterogeneity in the nations, languages and cultures between which texts are translated.

Bhabha’s notion of cultural translation, as outlined in *The Location of Culture*, is another area of transnationalism in which the homogeneity of the nation state has been critiqued. For Bhabha, cultural translation enables a perspective on national borderlines that unhinges them from a static position, insisting on interpenetration and fluidity, and thus critiquing the idea that nations, languages and cultural identities are distinct and separated by fixed borders. As Bhabha explains:

the transnational dimension of cultural transformation – migration, diaspora, displacement, transformation – makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural (ized), unifying discourse of “nation”, “peoples”, or authentic “folk” tradition, those embedded myths of culture’s particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. (247)

If Bhabha’s concept of cultural translation, a broad analogical use of the translation process to describe global movement, is applied to the more specific process of literary translation, it suggests that the various premises on which that process is based, whether they are languages, nations or cultural identities, cannot be taken as natural, but must be understood as the result of complex constructions over time that inevitably produce heterogeneity.

However, the notion of heterogeneity in the study of transnationalism is countered by a process at the heart of which is the concept of homogeneity: this is globalisation, or “the intensification of worldwide social relations [that] link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 64). Michael Cronin cites perceptual, institutional and economic factors behind our unique contemporary experience of globalisation. The perceptual factors he discusses date back to the 1968 Apollo 11 mission when the first human took a photo of the earth as a planet in space (Cronin 491). This photo caused a shift in our visual experience of our home: from that year, it could be perceived as a global unity rather than a collection of bordered national entities whose political differences had caused significant challenges over the preceding fifty years. Institutional factors refer to the resulting growth in international organisations and non-governmental organisations dealing with issues such as global health, natural disaster and poverty (491); in other words, they demonstrate the development of transnational cooperation on a scale never before experienced. Finally, the economic factors refer to the growing capacity for a business “to operate at a global level in real time” (492), enabling new kinds of transnational communication and exchange. Combined, these perceptual, institutional and economic factors make globalisation in the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century a unique phenomenon.

The tension between the contemporary experience of transnationalism and the contemporary experience of globalisation therefore produces a sort of balance, manifesting on the one hand a homogenising process that produces a unified vision of the world, and on the other hand increased transnational relations which lead to more heterogeneous experiences to counter that unification. It is this tension that we pick up on when construct transdiasporic readings of translations. As the example of the Apollo 11 mission demonstrates, moving into a new position where one can look back at where one has come from naturally produces a different perspective on that place and in turn a different sense of one’s identity in relation to it. If translation is a movement from a source culture to a target culture, or a process of making decisions about how the former is represented in the context of the latter, the former must be perceived from the standpoint of the latter. As in the experience of globalisation, this has the effect of homogenising the source culture or point of origin, hence why the concepts of source and target culture can so easily be homogenised in approaches to reading translated texts. By introducing transdiasporic readings, which counter this with a heterogeneous understanding of the source and the target, we reproduce the same tension and therefore the same balance that is represented in the experience of transnationalism.

### 1.2.2 Diaspora and memory

Alongside transnationalism, the concept of diaspora is another manifestation of global movement that counters the homogenising tendencies of globalisation. An important distinction between diaspora and transnationalism rests in the need for a diaspora to identify with a homeland (Brettell 329). This characteristic can be traced to the roots of the concept in the Greek word *diasperien*, consisting of *dia* (across) and *sperien* (to sow), roughly meaning a scattering of seeds; that is, as a movement from one position to many, it underscores the importance of the home position from which the scattering begins. This motion also implies a form of triangulation in which the many positions can relate directly to each other, as well as back to the one position they each have in common. As such, it excludes the possibility of a one-to-one binary relationship and insists on a world view that privileges heterogeneous entities constructed through ongoing processes of dispersal. By applying this form of triangulation to our understanding of translated literature, we can pursue an approach to accessing the heterogeneity of source and target contexts.<sup>1</sup>

Despite its clear etymological roots, the definition of diaspora has been debated since the emergence of diaspora studies as a field of contemporary cultural theory in the early 1990s. Scholars have noted a tendency to use the concept “as a catch-all phrase to speak of and for all movements, however privileged, and for all dislocations, even symbolic ones” (Brubaker 3). This approach focuses on the etymological significance of dispersion and applies it metaphorically as an indication of a shared identity, leading to the application of diaspora to any community understood to have been dispersed, from linguistic and religious communities to communities of a given sexuality or political leaning (3). Countering this tendency, some scholars have noted that “the proliferation of meanings ascribed to diaspora has masked important distinctions among groups and kinds of dispersion” (Banerjee 2), and to revisit these distinctions we need to maintain “historical referents” and a “relationship to material realities” (9).

One important step in this process of revisiting is acknowledging and exploring the differences between communities of the same diaspora who are settled in different host contexts. Clifford referred to this as a focus on the “decentered, lateral connections” of a diaspora (2), and Butler expanded on the idea by moving beyond the notion of diaspora as the dispersion of a particular ethnicity to consider it instead as “a framework for the study of a specific process of community formation” (194). This process,

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<sup>1</sup> The term diaspora was first used in the Greek translation of the Bible in Alexandria in the third century BCE, in reference to the Jews exiled from their homeland in Palestine to avoid persecution. Within this usage, we can see a certain contestation between the positive connotations of fertility and new life, and the negative connotations of a people escaping persecution, a binary tension that is still present to some extent in the contested nature of contemporary definitions (for example see Dorais “Defining the overseas Vietnamese” 4-7).

according to Butler, has five dimensions, including the dispersed group's relationship with its various host contexts and the interrelationships between different communities of that group. She claims there is "a need to examine host-host relationships comparatively, to determine any potential patterns, both within and between diasporas, as part of the effort toward developing diaspora theory" (206-7). However, to map these patterns we need to consider the diaspora's "internal dynamics in conjunction with spatiality" (208), drawing on tools and techniques from outside perspectives to do so. She draws on geographical and historical perspectives, which lead her to question whether "different types of diasporas result depending on the extent to which global powers are involved" (211).

While the links between diaspora and translation studies have been explored to some extent, the influence of global power relations can be addressed in further detail. The axis where translation processes occur between major and minor literary cultures has been a key focus of translation studies since the cultural turn, when the influence of postcolonial, feminist and cultural studies highlighted the importance of power relations in understanding translation decisions. Similarly, the axis where diasporic processes occur between major and minor cultures has been a key focus of diaspora studies. Where the latter has seen some interest directed toward the lateral relations between host cultures, that is between the entities toward which dispersed communities travel, there has been similar interest in centre-to-centre translations, for example between English and French, for the insight they provide into major world literary trajectories. However, the more explicit nature of the triangulated form in a diasporic process means that the influence of the home culture in the lateral relations between host cultures has been strongly present in diaspora studies, while the potential influence of a similar kind of mutually-related culture on centre-to-centre translations has not been so readily acknowledged in translation studies.

The triangulated aspect of the transdiasporic addresses this gap between the two fields, applying the framework of diaspora studies to our understanding of translation to address the extent to which the "periphery" is present in centre-to-centre translations, and how its presence might be used to better understand the texts these translations produce. One genre of literature in which we can easily see this approach offering value is the case of diasporic or migrant literature. It is important to note first that there is significant terminological overlap between the concepts of diasporic and migrant literature, however the former is chosen here based on its awareness of participating in a dispersed transnational network. Azade Seyhan refers to diasporic literature as an act of "restorative work" following social rupture, meaning it is "intimately connected to cultural memory" because it "articulates a real or imagined past of a community in all its symbolic transformations" (15-16). Seyhan also stresses its nature as an "intersection between personal recollection and historical account", often taking the form

of “biographies, autobiographies...autobiographical fictions, testimonies, and memoirs” (17). While migrant literature also takes these forms, diasporic literature lends itself to considering in more detail the complex interrelations between personal, communal and transnational memory, or in other words, the similarities and differences between migrant experiences across the various host cultures of a given diaspora. The importance of memory in diasporic literature is highlighted further when we note that such texts need not be those created during the period of time that a diaspora is developing. Rather, they can include those that later explore the experience of this period, both directly through personal memory, or indirectly through experiences on which it later had an influence.

When diasporic literature circulates in translation between different host cultures, its translation becomes a site at which we can explore these similarities and differences. While there has been some recognition of a need to address the translation of diasporic literature (Xiaoying), the area has not been studied at length. However, the conceptual overlap between diasporic, migrant and postcolonial literatures has led to some discussion of diasporic literature as already enacting a form of translation (Federici and Leonardi 148), and as such we can also draw on the slightly larger body of work around translational forms of literature in translation (Delabastita and Grutman; Grutman). The notion of translational literature is linked more directly to diasporic literature through Nathalie Nguyen’s description of memory as a “continuous process of ‘retranslation’” in itself (*Memory is Another Country* 6); in other words, if diasporic literature explores memory it can also be seen to explore retranslation, a process that is then translated again when represented in a target text. The conceptualisation of memory in terms of translation can be extended further when we consider scholarly reflection on the unreliable nature of memory. Catherine Kohler Riessman for example discusses how “stories must always be considered in context, for storytelling occurs at a historical moment with its circulating discourses and power relations” (8); the same need for historical contextualisation can be said of the act of translation. David Gross claims that in a memory there is “as much material from the present that is projected backward as there is material that comes authentically and indisputably from the past itself” (3), a parallel to a translation’s presentation of elements of both its target and source contexts; he also claims that “memory permits an individual not simply to visit again these futures that did not happen, but actively take them up once more if one so chooses” (14), just as an interventionist translation might enable a source text to venture into new directions. Interestingly, these perspectives on the nature of memory focus not on the challenges of enacting the process, but on the insights offered by what is produced. This contrasts with much of the literature on translating translational texts, which tends to consider how one deals with the challenges of that translation *process*, falling short of considering the translational text in translation as a *product* that might offer new perspectives and means of

understanding. Instead, we could say that when a work of diasporic literature is translated into the language of another host culture, the translational memories instilled in its narrative will be retranslated in the framework of that other host culture's memories, creating a unique representation of that diaspora's collective memory.

Another way of conceptualising this unique representation is to draw on the concept of "furthering". Introduced to translation studies by Sherry Simon in her study of multilingual cities, "furthering" refers to the innovative potential of literary practices that are enacted by "translational cultures" (2013: 17). She explains that when living in a shared metropolitan space, different language communities can respond to each other by "distancing" or by "furthering". "Distancing" describes a community's drive to "aggressively cultivate their distinctiveness", and literary translation can support this by "[deepening] a sense of otherness, reifying the categories of knowledge production" (13). "Furthering", on the other hand, describes a community's drive to "[work] against indifference, distancing and memorialization", and literary translation can support this by "broadening [the] horizons", contributing to innovation and revival (16-17). Simon adds that original writing, as opposed to translating, can also support furthering when it resists conventional forms of exchange, and she identifies diasporic communities as a "translational culture" that can produce of this type of writing (17). If diasporic literature is thus *already* a translational practice, looking at diasporic literature in translation not only means looking at the translational in translation, but it means looking at literature that "furthers", or innovates, a language community's engagement in a shared space through a text that already has furthering potential; it therefore creates a unique representation of the interactions experienced by that community. If we approach this literature via a transdiasporic analysis, that is, via a triangulation of its source and target cultures with a mutually-related third culture, its representation can provide insight into the diasporic network as a whole. Thus, we arrive at a point where diaspora studies, having offered translation studies a new model of translation analysis, can now find in translated texts a new space for exploration and study.

A unique factor in such translated texts from the point of view of diaspora studies is the potential they offer for understanding sites of "multidirectional memory". This concept "posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites" (Rothberg *Multidirectional Memory* 11). It is of relevance to diasporic contexts in translation as it "is meant to draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance" (11). That is, in a diasporic text translated into another host context, there will be diverse "spatial, temporal and cultural sites" invoked from the collective memory of the

different diasporic communities and their surrounding host cultures. These memories will tend to compete with each other in a zero-sum struggle to identify the dominant host culture; this struggle is highlighted in a translation because the target culture is at once constrained by the source culture it is translating and invested with the power to rewrite that source culture's text. To illustrate such a struggle, we can note that there is a tendency for systems of diasporic literature to develop in dominating languages, for example, in the global languages of English and French. The fact that these dominating languages are among the most often translated,<sup>2</sup> with significant numbers of texts translated between themselves (Sapiro "Globalization and cultural diversity"; Sapiro "Translation and Symbolic Capital"), means that there are considerable numbers of Anglophone diasporic texts translated into French, and vice versa. In the case of these translations, *both* source and target languages have their own tradition of diasporic literature in relation to various home cultures, and the memories of these traditions will be working against each other through the translated representation. Again, if approached via a transdiasporic analysis, these texts will reveal confrontations between the Anglophone and Francophone host cultures of a diaspora, and rather than reconciling these confrontations to produce a coherent textual reading, we can analyse the translation as a unique multidirectional manifestation of diasporic memory.

### 1.2.3 The translational in translation

It has already been acknowledged that diasporic literature in translation can be understood as translational literature in translation, and that we can access the unique perspective of these texts by exploring the confrontation of their different diasporic traditions of memory. However, it is no straightforward matter to identify these confrontations in a way that accounts for the triangulated relationships involved. It is important, for example, to be able to differentiate between the host culture present in the narrative of the text, in the implied source representation of that narrative, and in the translated representation of that narrative, as well as the different ways in which they can each interact with and comment on relations with the home culture. We can construct a method for identifying these confrontations, or intersections, by applying a more specific understanding of the concept of the translational.

Discussion over the notion of the translational in literature reveals two significant trends: one is the view that it can be found in a distinct body of literature, and the other is the view that it can be

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<sup>2</sup> According to the bibliographic records of UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, which lists English and French as the top two source languages across all text types (with 1,265,366 and 225,805 texts respectively), and the two top source languages for literary texts (with 661,989 and 109,459 texts respectively) ("Index Translationum").

found in a much wider, perhaps unlimited body of literature. In the first case, the body of literature will feature particular narrative, structural or linguistic elements that foreground processes of language transfer; these might include fictional representations of translation processes and fictional translators, as well as the use of multiple languages, whether explicitly or implicitly, given interaction between languages inherently represents translational processes (Sternberg; Delabastita and Grutman; Hassan; Wilson "Cultural Mediation"; Meylaerts and D'Hulst; Simon). In the second case, the body of literature is one that explores patterns of engagement and movement, often transnational, transcultural and/or migrational in nature, regardless of any references to language or translation processes. These patterns and their contexts can then be metaphorised as or applied to our understanding of how languages interact and how translation processes work (Kaindl and Spitzl; Polezzi; Gentzler).

From this summary, we can deduce two broad means of identifying the translational in literature. The first is as a "representation of the translation process", and the second is as an "exploration of patterns of movement and engagement". However, we need to acknowledge that both kinds of translational literature will manifest differently when they in turn are translated (Sternberg; Meylaerts; Grutman). For example, when the first kind is translated, we will find it produces an increased range of the multilingual and of translation processes. Integral to understanding this is Sternberg's approach to multilingual representation in literary texts, which differentiates between the referenced object and the referential medium (1981: 223-4); that is, he considers independently the language spoken by a character within the narrative, and the language used to represent that speech by the narrator. The relationship between these two elements can be manifested by the text using different "representational strategies", each of which "manages in its own way to eliminate the complications of imitating foreign ("heterolingual") speech" (224). One of these strategies is "referential restriction", where the medium restricts

"the scope of the represented world to the limits of a single, linguistically uniform community whose speech-patterns correspond to those of the implied audience" (223).

Another strategy is "vehicular matching", where the medium

"accepts [linguistic diversity or conflict] as a matter of course, as a fact of life and a factor of communication, and sometimes even deliberately seeks them out - suiting the variations in the representational medium to the variations in the represented object" (223).

While the former maintains the referential medium so that it matches that of the reader regardless of its referenced object, the latter changes the referential medium to match its referenced object regardless of its reader. When a text is translated, the decision to employ one strategy or the other must be made all over again, because the target text could variously match either its reader or its referenced object; in addition, it could sometimes choose neither, matching instead the source language medium.



In other words, a multilingual text in translation will produce a greater number of translational sites because we can identify referential restriction and vehicular matching between the referenced object, the referential medium of the source text and the referential medium of the target text.

There is just as much potential for identifying translational sites when dealing with the second type of translational text, where the translational manifests as a broader process of movement and engagement. We can draw here on Derrida's notion of 'différance' which states that "every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to other concepts by means of the systematic play of differences" (11). Thus if a sign is translated, the chain of signification that it had created is broken and re-built, inherently shifting its range of meaning. In other words, where cultural concepts in a source text construct a chain of meaning based on the fact that they represent a translational form of movement, in the translated text they will construct an inherently different chain, justifying an independent analysis of their meaning. However, as in the case of multilingualism in translation, these new chains of meaning do not necessarily erase the visibility of the old chains, but can in fact add to them, or frame them in a new light. Thus, a broadly translational text in translation will also produce more translational sites, because we can identify in it processes of movement and engagement taking place between those cultural elements present in the narrative itself, and between those elements and others introduced through the new translated context. Regardless of whether the translational is taken to refer to explicit multilingual practices or to broader processes of movement, as a concept it can help direct our analysis of translations toward those points of intersection that we need to identify for a transdiasporic analysis.

### 1.3 Outline of method

Drawing on the above discussion of reading methods and theoretical concepts, a detailed explanation of transdiasporic analysis can now be presented. The first step is a close reading of the translation that involves identifying translational sites that are built on the interaction between the source and target host cultures and the mutual home culture. The second step involves a distant reading of the cultural network in which these interactions participate, to submit them to an exploration of the relations they highlight between the source and target cultures. This produces an understanding of the source and target relations of the text, but rather than assuming homogenised understandings of each, it enforces a heterogeneous understanding of them that relates them to a broader cultural network.

It should be noted that in the process of applying transdiasporic analysis, the identification of the "source host culture", "target host culture" and "mutual home culture" necessitates the presumption of a certain level of homogeneity in order to clarify their points of comparison. This

homogeneity is “imagined”, in the sense employed by Benjamin Anderson in his critique of the concept of the “nation”:

“[The nation] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion ... regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail ...” (2006: 6-7).

In other words, the cultural entities referred to in a transdiasporic analysis constitute homogeneous entities only inasmuch as they have been constructed by the tendency to imagine ourselves within a community of shared and equal experiences. Moreover, even as imagined entities they are difficult to delineate because a cultural identity, as Stuart Hall observes, is constantly producing and reproducing itself according to the “positioning” of any given individual within it (1990: 222). Thus, to produce a transdiasporic analysis that maps onto reality, the points of comparison that cultural entities help us to identify must be contextualised within an understanding of social, cultural and linguistic nuances. In practice, this means that when a translational site is identified between a source or target culture and the diasporic home culture, it should be explored at length in light of relevant nuances, and this exploration should then guide the extra-textual research so that it can produce a complex map of the surrounding network and a more thorough understanding of the source-target relations.

### 1.3.1 Close reading: identifying translational sites

In the first step it is important to identify translational sites in the text as systematically as possible. Doing so draws on the concept of the translational in literature, and in particular on Sternberg’s concepts of referential restriction and vehicular matching. Before looking at some concrete examples of this process, the role played by the translator should be acknowledged. The translator’s decision to make a second language explicit through vehicular matching, for example, might be one of mimetic value, simply ensuring that what was rendered foreign in the source text is rendered foreign in the target text; alternatively, it might be one of equivalent effect, where the presence of the foreign constructs an idea for the target reader that is analogous to an idea constructed by other means in the source. Similarly, the ways in which patterns of engagement and movement are broken down and reconstructed in translation will be mediated by the translator’s choice of words or expressions, tending as they might toward certain associations, more so than toward others. The sociological turn in translation studies (Wolf) and the recent surge in what Andrew Chesterman has labelled “translator studies” (323) demands that one acknowledges the translator’s habitus as one of many factors involved in the network that creates a single translation. However, a transdiasporic analysis diverges from this priority by drawing its understanding of translational sites from the text alone, rather than from a

sociological study of the translator's decisions; as such it likens the translatorial habitus to authorial intent in the sense that it is not considered central to delimiting the possible range of textual interpretation.

To demonstrate how translational sites might be identified, both in terms of explicitly multilingual 'representations of the translation process' and of broader 'patterns of movement and engagement', brief excerpts will be drawn from the translated work of two authors, the first Hispanic-Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges translated into English, and the second Anglo-Australian-Canadian writer Janette Turner Hospital translated into French. Borges' fiction has been discussed at length for its exploration of the concept of translation (Kristal; Waisman), and so his work provides a strong example of explicit translational representations in the form of multilingualism. Hospital, on the other hand, while receiving some attention as an Australian writer (West-Pavlov; Samuels) and a Canadian writer (Cameron), has rarely been considered as one who engages with the concept of translation (for an exception, see Trevitt "Fluid Borders" and Trevitt "Of Frames and Wonders"), and so her work provides a strong example of broader translational representations in the form of movement and engagement.

Borges' short story "Pierre Menard" has been dubbed his "most important text on the topic of translation" (Waisman 85). It is narrated by an admirer of the fictional translator Menard, who translated excerpts of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* by rewriting it word-for-word in the same language. The story underscores the fact that although Menard may simply be appearing to *transcribe* Cervantes' work, he is doing so in a new century and for a new cultural context, and thus it demonstrates how he is still effectively translating it, because the words, phrases, images etc. will be received by their readers in new ways. This asks us to consider the extent to which translation, writing and reading are all one and the same process. For examples of its representation of the translation process via multilingualism, consider the following passage from the English translation:

"The *Quixote*", explains Menard, "deeply interests me, but does not seem to me – *comment dirai-je?* – inevitable. I cannot imagine the universe without Poe's ejaculation "Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted!" or the *Bateau ivre* or the *Ancient Mariner*, but I know myself able to imagine it without the *Quixote*. (92)

Menard's native tongue is French, a fact that the reader is reminded of throughout the story by references to his hometown of Nîmes, and to the French authors he admires. The fact that his speech is, for the most part, quoted in English indicates that referential restriction is being employed as an overall strategy. However, knowing also that the source text was written in Spanish, this restriction is double-layered, having been restricted first to the Spanish of the source and then to the English of the target. Thus in translation, if an overall strategy of referential restriction is maintained, the representation of the translation process that it implies between the narrative world and its textual representation is

extended or re-translated. However, the technique is not entirely maintained in this translation: there is one phrase for which vehicular matching with the French is used, in the phrase “*comment dirai-je?*” In the English translation this serves to remind the reader that the character of Menard is a native French speaker, and as a basic discourse marker whose meaning is not integral to the text, it is a phrase that may be rendered in French for nothing more than this reminder. Interestingly, however, the original Spanish text does not use vehicular matching with this phrase, but rather continues its referential restriction in Spanish without interruption: *¿cómo lo diré?* Thus we see that when the translation process shifts from referential restriction to vehicular matching, rather than doubling an implied representation of the translation process, it can insert a new and more explicit representation.

The references to literary works in English and French provide further possibilities. The *Bateau ivre*, for example, referring to a poem written in French by Rimbaud, is an example of vehicular matching with French that is also employed in the Spanish source text. In both cases, it contrasts with the text’s surrounding language of representation, and it serves to underscore Menard’s interest in these works written in their original language. Thus, in translation, if vehicular matching is maintained by the translator, explicit representations of the translation process can be maintained. The quote from Edgar Allen Poe offers a different conclusion. Taken directly from the American text, it is represented in English to highlight Menard’s interest in the original work, and it is employed as such in the Spanish source text, creating an explicit representation of the translation process through vehicular matching. In the English target text, however, it now matches the surrounding language, so the shift from vehicular matching to referential restriction has effectively shifted the translational representation from explicit to implicit.

This short passage alone demonstrates four possible outcomes in the translation of a text with multilingual representations of the translational: where referential restriction was maintained, it extended the implied representation of translation, and where it was not maintained, it added a new and explicit representation of translation; where vehicular matching was maintained, it extended the explicit representation, and where it was not maintained, it rendered an explicit representation implicit. In each case, these outcomes indicate a site at which the translation process has been represented, drawing the reader’s attention to the movement between French, Spanish and English, and to the questions this raises about how and why we choose particular languages to express particular ideas. In the context of a transdiasporic analysis, these can be used as sites of the translational from which emerge engagement between the source and target cultures – in this case Hispanic-Argentinian and Anglo-American – that the reader can triangulate via the mutually connected third culture, the French.

We can examine broader representations of the translation process in Hospital's short story "Litany for the Homeland" (2003), translated into French as "Litanie pour la patrie" by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek (2006). The narrative is a semi-autobiographical account of a woman whose life takes her from the suburbs of Brisbane in Queensland, Australia, to MIT in the USA to the plains of the Canadian wilderness. She encounters a figure in each location who causes her to reflect on the nature of movement and storytelling, and the experience of margins in society. While each location and encounter is decidedly Anglophone, we can identify within these reflections distinctly translational sites. Take the following passage from the French translation as an example:

En bas de mon jardin, le Saint-Laurent vampirise sans relâche le bas de nos falaises. Sans relâche, il arrache et dissout, arrache et dissout, s'appropriant par-ci un peu de Canada, entreposant par-là de la vase américaine. L'État de New York barbouille l'horizon. Je vis à me dessécher le coeur, à la ligne de partition entre deux pays, nulle part, partout, dans les marges. Où que je sois, je vis dans le Queensland. (Hospital 155)

Here at the end of the narrative, the protagonist sits on the banks of the Saint-Laurent river and watches as the water gives and takes land between each shoreline, that of Canada on the one side and the USA on the other. The fluidity of the river as a borderline represents the instability of any bordered entity, whether physical, national, cultural or linguistic. Furthermore, the fact that she still feels she is in Queensland, even while sitting at this border on the other side of the globe, suggests that the identification of any entity, bordered or not, is a construction that depends on one's experiences and responses. In other words, in this moment we can take the protagonist's reflection on borders and national engagement as a translational site because it draws our attention to the need to critique the stability with which different entities come into contact and relate to each other. As a process during which languages come into contact, translation is a context in which just such a critique needs to take place. In the context of a transdiasporic analysis, these ideas within the narrative are enhanced by their representation in French, because it underscores the fact that this text is a physical manifestation of this translational context and its need for critique. It raises questions such as, how does the border between the French representation and the Anglophone narrative world reflect the give and take of the river metaphor? And if the protagonist is aware of Australia at this border between Canada and the USA, how might the reader be aware of France at the same border? These questions begin to open up the possibility of triangulating between the English source language, the French target language and the multiple Anglophone identities that both are engaging with. This is a much more abstract reflection on the translational, but one which nonetheless emerges from the identification of a translational site within the text, and which can contribute to a transdiasporic analysis.

### 1.3.2 Distant reading: exploring the broader network

Once translational sites have been identified in the translation, the second step in a transdiasporic reading involves pursuing the comparisons they bring to light between those cultures in the role of home and host, and identifying divergences that emerge between the source and target cultures, or those in the role of different hosts. This process takes the reader beyond their close engagement with the text, toward a distant reading that pursues historical and contextual research into the relevant social, cultural and political forces. For example, in the case of the Borges, the references to Anglophone and Francophone literatures using vehicular matching might point toward an exploration of the relations between them as host and home cultures whose literary histories have a particularly close relationship. The comparison with the Spanish and the Francophone as host and home cultures raises the question of why there are no Spanish literatures listed here, opening the idea that English and Spanish literary cultures relate to the French in different ways. The distant reading that pursues this idea would involve historical and critical research aimed at understanding its accuracy and its ramifications for our interpretation of the story. It has the potential to reveal the unique perspective that this translation offers on the character of Menard, an interpretation which would not be possible from the perspective of the Spanish source text.

A similar process takes place where the translational site identified represents a broader process of movement rather than an explicit multilingual site. For example, in the case of the Hospital, the translational site raises the question of how the Anglophone source culture and the French target culture relate differently to the multiple Anglophone locations of the narrative and the fluid borders between them. The comparison between them will encourage a reflection on how relations within the global Anglophone network differ from those between the global networks of the Anglophone and the Francophone. The distant reading that pursues this comparison would involve cultural and historical research aimed at understanding these broad transnational networks, and the ramifications for our interpretation of the story. It has the potential to reveal, for example, the extent to which Hospital's Anglophone experiences might be transferred to experiences of other intralingual networks across the globe, and how the concept of fluidity works at the borders of their different national entities.

These brief examples serve to demonstrate the thinking processes involved in formulating a transdiasporic analysis. In each case, a translational site becomes a focus for comparison between host culture contexts within a global network. On the one hand, this comparison can be applied as a framework for analysing the text as a unique literary representation that has been constructed through the process of translation, and on the other hand it can be used to produce new research questions that open up unique approaches to studying the network in question.



## Chapter 2: World literature and the case of the Vietnamese diaspora

This chapter contextualises in more detail the transdiasporic approach within world literature studies, with a focus on the notion of literature as a network. This will clarify its value as an approach that builds on current discourses and responds to current needs. It will also serve to introduce the diasporic network of relations between Anglophone, Francophone and Vietnamese cultures, which will form the basis of the case studies addressed in later chapters. The colonial histories of Britain and France were important precursors to the translational relations between the English and French languages, and the colonial histories of France and America were important precursors to the Vietnamese diaspora; Vietnamese diasporic literature therefore has an active role in the world literary space between English and French. A transdiasporic approach to this literature will open it up to new readings that engage with the literary representation of the Vietnamese diaspora.

### 2.1 World Literature: the development of literature as network

Outside translation studies, the pursuit of knowledge related to literary translations and ways of approaching them are most commonly found within the disciplines of world literature and comparative Literature. While chapter one addressed some aspects of this overlap from the point of view of translation studies, a detailed consideration from the point of view of world literature studies will highlight important elements of the world literary space that support the relevance of a transdiasporic approach. By extending the already considerable debate around the place of translation studies in relation to world literature, this discussion will also clarify how a transdiasporic approach offers a way in which each disciplinary field can help to critique and extend the other.

Translation scholar Sandra Bermann states that one's understanding of world literature will inevitably be constructed according to where one stands:

If we are in China, Tanzania, Peru, Syria or India, our perspective on and access to world literature will differ dramatically from that in England or North America...One of the tasks for the future will be to explore more fully what "world" literature – as well as "translation" and "transmission" – mean from different geo-linguistic standpoints, since these central terms vary markedly according to linguistic and cultural context. (176)

This statement immediately raises a central concern in the field, namely the dominance of the nation as a determining entity and the unequal power relations that it creates. The concept of *Weltliteratur* was first coined by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1827 in the context of German Romanticism and the acknowledgement that national literatures were beginning to interact with each other by virtue of being "translated, hosted, or criticized in the receiving language" (Aravamudan 196). Goethe was acknowledging the growing need to consider literature in an international context, and the process of



translation as a means of engaging with the literature of the other. It is important to note that this initial concept was not a universalising one that homogenises national differences, but rather one that encourages dialogue and the identification of differences. However, it depended on the entity of the nation-state, and this element contributed to its usage at the hands of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. They looked toward a world literature attainable once “national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness” were eliminated (Marx and Engels), and not only was the separation of and progression between nation and world further developed in this model, but the idea of a universal concept of literary output was created, arguably the basis of the World Literature field of the 1990s.

The universal concept of literature pursued by the American academy in the 1990s emerged from the discipline of comparative literature. As a discipline based on the comparison of original work produced in different languages and cultures, comparative literature was struggling with the reality that global movement was making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between different languages and cultures (Spivak *Death of a Discipline* 3), and students were finding it difficult to incorporate language learning into their degrees. The result was the need to re-assess the traditional resistance to using work in English translation. The concept of “world literature” was taken up as the title of a new approach that pursued a form of comparison of the world’s literatures enabled by those literatures having travelled, making them more easily accessible to the comparatist. In 2003, David Damrosch’s seminal book *What is World Literature?* posited that World Literary texts constitute a subset of the world’s collective literary output which has travelled beyond its literary culture of origin, whether in time or space or both, and have then become an active part of another literary culture. He specifies that this travelling can occur through translation, though it can also occur when texts move into other national or cultural systems of literature without moving outside their source language (4). However, when discussing approaches to reading translations in the context of world literature in his later work “How to Read World Literature”, he makes it clear that the scope of literature that circulates globally would be small indeed without the process of translation (83).

The conception of world literature as a body of works, often canonised in anthologies edited by the professors of American academies,<sup>3</sup> sparked a collection of approaches that focused on the question of what constitutes world literature. Some argued the answer lay in the identification of genres that engage with contemporary “global imaginaries” and present a sense of the “*trans-nature* (trans-cultural, trans-historical, trans-generic)” of our contemporary global society (Siskind 346). The more ideal genres,

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see Davis et al, Damrosch and Pike, and Puchner et al.

Siskind posits, would “address critical questions about [a text’s] global circulation, reproduction, translation and appropriation, or about the transcultural conversations, quotations and antagonistic resistances writers engage in when immersed in their writing process” (349). Dagnino classifies such texts as “literatures of mobility”, a subset of world literature texts “that are affected by or deal with travels/exploratory drives, migratory flows, exile-diasporic experiences, expatriate/transnational narratives and, more recently, neo-nomadic trajectories” (Dagnino 1).

Another approach to what constitutes world literature has been argued by Martin Puchner, who refers not to world but to worldly literature. For him it is a subset of texts “that maintain a crucial relation to the world”, being “literature that is relevant to the world and engaged with the world... [or] that has been taken up by the world, emerging in the struggle for dominance” (256). It could be argued that this is simply another formulation of the genre framework discussed above, but Puchner takes it a step further to consider the ways in which worldly literature encourages reflection on the relation between different understandings of literature and the relation between literature and imagining *other worlds*. Thus he moves beyond a static conception of world as a global entity around which a given subset of literature moves, considering its more abstract sense of a way of living and understanding. World/ly literature thus emerges as an adaptable concept that can encourage reflection on what worldliness and literature might mean for any one individual.

In response to the number of approaches concerned with the question of ‘what’, Vilashini Cooppan has argued that world literature:

should be just as concerned with how [texts of world literature are compared with one another]. For world literature is not an ontology but an epistemology, not a catalogue of literary data but a way of reading and even, dare one suggest, thinking: a philosophy in, and of, motion. (200)

This shift in perspective toward motion has been reflected in other approaches to world literature that focus on the mapping of literary relations rather than the canon they constitute. For example, French scholar Pascale Casanova outlined the idea of the “World Republic of Letters”, in which she identified the inherently unequal relations that come to pass between nations exchanging goods and values; thus world literature is premised on a system of power between centres and peripheries (Casanova *The World Republic of Letters* 43). Through this idea she explored the violent relations of a world space made up of literary relations, one which is relatively independent of the political and economic world space in which we live. For her, “the primary characteristics of this world literary space are hierarchy and inequality” (Casanova “Literature as a world” 282) because it is made up of national spaces, each representative of a position along the spectrum from centre to periphery, and an international space, within which literary resources are passed and power is exchanged. There is however always a skewed

distribution between national spaces, and in this case the distribution of literary goods is in some spaces very free from “political, national or economic constraints” while less so in others “where political, national and commercial criteria hold strongest sway” (282).

The notion of world systems is a more recent approach which frames the global movement of literature within a system or world, namely that of modern capitalism. It draws on Marx and Engels’ use of literature to illustrate global trade relations and the more recent Marxist-influenced theory of there being one world literary system structured by inequality. As Neil Lazarus explains, it “takes its cue from recent scholarship that, de-linking the category of modernity from the idea of the ‘West’, ties it instead to the idea of the capitalist world-system” (121-2). Its focus is on the “literary correlates” of this understanding of modernity, exploring “the *literary* registration and encoding of modernity as a social logic ...[and] trying to explore the suggestion that ‘world literature’ be understood as the literature that registers and encodes the social logic of modernity”, thus linking it with a specific temporal period and social configuration (122). That is, the approach follows Immanuel Wallerstein “in speaking of the instantiation of capitalism as a world system around 1500”, and then of the “*worlding* of capital and of the *capitalization* of the world” following British and European colonialism (122). Its application to world literature constructs an understanding of it as something that has developed over the last 150-200 years, with its roots in the early sixteenth century.

Franco Moretti’s notion of distant reading approached the mapping of world literature from a different angle again, drawing on global patterns of data to understand its movement, rather than drawing on close readings of texts. While generally acknowledged as a unique take on the discipline that offers a larger perspective more appropriate for a globalised and digital age (Ross), it has also been critiqued for falling short of delivering the empirical methods it claims to pursue (Ascari 3), and for its unapologetic sidelining of close reading as a technique in World literature. In articulating the latter critique, Spivak underscored the fact that if close reading is left outside world literature in the hands of national specialists, it will lack the strength given by methods of comparison and multiple perspectives (Biti 134). Scholars accepting of distant reading have tended to acknowledge the advantages of combining it with close reading practices (Ross; Venuti 199). For example, Damrosch’s later thought reflects an embracing of a more distant perspective in addition to his traditional focus on close reading; he moved from seeing world literature as designating certain “works,” to designating “a network” (*What is World Literature?* 3). Thus, it is because of the network that the work can be categorised as world literature, rather than a categorised work becoming a part of the network (Walkowitz “Unimaginable Largeness” 216-7). In an interview in 2014, Damrosch explained that at the time of *What is World Literature?* he was “emphasising the idea of circulation ...and the voyage *outwards*”, but he has

since reversed the direction of that circulation to begin thinking about “the voyage *inwards*”, where “the world text is either one that has circulated or one that has been produced within the nation in dialogue mostly with translated works to which the writers have been exposed” (Trevitt “Jessica Trevitt speaks to David Damrosch” 100-1). This allows for world literature as something that relies on the processes of translation, but rather than being the translated text, it can be that which has been written under its influence. This is reflected in Rebecca Walkowitz’s notion of comparison literature, defined as “an emerging genre of world fiction for which global comparison is a formal as well as a thematic preoccupation” (“Unimaginable Largeness” 218). For her, this literature “asks us to imagine new geographies of literary production and requires methodologies that understand the history of a book to include its many editions and translations” (218). It also allows for the idea that the source texts can be, in the words of Rey Chow, “comparative” rather than “monolingual, monocultural, or mononational”, and thus “comparison...appears as predicate as well as practice” (Walkowitz “Comparison Literature” 569).

There is an important difference between Cooppan’s articulation of world literature as motion and the mapping methods described here. She refers to a “rhizomatic assemblage” with multiple entryways, to an “uneven, discontinuous” form of movement, or what she calls a network of literary relations (195). While the above approaches to mapping world literature are based on structured frameworks that are subservient to the will of the mapper, Cooppan’s concept of the “network model” works with a “desubjectified map” where the configuration of literary forms and historical events is constantly shifting (196). This is a valuable point of view within a transdiasporic framework, as it underscores the necessity of allowing the global to trace itself, resisting the individual mapper’s drive to compare and homogenise concepts such as source and target cultures. Instead, Cooppan’s notion of literature as a global network naturally highlights the unique position of a translated text not simply in relation to its source text, but in relation to other cultural entities with which the source and target cultures have independent and inter-dependent relations. In this framework, transdiasporic triangulation becomes an invaluable tool for engaging with literature in translation.

## 2.2 The network of Francophone-Anglophone-Vietnamese relations

The beginning of Casanova’s “World Republic of Letters” situates France and England as cultural centres from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century (“Literature as a world” 277). At this point, the US became a literary producer distinct from England, and Belgium a literary producer distinct from France (Sapiro “Globalization and cultural diversity” 422); as the cultural centres expand transnationally in this way, so their peripheries become visible through colonial relations and postcolonial resistance. For

Casanova, the “World Republic of Letters” is made up of such structural inequalities between national contexts which create contestation over literature and ultimately render the “unification of literary space” visible (“Literature as a world” 278). Recent critiques of Casanova’s model however have questioned the extent to which it is applicable in the context of transnational engagement in the post-cold war era. In the latter part of the twentieth century, “the axes of comparison have become very complex and are no longer based primarily on national or linguistic differences”; thus, “a world literary space determined solely by postcolonial geographies of French and British empires and their liberated colonies” is no longer tenable (Ganguly 250). Contemporary diasporic contexts offer a manifestation of this increased complexity, as they are fed by individual migrant histories and collective postcolonial and/or exilic ideologies. Rather than being situated within a centre-periphery relation, their struggles in this context can be situated within centre-centre relations, bringing foreign culture into the local context.

#### 2.2.1 The Vietnamese diaspora within a Francophone-Anglophone network

The Vietnamese diaspora provides a context in which these centre-centre relations can be explored, as it has produced a significant global community in both Anglophone and Francophone contexts. The Viet Kieu, or Vietnamese living outside of Vietnam, have been described as “one of the largest and most visible mass migrations of the late twentieth century” (Nguyen *Memory is Another Country* 4), and they are constituted by significant transnational heterogeneity. Coming into existence as a result of the American war in Vietnam,<sup>4</sup> the diaspora consists of over 2 million Vietnamese who for the most part fled their country by refugee boat between 1975 and 1990 (4). A countless number of people died at sea from starvation, drowning or pirate attack, with estimates ranging from 10% to 90%. Of those who survived, 50% ended up in the US, 400,000 in France, 200,000 in each of Australia and Canada (Chan and Dorais; Nguyen *Memory is Another Country* 4), in addition to smaller communities scattered globally. The vast majority of Vietnamese host culture contexts, then, are Anglophone or Francophone, and given the relations between these contexts, there is significant scope here to consider the position of the Vietnamese culture within their centre-centre relations.

As one brief example, the early Vietnamese literature of French expression aimed to explain aspects of Vietnamese culture to an implied French reader (Yeager *The Vietnamese Novel in French* 54-

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<sup>4</sup> The name given to this war has been contested, with alternatives such as “Vietnam war” and “war against America” limiting its meaning to the perspectives of America and North Vietnam, respectively. The term “the American war in Vietnam”, or the shortened form “the war in Vietnam”, will be used here, following Dao-Shah and Pelaud (469).

55), enabling it to mean something to the Francophone element of the contemporary colonial Vietnam. Pham Duy Khiem was a diasporic figure who moved from Hanoi to France in the 1920s to pursue his education. He remained there as an academic and ambassador, and along with his translators Aveling and Römbell, he played an important role in perpetuating Vietnamese stories within centre-centre relations. His book of short stories *Legendes des terres sereines*, first published in 1951, brings together Vietnamese legends, the essence of which had been passed through oral storytelling and the details of which were added in the written form to construct a complete *récit*. They were thus literally and figuratively translated for French readers, and have since been translated again into English (Khiêm *Legends from Serene Lands*) and German (Khiêm *Vietnamesische Mädchen*).

### 2.2.2 Researching the Vietnamese diaspora

There has been some research into the particularities of selected Vietnamese communities, for example in Québec (Chan and Dorais; V. Nguyen), Australia (Jacklin) and France (Liem and Mais; Tho), as well as some comparative studies (Dorais “Vietnamese Communities”), however the literature on the lateral connections between these communities is still rather sparse. The following will address some aspects of these connections to provide a basis of knowledge for the transdiasporic analyses to come.

Prior to 1975, the United States was home to about 3,000 Vietnamese (Liem and Mais), but American involvement in Vietnam from the mid-1950s ensured that by 1975 it was in the American interest to enable the evacuation of South Vietnamese and offer them shelter from the communist regime. This began a series of migrational waves toward the United States, the first of which, in 1975, consisted of about 125,000 “military personnel and urban, educated professionals” whose American connections in Vietnam would make them a target of the new government (Rkasnuam and Batalova). The second, in the late 1970s, consisted of a significantly higher number of poorer and less-educated refugees who had escaped communist Vietnam by boat, while the third, during the 1980s and 1990s, consisted of family relations of those already arrived, as well as “children of U.S. servicemen and Vietnamese mothers” and Vietnamese political prisoners. Official figures put the Vietnamese community of the United States in 2012 at 1.3 million (Rkasnuam and Batalova).

Due in part to the lack of relations between the two countries prior to the American war in Vietnam, there developed significant segregation between the local American society and its Vietnamese communities. This resulted in a strong sense of an ethnic Vietnamese identity, and this visibility has contributed to the United States’ relatively large amount of critical material on the Vietnamese diaspora. Correspondingly, the war and the diaspora created a significant discourse around local American identity. As Neil Jamieson asserted, “to better understand ourselves, we must

understand the Vietnam War” (x); that is, given the amount of controversy surrounding US involvement, and given new global situations in which the US must once again determine the extent of their involvement in the politics of foreign nations, it is imperative that there is a good understanding of what was motivating the country at the time, and how these motivations compare to its position and role in international politics today. The presence of this idea in contemporary American culture, in addition to the nature of the Vietnamese community itself, constructs a unique context for discussion of American-Vietnamese diasporic literature.

The context in France is significantly different because of the nature of its contact with Vietnam prior to the American war in Vietnam, namely the French colonisation of Vietnam from 1867 to 1954. This had an impact on the demographics of its various migrational waves, as well as on the identity discourses that emerged from the French and Vietnamese perspectives. Unlike in the United States, there was an established community of 30,000 Vietnamese in France prior to 1975. Vietnamese people had been visiting France since the beginning of the century to study and in some cases to work, but they usually returned to their home country to bring back what was viewed as more advanced cultural and technological knowledge. According to the website of the Vietnamese Embassy in France, the first significant wave of Vietnamese immigrants to France took place during the First World War, when about 50,000 were recruited as workers, and then again during the Second World War when about 200,000 were recruited (“Aperçu sur la Communauté”). In the five years prior to 1975, there was a spike in France-based Vietnamese naturalising as French, then between 1975 and 1977, as in the case of the United States, the first wave of Vietnamese migrants consisted mainly of those in particular danger due to their professional associations with America. The second wave, over the subsequent decades, consisted mainly of boat refugees. Again, as in the United States, further migration was motivated at least in part by family regrouping, and the most recent official estimation of the Vietnamese population by the Vietnamese Embassy of France puts the number as high as 300,000. This is still of course significantly lower than that of the United States, which can be attributed not only to the active part played by the latter in sheltering Vietnamese post-1975, but also to the fact that 91% of Vietnamese refugees who were given a choice of host country nominated the United States, while only 1.5% chose France (Liem and Mais). Also contributing to this discrepancy in numbers, however, might be the stricter criteria for France accepting Vietnamese migrants, in favour of those with more education and/or knowledge of French as well as those with family ties to the continent (Bertrand 157).

A particularly interesting aspect that is unique to the French host environment is the concept of post-colonial nostalgia (Cole *The Perfume River* xiv). This idea, prominent in 1990s France, was proposed by psychoanalyst François Lelord and it was less a nostalgia for the French presence in Vietnam than it

was a nostalgia for a pre-1968 France. As Cole paraphrases, Lelord argues “that the French believe they are seeking something of themselves in their colonial past but their quest is really about life in France in the 1950s” (Cole “The Third and Fourth Countries”). This nostalgia is reflected in France’s increased production throughout the 1990s of Vietnamese cultural items, including the re-publication of novels about colonial life in Indochina and the publication of contemporary novels and screen productions, as well as the high numbers of French visiting Vietnam when it opened up to international tourists in the 1990s (Logan and Nguyen 46-7). The presence of this idea within contemporary French culture, in addition to the nature of the Vietnamese community itself, has the potential to construct specific discourses in relation to Vietnamese diasporic literature originating from France.

The Canadian context offers yet another story, one which has its overlaps with the United States. As in the case of the latter, there were very few Vietnamese in Canada prior to 1975, though in the 1950s and 1960s a small number of Vietnamese settled in Canada to attend French-speaking universities (Dorais “The Vietnamese in Montreal, Canada” 234). From 1975-6 more than 8,000 arrived, more than half of whom settled in Montreal as “highly educated urban professionals” who were fluent in French (234). The following wave in 1979-1982 was a group of about 59,000 who arrived as refugees via boat and Asian transit camps. As in the equivalent groups in the French and American contexts, they were considerably poorer and less educated than the previous two waves of migrants; sponsored by the government and private organisations, they were settled not only in Montreal but in towns around the region of Québec (Richard and Dorais 2). Following 1982 came a wave of migrants related to those already settled, and these continued to arrive well into the 1990s. As of the Canada 2011 Census, there were 220,470 people of Vietnamese origin living in Canada, 42,480 people of whom were based in Québec and 38,960 in Montreal (“2011 National Household Survey”).

The Vietnamese community is smaller in Canada than in France or the US, due to the lack of any direct role played by Canada within Vietnamese culture pre- or post-diaspora. This means there was no established Canadian profile in Vietnam to encourage migrants to aim there as a destination. In an interview, Kim Thúy admits that her family thought Canada “only had igloos... with winter twelve months out of the year” (Hong); this attests to the relative lack of familiarity with Canada among Vietnamese people, as opposed to with the United States and France. In addition, the relatively little contact between Canada and Vietnam prior to 1975 meant that there was a significant level of segregation between the local Canadian society and its Vietnamese communities, as in the case of the United States. It has been argued for example that the Canadian laws of state multiculturalism constructed “a discourse that contains and manages ‘difference’ in a way that maintains white privilege and hegemony” (V. Nguyen). Unlike the case of the United States, however, “literary and cultural



productions as well as theoretical and critical scholarship by and on the Vietnamese diaspora” is “only just emerging” in Canada, suggesting there has not been the same level of reflection on ethnic identity. At the same time, internal Canadian conflicts have ensured that the diasporic influx has created some critique of identity among the locals. As Beiser and Hyman have stated, Canada’s intake of Vietnamese refugees “marked a high point in the country’s evolution from an insular, indifferent nation to one now widely admired for her compassion” (35). More specifically, the acceptance of refugees in Québec, where the majority of Vietnamese immigrants were posted, contributed to that region’s opening up to the world in the wake of the 1960s Quiet Revolution. In fact, the increase in migration literature from the 1980s encouraged the recognition of migrational aspects within Québécois identity more generally (Green 18). Meanwhile, the contemporary language politics which saw French regain its dominance over English, have resulted in trilingual immigrant communities. These are visible on a communal level, for example through Mormina’s account of the language situation of the Italian community in Québec, as well as on an individual level, for example through the personal narratives of Québécois-Vietnamese writers like Kim Thúy who has a complex relationship to her three languages, Vietnamese, French and English (Hong). As in the case of the French and American contexts for the Vietnamese diaspora, the presence of these ideas in contemporary Canadian and Québécois cultures has the potential to construct specific discourses in relation to Vietnamese diasporic literature originating from Québec.

### 2.2.3 Vietnamese diasporic literature

One site for exploring further these strands of Anglophone and Francophone discourses of the Vietnamese diaspora is the significant amount of literary representation of the diasporic experience in both languages (see for example Nguyen “War through women’s eyes”). When attempting to define Vietnamese diasporic literature, it should be acknowledged that in one of the few studies of lateral relations between the various Viet Kieu communities (Dorais “Defining the overseas Vietnamese”), the application of the term diaspora has been called into question. Drawing on Khachig Tölölyan’s criteria for a diaspora, Dorais identifies in the Viet Kieu a number of corresponding factors, but one important criterion that he considers to be missing is the need for the group to maintain “chiefly collective” ties to “transnational values and institutions”. Instead, he has found that they tend to maintain the “most meaningful transnational ties... [to] one’s personal relations with family and friends” (9). However, drawing on “Clifford’s distinction between the notions of diaspora and a diasporic dimension”, he does identify a diasporic moment for the Viet Kieu in the period between 1975 to 1990, or “the period between the fall of South Vietnam to northern Communists and the implementation of liberal economic and social reforms” (23). Following this assertion, this thesis considers 1975-1990 to be the specific

diasporic period of the Viet Kieu. However, as noted already, diasporic literature does not simply refer to texts created in a diasporic period; Vietnamese diasporic literature is also that which later explores the experience of 1975-1990, both directly through personal memory, or indirectly through experiences on which it later had an influence.

Whether written originally in English or French, Vietnamese diasporic literature tends to include elements of the Vietnamese language, producing Francophone-Vietnamese and Anglophone-Vietnamese forms of heterolingual textuality.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in a world literary market that increasingly favours ethnic and migrant narratives, much of this diasporic literature is successfully travelling beyond its point of origin through translation, and with English and French currently standing as two of the strongest literary languages on the global market, it is common to find Franco-Vietnamese texts translated into English and Anglo-Vietnamese texts translated into French. Prominent examples can be found across a range of genres, including the following: autobiographies such as Doan Van Toai's *Le Goulag vietnamien* (1979), translated into English as *The Vietnamese gulag* by Sylvie Romanowski and Françoise Simon-Miller (1986); poetry such as Thuong Vuong-Riddick's "*Two Shores*" / "*Deux Rives*" (1995), a self-translated bilingual publication based on her personal experiences of Vietnam and immigration to Canada; and songs such as "Bonjour Vietnam" (2006) by Marc Lavoine and Yvan Coriat for the Vietnamese-Belgian singer Quynh Anh, inspired by her never having seen Vietnam, and translated as "Hello Vietnam" (2008) by Guy Balbaert. Fictional narratives include the work of Kim Thúy, a Vietnamese author living in Canada whose work has received positive critical acclaim. Her novels *Ru* (2009) and *Mãn* (2013), both exploring her personal experiences of war-time Vietnam, migration and the Vietnamese community of Montreal, were written in French and translated into English by Sheila Fischman (2009 and 2014, respectively). The work of Linda Lê, a Vietnamese author living in France, includes the novel *Calomnies* (1993), which explores the experiences of Vietnamese émigrés living in France; it was translated into English as *Slanders* by Esther Allen (1996). The work of Le Ly Hayslip, a Vietnamese author living in America, includes the novel *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989), about a Vietnamese girl's survival under the Viet Cong and her path out of Vietnam; it was translated into French by Roland Mehl as *Entre le ciel et la terre* (1993), and adapted into a film by Oliver Stone in 1993. This is but a glance at the range of works that might lend themselves to a study of Vietnamese diasporic literature in translation, but it supports the idea that there is room for an extended exploration of literature of the Vietnamese diaspora in translation.

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<sup>5</sup> In some Canadian cases, both French and English are utilised as host languages alongside the origin language of Vietnamese, for example in Kim Thúy's novellas *Ru* (2009) and *Mãn* (2013).

Moreover, if we approach translated literature using Vietnamese diasporic discourse, the reader of the translation becomes a further example of what Appadurai has referred to as a “diasporic switching point” (172). For Appadurai, diaspora is a continuous process which constantly moves and shifts. He posited the US as one geographical switching point for the Vietnamese diaspora, and here I posit the readers of these translations as individual switching points of that same diaspora. Of course, the further the process of translation extends that diaspora, the more linguistic and cultural boundaries we erase, and the further we move from the Vietnamese community with whom we began; but this only supports Stuart Hall’s conception of cultural identity as something which is constantly producing and reproducing itself, particularly within diasporic contexts (1990: 222). In other words, approaching translated literature via the discourse of diaspora opens the possibility of talking about these texts as concrete manifestations of the movement and reproduction of identity that takes place across a diaspora. The subsequent chapters will pursue in more detail the unique elements of this literature depending on its host context, but at this point there exist many examples of texts in which we can potentially identify a triangulated relationship between Vietnamese, Anglophone and Francophone cultures.

## 2.3 Case studies

### 2.3.1 Delimitations

The case studies in this thesis will include three works of short fiction, two of which are short stories and one of which is a novella. The distinction between a short story and novella is not always clear (V. Shaw 20), particularly when we take into consideration the etymological and literary development of the term “novella” across European languages (Gillespie). As Gillespie says, the novella in English is “a kind of ‘wedge’ separating definitively the spheres of the short story and the novel” (126). For the purposes of this thesis, the distinction is made based on length and formatting of the publication; the short stories were published as part of short story collections, while the novella was only ever published as an independent work.

The choice of short fiction for this corpus has emerged for various reasons. Anglophone scholarship and the Anglophone global literary market both have a history of favouring the novel, and thus first and foremost it is a choice that seeks to underscore the unique qualities of the genre. In her introduction to the edited collection *Short Story Theories: a Twenty-first Century Perspective*, Veronika Patea designates Mary Rohrberger “the first theorist of the short story”, although she was publishing as late as 1976, and she quotes her as saying “short narrative fiction is as old as the history of literature...but the short story as we know it today is the newest of literary genres” (Patea 1-2). In the

latter decades of the twentieth century there was a boom in short story criticism, and its “long-standing theoretical neglect” is credited as the reason why it came to be seen as what Clare Hanson refers to as a “form at the margins” (7). This made it an attractive vehicle for practitioners who identified themselves at the margins, taking it up as a form of subversive or assertive writing. Patea quotes Marie Louise Pratt, for example, as saying the short story lends itself to processes of affirmation linked with “regional, gender and political marginalization” (7). Thus the choice to focus on short fiction is also a recognition of it as a platform for the exiled or diasporic subject, as well as for a triangulated form of analysis, with its interest in the bordering that occurs in social, cultural and linguistic experience.

A further reason for this choice of genre emerged from the suggestion that aspects inherent in short fiction lend it to experimentation and independent voices. As a balance of “the peculiarities of storyness and narrativity and the intensity, tension, compression and suggestion of the lyric mode” (Patea 9), even in its most realist form it remains the affair of what Frank O’Connor famously called the “lonely voice” (1963). Theorists have even said that it lends itself to the expression of the inexpressible: “relying on intensity and tension, the short story...aspires to transpose the incommunicable into aesthetic form” (Patea 14). This could explain why it has been closely related to the arts of photography and painting (7). Interestingly, on this basis the short story form could also be likened to translated literature: by attempting to construct in one language system the signs that will communicate the signifieds of another language system, the translator, like the writer of a short story, is attempting to express the inexpressible.

The authors chosen to demonstrate transdiasporic triangulation all explore in their work transcultural exchanges between Vietnam as a diasporic homeland and Anglo-America, Australia, Canada and France as different hostlands. This enables the thesis to test the concept of the transdiasporic at length, considering the interrelations between various sociocultural contexts. A similar approach was taken by Dao-Shah and Pelaud, who addressed, as part of a group of five, the same three writers listed below as case studies. Having added Vietnamese-American authors Andrew X. Pham and Monique Truong, they justified their choice as representing the “four primary geographic locations of the Vietnamese diaspora” (471). Importantly, by addressing just three of their five authors in translation, I still engage with these four geographic locations, and I do so in a way that has more potential to uncover their overlaps and perspectives on each other. That is, the case studies chosen by Dao-Shah and Pelaud allow them to address Stuart Hall’s notion of the “positioning” of individual diasporic subjects (1990: 226) and so explore what Sudesh Mishra called their “situation-specific becoming” (2006: 17), but by addressing these same authors in translation, this thesis explores their re-positioning, or the way in which their “becoming” in one situation is viewed through the lens of their

“becoming” in another. In addition, the stories also explore metafictional discourses of writing as a process of expressing the complexities of this transcultural exchange, and they therefore present particularly interesting contexts for discussion of translational sites and translated representation.

### 2.3.2 Texts

#### **Linda Lê, translated by Nicholas Royle**

Linda Lê was born in Dalat, South Vietnam in 1963 and relocated with her family through a war-torn countryside to Saigon in 1969, where she began her studies at a French lycée. She grew up speaking French with her mother and Vietnamese with her father, but in 1977 when she left for France with her mother and sisters, her father was left behind. While they wrote letters to one another, he was unable to see her again before his death in 1995. Critics have discussed the links between these autobiographical details and the presence in Lê's work of macabre themes such as death, mutilation and abandonment, as well as writing as a form of salvation (Kurmann “Linda Lê – Biography”; Barnes; Selao). However, Lê herself has asserted that her writing is not intended to reflect directly experiences of mid-twentieth-century Vietnam; in fact she actively distances herself from identity labels such as Vietnamese, Vietnamese-French, and Francophone, and has “always shunned any form of community belonging, be it to the Vietnamese diaspora or the French literati in France, or to her compatriots in the homeland” (Kurmann and Do 151). She studied at the Sorbonne before going on to publish several novels, collections of short stories and academic essays.

“Parlez-moi” appears in her 2002 collection of short stories *Autres Jeux avec le feu*, alongside 13 others concerned with themes of death and exile (Selao). It tells the narrative of a Vietnamese man who has exiled himself to Paris as an attempt to atone for his past sins. Feeling isolated and in need of someone to whom he can confess his story, he walks the streets looking for the right person, and finally approaches a fellow émigré. He explains that in Vietnam, he was recruited during the war by the Viet Cong in Saigon, and was supplied with a phial of poison to take in case he was ever caught by the enemy. However, he was listless about the cause for which he had been recruited, and contrary to their instructions, he kept the phial at home rather than on his person. When he was called on for a mission, he backed out, saying he was too lazy to give up his life for his country. Out of shame he decided to take the poison, but he came home to find his wife had taken it first. His subsequent relocation to France was part of his effort to atone, and now having confessed to her, he expects to feel relieved. Instead, the voice of his wife continues to haunt him and he realises that regardless of his attempts, Paris as a city will refuse to offer him the atonement he seeks.

While several of Lê's novels have been translated, many of her short stories are yet to be discussed in a critical context. "Parlez-moi" is one of the few in *Autres Jeux* that has been translated, though it was done quite early, following an initial publication of the story in French. It appeared in English in 1998 as "Speak to me", translated by British writer and academic Nicholas Royle. The publication was the *Time Out Book of Paris Short Stories*, also edited by Royle. In applying a transdiasporic approach to "Speak to me", I engage with an Anglophone representation of a Vietnamese diasporic experience that negotiates the European French and Anglophone host cultures. This intersection is highlighted through references in the story to French surrealism and anti-American propaganda, both of which in their translated Anglophone context offer a distinctive view on French- and American-Vietnamese relations.

### **Nam Le, translated by France Camus-Pichon**

Nam Le was born in Vietnam in 1977 and came to Australia by boat with his parents in 1978. He grew up in Melbourne, became a lawyer and then gave up the corporate life at the age of twenty-five to move to the US and enrol in the Iowa Creative Writing School. His debut work was a collection of short stories titled *The Boat*, published in 2008 and subsequently translated into fourteen languages. His transnational background has attracted various labels from critics and scholars who have described him as "Asian-Australian" (Massola), "Asian-American" (C. Lee) and just plain "Australian" (Ommundsen "Transnational Imaginaries" 2). In relation to his Vietnamese heritage, Le himself has admitted that "[he does not] completely understand [his] relationship to Vietnam as a writer", but that he is exploring through his writing ("Knopf Q&A").

The opening story of *The Boat*, titled "Love and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice", has received the most critical attention among the stories, due to its complex metafictional and autobiographically-based exploration of the Vietnamese migrant family and their representation in literature. Its protagonist Nam was born in Vietnam, moved to Australia as a child and then to the US as an adult. He associates Vietnam with the stories he has heard of his father's experience of the war, and notably speaks in Vietnamese, largely represented in English, when his father comes to visit. He associates Australia with his recollection of his father telling him the story of his past, and the US with his father's re-telling of that story. In the US he develops a short story out of his father's experiences, drawing together the three national spaces through the act of story-telling, and when his father burns that story there is a sense in which the borders between those nations have not only been transcended, but erased altogether. Behind this transnational exploration of identity is a critique of the position of ethnic literature in American literary circles, represented in the figure of Nam who

resists playing into the stereotype of the ethnic writer and the pressure of the knowledge that “ethnic literature’s hot”, and therefore sells well. He resists, that is, until he realises that he could heal the damaged relationship he has with his father by showing him how well he can represent his story and enable its circulation and appreciation, but by burning it in a ritual-like scene his father demonstrates his belief that those who do not share his experiences can only “clap their hands and forget”. Thus, the story asks its reader to weigh up the value of literary circulation with that of historical ownership of narrative.

Following international recognition of *The Boat* through numerous literary prizes, including the Dylan Thomas in 2008, the collection was translated into 14 languages. The French translation of the collection, including the opening story as “L’amour, l’honneur, la pitié, l’orgueil, la compassion, le sacrifice”, was completed by France Camus-Pichon, a literary translator who works for the French publishing houses Albin Michel and Gallimard. In applying a transdiasporic approach to “L’amour, L’honneur...”, I engage with a Francophone representation of a Vietnamese diasporic experience that occurs in Anglo-American and Anglo-Australian host cultures. This intersection is a reversal of the previous case study, but is similarly highlighted through references in the story to the global Anglophone discourse of boat people and to William Faulkner, both of which can be related to Anglo-Vietnamese relations and which in their translated Francophone context offer a distinctive view on these relations.

### **Kim Thúy, translated by Sheila Fishman**

Kim Thúy, which is shortened for Kim Thúy Ly Thanh (Hong), was born in Saigon in 1968 and left the country as a boat refugee with her parents and two brothers when she was 10. They spent time in a Malaysian refugee camp, until they were picked up by a Canadian delegation because they could speak French, and were taken to live in Granby, Québec. Thúy studied linguistics and translation at the University of Montreal, but moved into law because she did not believe her language was strong enough to work as a translator. Working for a law firm she returned to Vietnam, before moving on to Thailand and back to Montreal, where she opened a restaurant. Running the restaurant in addition to a family, her life was becoming increasingly hectic and she eventually took a break, which is when she began writing. The result was the novella *Ru*, published in 2009, which has since been followed by two more novellas, *À toi* (2011) and *Mãn* (2013).

For Thúy, the writing of *Ru* was a personal exercise that “happened almost automatically when her husband advised her to take a break from her hectic career and think about what she really wanted to do”. The vignette structure was apparently unintended at first; as one article puts it, “Thúy harboured no burning desire to memorialise the Vietnamese experience, to extol the virtues of multiculturalism or

to serve as anyone's role model. She said 'I did not choose to write it or not to write it, or to structure it in any specific way,' she says. 'I just wrote, and I followed its internal rhythm. For me it's one breath'" (Barber). In the single breath that is *Ru* she explores the significance of motherhood, of family, of love and of memory in relation to her experience as a refugee and the development of her Vietnamese-Canadian identity. Interestingly, the only language she ever wrote in was French, because she never did "master Vietnamese very well—what [she knows] is very basic, the language [she] spoke at home as a child" (Hong). The nature of this text then as almost stream-of-consciousness represents in itself a kind of translation process, rendering her childhood experiences into French.

Following international recognition of *Ru* through awards such as the Grand Prix RTL-Lire at the Salon du livre in Paris in 2010, it has been translated into several languages. The English translation was completed by acclaimed Canadian translator Sheila Fischman in 2012, who in Thúy's own words has "the perfect voice" for the text (Hong). In applying a transdiasporic approach to the English translation *Ru*, I engage with an Anglophone representation of a Vietnamese diasporic experience that occurs in a French Canadian host culture. This intersection involves a host culture already imbued with multilingual relations not only between French and Vietnamese, but between French and English. These are highlighted through the use of the word "*Ru*", which has meaning in both French and Vietnamese, and the reference to the concept of the American dream, which has a particular relationship to Anglo- and Franco-American discourses. Both of these references can be related to Canadian Franco-Vietnamese relations which in their translated Anglophone context offer a distinctive view on these relations.

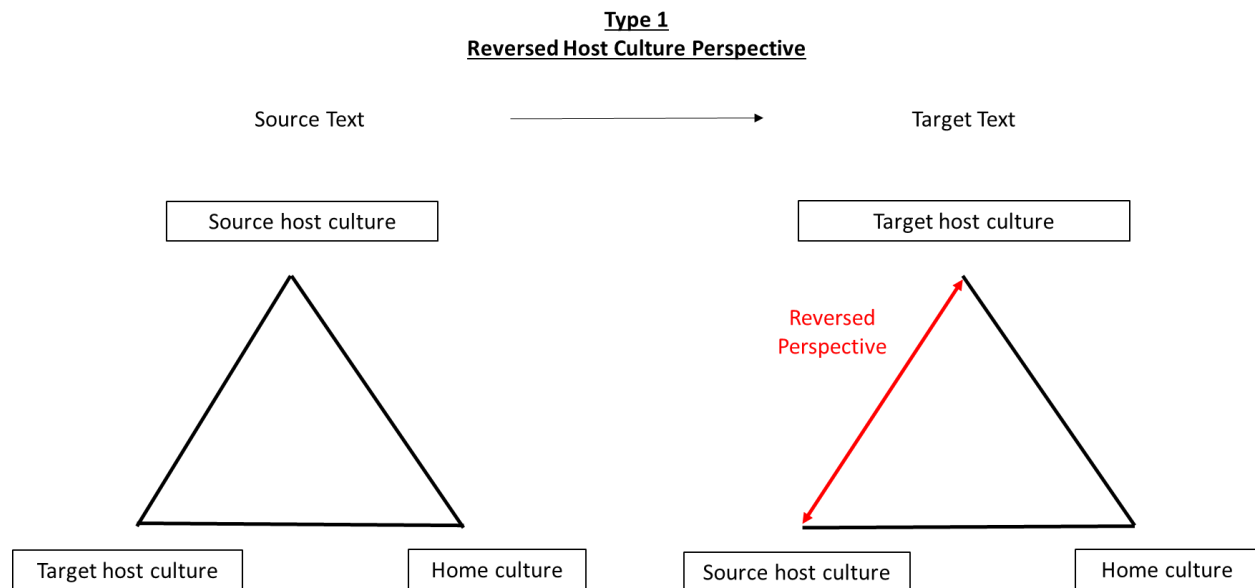
### 2.3.2 Transdiasporic types

What each case has in common is its representation of a host-to-host translation, producing a text whose source-target relations can be engaged with via a triangulation of their respective relationships with a diasporic home culture. An important difference between them is that each source-target pair has a relationship with the narrative's representation of the diaspora, and as such, they can be categorised into different types of text for the purposes of a transdiasporic analysis. While these types are useful for approaching the texts in the present study, they do not necessarily represent a comprehensive framework for transdiasporic text types. They are presented here as an initial attempt at categorisation. It is anticipated that over the course of the case studies, this framework will be critiqued and expanded according to the types of insight that each analysis reveals.

Case study 1 is categorised as Type 1, the Reversed host culture perspective, case study 2 as Type 2, the Additional host culture perspective, and case study 3 as Type 3, the a Multi-directional host culture perspective. These are represented in the figures below, which are designed so that the apex of



each triangle represents the linguistic and cultural perspective through which that text is presented. In Type 1 (Figure 1), the target host culture is already present in the source text narrative alongside the source host culture. The narrative perspective is that of the source host, but in the process of translation a reversal takes place, so that the perspective becomes that of the target host.



*Figure 1*

In Type 2 (Figure 2), the target host culture is not present in the source text narrative, but it is introduced through the translation process, when the source text is reframed via the added perspective of the target host. The source text may, however, still include multiple host culture perspectives, what we can call second and third host cultures, and these will also be reframed via the added perspective. They may or may not represent the same language as the source and target hosts; for example, in the case of the Vietnamese diaspora, they may represent the Australian as opposed to the American and French host cultures, or the Japanese as opposed to the American and French host cultures.

**Type 2**  
**Additional Host Culture Perspective**

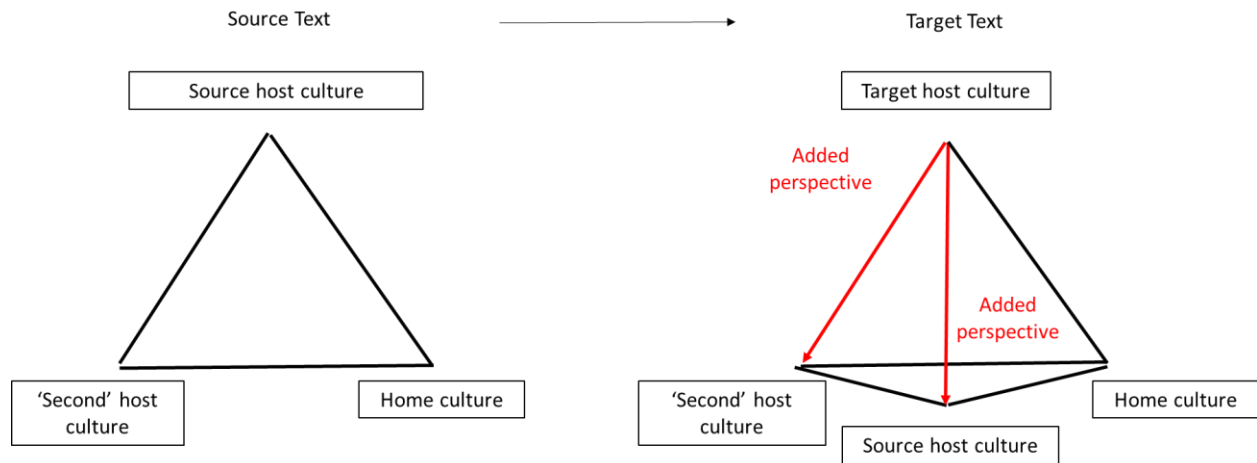


Figure 2

In Type 3 (Figure 3), the target host culture is present in the source text narrative *in addition to* second or third host cultures. In the translation process there is therefore a reversal from the perspective of the source host culture to that of the target host, as well as a reframing of the second or third host cultures via this new perspective.

**Type 3**  
**Multi-Directional Host Culture Perspective**

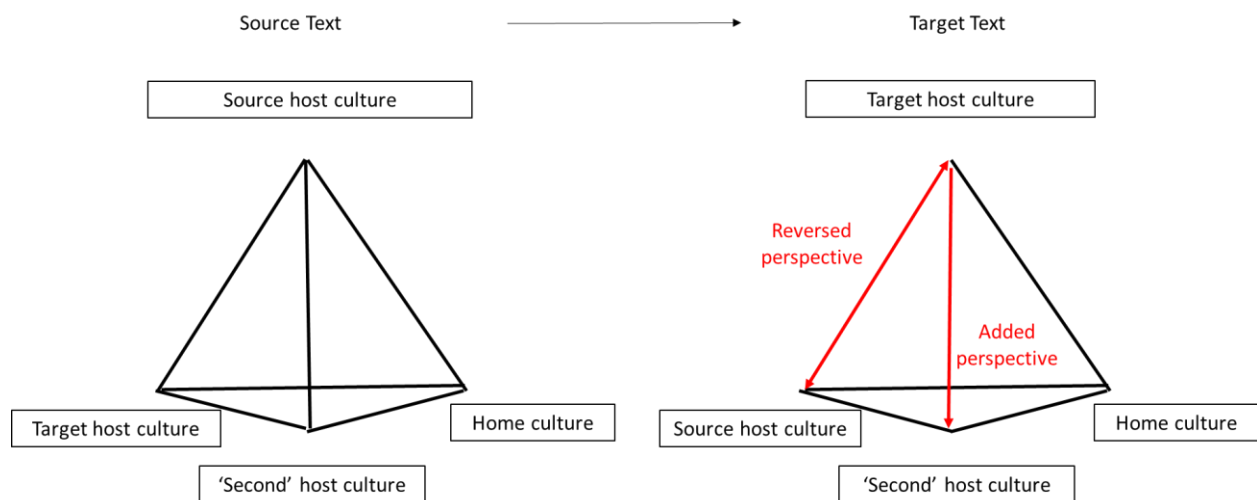


Figure 3

## Chapter 3: French-Vietnamese diasporic literature in English translation

Case study one considers an English translation of a Francophone text written by a Vietnamese migrant in France. Linda Lê's "Parlez-moi" (2002) was translated by Nicholas Royle as "Speak to me" (1999). It is a short story that integrates the post-1975 experience of a Vietnamese man in Paris with his pre-1975 experience living in Saigon. It explores the relationship between the French, American and Vietnamese cultures, contextualised within the Francophone host culture. However, its translation into English re-contextualises it within the Anglo-American host culture, reversing the perspective from French to American. A transdiasporic analysis reveals that by triangulating the source and target cultures with the diasporic home, we can access in the translation a representation of the historical relations between the two hosts. The analysis therefore enables us to consider the impact these relations have had on the development of the diasporic network and their respective positions as hosts.

### 3.1 French-Vietnamese diasporic literature

The first published examples of Francophone-Vietnamese literature appeared in Vietnam in 1913.<sup>6</sup> The French colonial *mission civilisatrice* had installed Franco-Vietnamese schools and universities, helping to boost the levels of literacy in the country. Combined with the Vietnamese Confucianist valuing of "public service, scholarship and verse composition", this new system led many students to work for the colonial government as interpreters and translators (Yeager *Vietnamese Literature in French* 2). Many of these workers then went on to produce literary texts, in some cases with the intention of "explain[ing] aspects of Vietnamese culture to an implied [French] reader" (2-3). The first novels appeared in the 1920s and by the 1930s periodicals were providing a regular outlet for short fiction, essays and poetry. Around this time Vietnamese writers began settling in France; this was perhaps pursued, as Nguyen suggests, to enjoy "a greater freedom with which to express themselves or see with a clearer eye away from the polemics and conflicts of their homeland" (*Between East and West* 10-11), and it contributed to the boom in production of the 1950s and 1960s. At this time major works emerged from Pham Van Ky (*Frères de sang* 1947 and *Celui qui régnera* 1954), Pham Duy Khiem (*Nam et Sylvie* 1957) and Marguerite Duras (*Hiroshima mon amour* 1960), all of whom were based in France. A quieter period followed, in part the result of the increasing influence on Vietnam of American culture and the English language (Nguyen *Vietnamese Voices* 6). By the 1980s, however, production grew again in the context of emerging identity discourses within the Vietnamese diaspora. This latest wave was made up of writers

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<sup>6</sup> Le Van Phat's *Contes et Legendes du pays d'annam*, a collection of fables, and Nguyen Van Xiem's *Mes Heures perdues*, a collection of poetry (Yeager *The Vietnamese Novel in French* 46).

who were born in Vietnam during the colonial period and who left for France in the 1960s, including Kim Lefèvre (*Metisse blanche* 1989) and Phan Huy Duong (*Un amour metequé: nouvelles* 1994), as well as a slightly younger generation who left later as a result of the war with America, the most prominent example of whom is Linda Lê (*Un si tendre vampire*, 1986). These latter two waves of Francophone-Vietnamese authors all emerged from a Vietnam free of French government, and thus the relationship they had with their literary language of choice was inherently different to those in the earlier wave. Nguyen notes that in the case of the youngest of these cohorts, who were associated with the more visible post-1975 diaspora, the use of French “no longer characterize[d] the voice of a small or embattled group of exiles, but the expressed vision of a well-established and thriving community” (*Vietnamese Voices* 181). In addition, their rupture from Vietnam meant that their work is more concerned with the experience of “violent fissures in place and personality”, exploring ideas of “displacement, self-image, and identity” (182). It is within this context that the short story “Parlez-moi” can be situated.

### 3.2 “Speak to me”

#### 3.2.1 Linda Lê’s source text

Linda Lê has been described as “one of the most provocative, daring, and fearless writers working in France today”, someone who “continually surprises her readers with explorations of the legacies of post-colonialism as she lives them in contemporary Europe” (Yeager “Foreword” i). From an academic point of view, her prominence as a writer is reflected not only in the range of critical material that has emerged over the past decade,<sup>7</sup> but in the organisation of symposiums dedicated to her work.<sup>8</sup> Across her 12 novels, two collections of short stories and one collection of essays, there is an ongoing fascination with macabre themes, images of death, ghosts, fire, violence and abandonment, but also with the recurring theme of writing as a kind of refuge or salvation. It is tempting to identify an autobiographical strain in her work given she grew up in a war-torn Vietnam, she was separated from her father when she was taken to France, she exchanged letters with him until his death, and she was hospitalised to treat mental disturbance. However, Lê has explicitly stated that “she does not wish [her work] ... to be read as veiled autobiography. She has aimed for the expression of a more universal sense of loss...” (Kurmman “Linda Lê – Biography”). The notion of universality is supported in the idea that she rejects essentialising labels, resisting ties to a Francophone identity as much as to a Vietnamese one

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<sup>7</sup> See Kurmman “Linda Lê – Biography”.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the Institute of Modern Languages and King’s College London hosted “Linda Lê after the Millennium” in June 2016.

(Kurmann *Intertextual Weaving* 1; Bacholle-Boskovic 2). It is also reflected in her use of intertextuality, which appears to construct for her “an alternative literary ‘family’” (Yeager “Foreword” ii). It is through alternative genealogies that she asserts “a validation of liminal, in-between spaces, and the mobility of the nomad” (ii). Given translation can be considered a metaphor “to reflect on social processes, such as migration, and states of being, such as in-betweenness” (Kaindl and Spitzl 11), this liminal space occupied by Lê’s work can be understood as a translational space, one in which negotiation is constantly taking place.

An extension of this idea emerges from Leslie Barnes’ criticism. Barnes shows how Lê’s writing can be interpreted not simply as what she calls “the dramatization of the exiled Asian’s guilt” (125), but as a resistance to the pressure to conform to a political and social role as an ethnic writer and the need to “assert [one’s] own voice and suffer the consequences” rather than “represent an other that is not one’s self” (125). These ideas are woven into Lê’s 2002 collection of short stories *Autres Jeux avec le Feu* (Other Games with Fire), made up of 14 short stories that reflect on the relationship between writing and death (Kurmann “Linda Lê – Biography”). The most expansive discussion of the book to date is found in Bacholle-Boskovic’s study, which considers the ways in which the stories explore the challenges of loss and of liminality. These themes will emerge again in the present discussion focusing on “Parlez-moi”. While several of the stories in *Autres Jeux* are concerned in some way with Vietnamese-French relations, two in particular, “Parlez-moi” and “Le Visiteur”, focus on Vietnamese-born narrators who have emigrated to France and are negotiating their French-Vietnamese identities. As noted above, they both explore the notion of guilt in the experience of the exile, but their narrators explicitly and self-consciously resist categorisation and pursue instead their self-expression through speech or writing. Of the two, only “Parlez-moi” has been translated into English, and this translation offers an ideal context for exploring the representation of diasporic relations between Vietnamese, Francophone and Anglophone cultures.

The story is structured as a nested narrative: the framing narrative tells of the narrator’s post-war experiences in Paris, including his drive to confess an act of his past to a fellow exile; the story of this confession, set in Saigon during the war, functions as the framed narrative. Henceforth, the narrator’s Parisian experience will be referred to as the framing narrative, while his Saigon experience will be referred to as the framed narrative. The diasporic relationship between the home culture and the host culture is therefore presented as the home being framed or viewed from the perspective of the host. However, an understanding of the story as diasporic also brings to the fore its focus on homeland memory and the act of storytelling. These can be identified not only on a level of structure, given the framing narrative is the storytelling context for the memories of the framed narrative, but also on a level

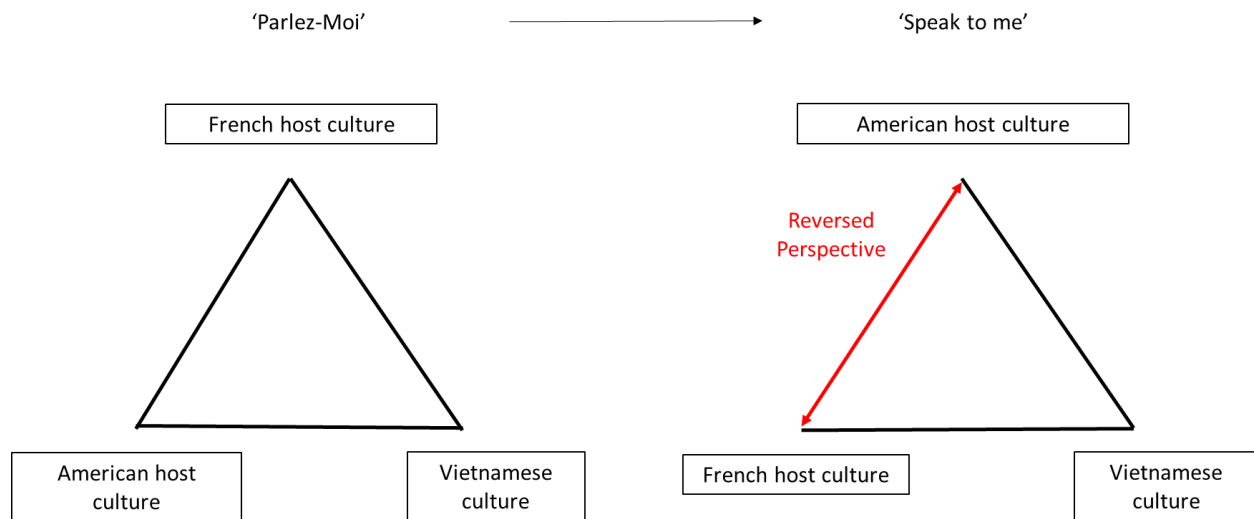
of narrative, in which we have an exiled man seeking to free himself from a negative memory of his homeland through the act of storytelling. He believes that by telling the story he is offering a “confession” (Lê “Speak to me” 146) that will allow him to move beyond the “inertia of the passing days” in his host culture, where he is haunted by the voice of the “woman [he] killed” (147). However, at the end he does not appear to experience the freedom he expected: instead, the final image is of his “advance into the night...stripped of the possibility of redemption” (147). The title, translated as “Speak to me”, reflects this end through its imperative tense, which renders it a call to communication with no indication of any response. The experience of isolation is a common trope in diasporic, exile or migrant literatures, where the sense of difference between self and other is at the centre of attempts to connect with the host culture.

### 3.2.2 Nicholas Royle’s target text

Royle’s English translation “Speak to me” was published in the *Time Out Book of Paris Short Stories* in 1999, also edited by Royle. In addition to his work as a translator, Royle works as a lecturer in creative writing at Manchester Metropolitan University, a literary reviewer and an editor. He has put together sixteen anthologies of short stories, among which are several editions of the *Best of British Short Stories* and the *Time Out* short story collections. While he works as a translator less often than he does in his other literary roles, his attraction to “Parlez-moi” as a source text might be understood within his proclaimed literary interests in “surrealism, crime fiction and fiction about place” (“Nicholas Royle”).

Approaching this text for transdiasporic analysis, we can identify the diasporic home culture as the protagonist’s Vietnamese background, and the host cultures as the French environment he has experienced as a diasporic subject, as well as the Anglophone environment presented via the translated representation of the narrative; the latter, however, is already present in the narrative via the protagonist’s references to American culture in Vietnam. The text therefore represents relations between the French and American host cultures and the Vietnamese home culture, where the main perspective of the French is swapped for the Anglophone through the process of translation; I categorise this as Type 1, Reversed host culture perspective (Figure 4). In translation studies this could be referred to as a target-oriented translation, one which has allowed the reader to easily access the narrative through the familiarity of the target culture, rather than framing their reading experience through a foreignised source culture perspective. In a transdiasporic analysis, however, the target orientation is not an indication of a translation approach, but rather it indicates the potential for using the translation to triangulate the relations between the two host cultures and home culture of the diaspora.

**Case study 1**  
**Reversed Host Culture Perspective**



*Figure 4*

### 3.3 Transdiasporic analysis

#### 3.3.1 Identifying translational moments

As outlined in chapter one, the first step to undertaking a transdiasporic analysis is to identify translational moments, or those moments of interaction between the home culture and the host cultures. Within this text's exploration of the diasporic experience, there are interesting representations of the translation process produced both through broader thematic representations and explicit multilingual interactions. In terms of broader representations, we can interpret the narrative of the migrant's failed attempts to communicate with his host culture as an analogy of a failed attempt at the process of translation. The analogy of the migrant experience and the translation process was most famously expressed by Salman Rushdie who likened migrants to texts being "borne across" or "translated" (Rushdie 29). Within this framework, the narrator's current situation in Paris is the result of an attempt to be translated from Vietnam as his source culture to France as his target culture. More specifically, his desire to be redeemed by the host culture for an act he committed in his home culture is like the need for a translation to be freed from its source culture via acceptance into its target culture. If this acceptance is refused, as is suggested in the fact that the narrator is left "groping [his] way" through a Paris that has "turn[ed] away from [him]" (Lê "Speak to me" 147), then the translation remains bound to its source. This can be the result of a foreignised translation, what Friedrich Schleiermacher conceived of as a text that "moves the reader" toward the writer, asking them to engage with the "foreign", or the cultural other (2012: 49). In this sense the narrator's experience represents an accepted theoretical

approach to translation, and yet his feelings of isolation speak to its potentially negative consequences. Lawrence Venuti outlines these consequences: “in its effort to do right abroad, [the foreignised] translation practice must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience” (*The Translator’s Invisibility* 16). In other words, the target reader might reject such an “alien” experience, resulting in the rejection of the text, or in terms of the analogy, resulting in the isolation of the migrant. Venuti’s alternative is an approach to translation that still resists assimilation into the target culture, because this can dominate and essentially erase the source culture, but at the same time he requires translations to resist their source culture because the process of recreating them for a new environment should demand a certain amount of change. To enable this double “resistance”, Venuti draws on Philip Lewis’ concept of “abusive fidelity” as a strategy that looks not at the *meaning* of a text to be translated but at the “play of signifiers” that work to create meaning in the source text, and whose play can be recreated to create meaning in the target text (*The Translator’s Invisibility* 18). If we re-conceptualise the narrative of “Speak to me” within Venuti’s approach, it could be argued that in the narrator’s need to confess his past sins about Vietnam to someone in Paris, he is demonstrating an inability to engage with his target culture through any framework *other* than his source culture. Thus, his rejection and isolation is the result of him not allowing enough resistance of his source culture, despite resisting assimilation into his target culture. In this light, a transdiasporic analysis of “Speak to me” that draws on the migration-translation analogy could propose that an English translation of the story offers the opportunity to revisit this failed attempt at translation from Vietnamese to French, by applying the Anglophone discourse, championed by Venuti, of the translator’s visibility and their duty toward a double resistance. This raises the question of whether the migrant’s process of translation from Vietnam to an Anglophone country would create a different outcome, due to differences between Francophone and Anglophone relations with the Vietnamese diasporic home culture. Thus we move toward a comparison of the French-Vietnamese and Anglo-American-Vietnamese encounters, and subsequently to an understanding of the source-target relationship established via a triangulation with its diasporic network.

This demonstrates one potential avenue for transdiasporic analysis based on a broader representation of the translation process. The current case study, however, will focus on avenues that emerge from translational moments created by explicit multilingual representations of the translation process. These are mostly interactions between the two host cultures and the home culture that remain beneath the surface of the text’s English representation. The framing narrative, for example, being set in Paris, is taking place largely in French, while the framed narrative, being set in Saigon, is taking place in Vietnamese; thus, the English is hiding the distinction between the French and Vietnamese languages.



This tells us that the dominant technique for multilingualism is referential restriction, meaning the translation process is present in the very representation of the narrative. This technique has been maintained from the source text, which was represented almost entirely in French, however, this maintenance has created a doubled translation process in the case of the Vietnamese setting, where the language of the setting has been translated first from Vietnamese to French for its source text representation, and then from French to English for its target text representation. What stands out within this are a few instances of vehicular matching, which create particularly interesting translational moments.

One of them, occurring in the French setting of the framing narrative, maintains some French from the source text and so through translation produces a visible multilingual reference among the English. This reference re-evaluates an aspect of French-Vietnamese relations from an Anglophone point of view. It is a reference to a French-language text, *Liberté sur parole*, which is the French translation of an originally Spanish text by Octavio Paz, *Libertad bajo palabra*. The title is not given an English translation; it is assumed that there is enough similarity between the French and the direct English translation “Liberty on parole” for a non-French speaker to glean some meaning, though they are unlikely to recognise it as a text already translated from the Spanish. By exploring this reference first through a close reading of the text and second through a distant reading of its diasporic context, a transdiasporic analysis can use it to identify a representation of the historical relations between France and America leading up to the war in Vietnam. This will be explored in detail below.

Another instance of vehicular matching, occurring in the Vietnamese setting of the framed narrative, maintains some English that was visible among the source text French, but through the translation produces a reference that now matches the surrounding language of representation. This reference re-evaluates an aspect of Anglophone-Vietnamese relations, initially presented from a French point of view, from the Anglophone point of view. The reference is to the American name “Charlie”, which originated in American English as a term for North Vietnamese soldiers; it was then appropriated by the Southern Vietnamese to refer to the same. In the French source context, the visibility of this English terms conveys a French perspective on Anglo-American-Vietnamese relations, but when translated into an Anglophone context, this is re-evaluated from the reversed point of view. By exploring this reference first through a close reading of the text and second through a distance reading of its diasporic context, a transdiasporic analysis can use it to identify a representation of the differences between French and American relations with Vietnam during the war. This will be explored in detail below.

Thus, this analysis will consider two translated engagements within the text's representation of the Vietnamese diaspora, one originating in French-Vietnamese relations and the other in Anglophone-Vietnamese relations. The fact that we can identify an engagement from each host culture is a result of the text being a "reversed host culture perspective": the narrative already incorporates both source and target host cultures, therefore there are instances of both engaging with the home. Being able to identify both of these home-host engagements is therefore particular to texts that we can identify as this first transdiasporic Type.

### 3.3.2 *Liberté sur parole*; or Surrealism and the First Indochina War

The first translational moment used here to approach a transdiasporic reading is the reference to the literary text *Liberté sur parole*, which links a network of associations in the story between female figures, migrant discourses and the history of French-Vietnamese relations. The reference is made when the narrator finds the Vietnamese woman to whom he ends up confessing his story, and she is carrying the book as she wanders lonely, like him, through the streets of Paris. As a French text represented in an English translation, its significance might be clarified by the reader through a process of research that reveals its surrealist background; the relevance of surrealism to a narrative about Vietnamese exile might then be situated in the historical relationship between French surrealists and the presence of France in Vietnam. By exploring this literary reference in relation to the Francophone and Anglophone cultures as hosts of the Vietnamese diaspora, we can produce a transdiasporic analysis of the story that explores how an Anglophone perspective sheds light on the historical relationship between France and Vietnam, and on the evolution of the relationship between America and Vietnam. As an outcome of analysing a translated diasporic text, this demonstrates the value of triangulating the host cultures to understand the nature of their historical relations, and the impact of these relations on their subsequent role in the diaspora.

#### Close reading

The translational moment represented in *Liberté sur parole* should be contextualised in the narrator's experience of telling his story to a fellow Vietnamese exile, during which the narrative draws on a complex web of intertextual references.<sup>9</sup> As the narrative opens we learn that he is addressing a listener, someone he has invited to his apartment. He tells his listener that since leaving his wife Elena he has lived alone, trying to paint but finding it impossible. He has been living in isolation for so long

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<sup>9</sup> The significance of intertextual reference in Linda Lê's work is the subject of the most recent monograph on her work, *Intertextual Weaving in the Work of Linda Lê* by Alexandra Kurmann.

now that his hair is turning white, he is developing a “stoop” (Lê “Speak to me” 141) and he has a habit of watching out his window all night, imagining himself talking to and embracing women in other apartments. He imagines that they, too, are lonely, and when he sees them leave their building he follows them through the streets of Paris. He recalls one in particular who he watched drinking a cup of tea at a café. The scene had made him think of a “phrase [he] remembered reading somewhere”: “a lone woman with a forlorn cup of tea” (142). He moves on in his story with no explanation of this reference, and the Anglophone reader is left wondering what its significance might be. There is in fact no English language reference matching this phrase, and the reader might conclude that its translation from French has severed it from its intertextual link. Interestingly, this realisation mirrors the experience of the narrator at this point, who is aware of some significance in the image of the woman, but is unable to follow it through his memory. While it is conceivable that the original French phrase was not intended to link to anything specific, thus mirroring the narrator’s experience for the Francophone reader, without this knowledge the reader of the translation can conclude that this severed link is an element of the translation, one which presents it as a text with a unique perspective. That is, supposing there is an original link, regardless of whether or not the Anglophone reader can access it by searching for an equivalent phrase in French, the signaling of that link serves a purpose in itself: it indicates a movement back to, or a remembering of, other texts, performing a nostalgic nod to the past.<sup>10</sup> This action is reflected in the figure of the woman drinking tea who appears haunted by her past, having a “face [that bears] traces of age and suffering” and displaying nervous tics such as trembling lips and a repetitive motion of sweeping her hair out of her right eye (Lê “Speak to me” 142). The narrator likens her to three female figures, and in light of the earlier intertextual signaling, these might be interpreted as representing new intertextual references that may also have been severed from their French links. First she is the “Unknown woman, that lonely sister from the past”, second she is “half child, half mother, whom we seek and are happy to view from afar”, and third she is “Iphigenia climbing the steps to the sacrificial altar” (142).

The first might be traced by the Anglophone reader in a French context to the “unknown woman of the Seine”, or in French “*L’inconnue*”, a girl who washed up dead on the Parisian banks in the early twentieth century. Her serene facial expression was made into a death mask which became an object of admiration and raised the mystery of her death to something of a Parisian legend (Zeidler). As a figure

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<sup>10</sup> Anglophone research would in fact reveal that the phrase most likely refers to the 1925 work *Mon corps et moi* by French surrealist René Crevel, in chapter three of which the narrator states “Une femme seule boit un thé triste” (Crevel 17). The work was translated in 2005 by Robert Bononno as *My body and I*. The significance of this reference will be discussed at a later point.

who has been translated into other cultural contexts, most notably Anglophone, the ideas of frailty and innocence that she embodies and which are brought to the fore by invoking her here are accessible to the reader of this translation. The second intertextual reference, “half child, half mother” is more opaque and is therefore likely to serve simply as a reinforcement of the ideas already suggested through the “unknown woman”. Readers literate in surrealist imagery however might recall Breton’s use of the concept of the *femme-enfant* in his second manifesto, referred to in Anglophone contexts as the “woman-child”. This figure has a certain “naïve and spontaneous innocence” that allows her closer access to the unconscious that is unlocked through expression (Kaplan 47). This interpretation can be supported by a surrealist connection with *L’inconnue*, who was utilised by Breton, among others, as an exemplar of the way in which nineteenth-century art represented women (Saliot 96). Further consideration will be given to surrealist references below, however at this point we can identify in the combined associations of these two figures a view of the woman drinking tea as one who is universally appealing for her innocence, a figure who unites people and enables freer expression of emotion and thought.

The reference to Iphigenia adds to these associations. Iphigenia was a Greek mythological figure, the daughter of Agamemnon who had been commanded to sacrifice her so that his ships could sail to war at Troy. Her story comes to us in many different versions, some ending with her death, others with her survival and others again with the appearance of a second, secret Iphigenia. To an Anglophone reader the most well-known version is likely to be Euripides’ play *Iphigenia from Aulis*, which sees her put to death after a heroic declamation. In some versions of the play a deer is swapped for her body at the last minute, though this is generally considered to be an alteration of Euripides’ work. Nonetheless, the figure of Iphigenia is portrayed as solitary and heroic, shedding a fateful and defiant light on the character of the woman drinking tea. However, the multiple versions of Euripides’ play force us to ask whether it might not be possible or morally preferable to save Iphigenia from the fate of the Gods and send something non-human in her place; in other words, can we do something to overcome the Gods’ desires? This line of thought suggests that the intertextual web in “Speak to me” is developing associations with the act of resisting authority and a humanist philosophy that underscores the collective responsibility we have toward fellow human beings who need someone to listen to them.

While these references in the English translation are broad and relatively open to interpretation, they clearly focus on manifestations of the female figure and they reflect on the nature of gazing upon an “other” who appears to be less fortunate than the self. At this point the narrator moves on in his story, explaining to his listener why he has invited him/her to his apartment. It is only now that the reader learns his listener is female, and that “She comes from the same country as [him], from the same

Vietnam that [they] both left, she as a child, [he] already an adult” (Lê “Speak to me” 142). The similarities here identified between the listener and the narrator are immediately paralleled with differences: while she is an “escapee” of Vietnam like himself, she is someone whose face betrays “neither expectation nor nostalgia”, someone who seems free and assured as if she were not weighed down like he is by trauma (142). This is illustrated in the way her hair “floated in the wind, a flag declaring [her] freedom”, and it is contrasted with how he runs “behind [her], [his] chains rattling, chains of anxiety, of remorse” (142-3). There is the implication that while they share a common diasporic experience, she represents the strong diasporic subject and he the victimised one, an idea that is supported in his role as representative for “all those lonely people without a voice” who rise up and speak through the first words he says to her (143). This compulsion to rise up and speak, however, is also a compulsion to be spoken to, as the first words he says are “Speak to me”; that is, he is displaying a need for dialogue and communication. As discussed above, the silencing of the exile/immigrant is a common theme in diasporic literature, and it is most often explored through the experience of living in a language that is foreign. Here however it is explored through the experience of trauma and guilt, replacing the concept of language difference which is so often at the centre of the exile’s experience with the concept of non-language specific communication. This sudden revelation of a cultural and discursive context, that is the Vietnamese diaspora in France and the accompanying experience of feeling silenced, immediately re-frames the established intertextual web.

In this new context, further cultural and intertextual references serve to transfer the ideas already established from the figure of the woman drinking tea to both the listener and the narrator as Vietnamese exiles in France. This is done first through a reference to a musical tradition: the narrator recalls watching the listener walk along the *quai* of the Seine, past a guitarist who is playing “some fado melody, an exile’s lament” (Lê “Speak to me” 142). *Fado*, or “fate”, is a Portuguese tradition of music that is said to express *saudade*, “a feeling of nostalgia for the past”, and its lyrics usually express “mournful songs of loss, absence and other forms of despair” (Buck 94). The guitarist “watched [the listener] go by” as he played, implying that he identifies in her the subject of his music, and thus the text transfers the ideas of frailty, hardship and a fated position to the female listener, and by association, to the narrator. The narrator also recalls that she had been holding “a book, *Liberté sur parole*” (Lê “Speak to me” 143). As already noted, the title remains untranslated for the Anglophone reader, who can therefore interpret it in one of two ways, either as best they can by approximating the French words with English words, or by researching the title of the book and coming to understand its background. Either way, by swapping the French perspective on this reference to an Anglophone one, the text accords significance to it because of the explicit translational moment it now represents; this swapping

of host culture perspectives allows for an analysis of the text that draws on a unique triangulation of Vietnamese diasporic relations.

If the Anglophone reader, faced with the French title *Liberté sur parole*, finds the words are similar enough to the English “liberty” and “parole” that they can guess at its significance, they are likely to relate it to the idea of “freedom on parole”, or conditional freedom, in the sense that a paroled prisoner’s freedom is subject to certain conditions. In light of the earlier description of the Vietnamese exile, someone whose hair was like “a flag declaring [her] freedom”, this interpretation suggests that her freedom as a diasporic subject is conditional, and that frailty, hardship and a fated position might constitute such conditions. It has been noted however by an English translator of Paz’s original Spanish work that the choice of “parole” in an English translation “carries a legal connotation that would require a shift in emphasis on this aspect at the expense of the work’s fundamental concern with and exploration of language” (Concilio 7). This is fundamental to note when pursuing a unique reading of “Speak to me” as a translation, because it demonstrates how the English translation is lacking the intertextual significance of the French source text; this is because the French can draw on a double meaning of “parole” (“word” and “parole”), linking the reference to the story’s broader concern with the exile/immigrant’s need to speak. Concilio also notes that in Paz’s text, “Freedom is positioned under language because the former is a construct born of language. The former cannot exist independently of the latter. Language itself can also be oppressive, as in the translator’s struggle to find a term that reveals the sense of the Spanish in English” (8). Thus, the exile/immigrant’s need to “speak” is *the* condition of their freedom, they cannot have one without the other, and so it makes sense that the narrator is pursuing communication to attain freedom from his traumatic memory. However as noted, in “Speak to me” the restricted connotations of the word “parole” are likely to underscore the hardship of the exile’s freedom, rather than the exile’s need for communication. As Concilio observes, the idea of freedom being conditional upon language is itself represented in the challenge that this reference poses to the full transfer of meaning from Spanish to English (via French).

The second approach an Anglophone reader might take to this translational moment is to research the name of the text and so come to better understand its background. One would find it is the title of a collection of poetry by Octavio Paz, originally published in 1961 under the Spanish title *Libertad bajo palabra* and translated into French in 1966 by Jean-Clarence Lambert. In an English-language interview published in *The Paris Review* in 1991, Paz explained some of his thinking behind *Libertad bajo palabra*, or what he refers to in English as “Freedom on Parole”. He confirms that he “wanted to say that human freedom is conditional”, but he also reveals that this idea is connected to language because “parole means ‘speech,’ ‘word,’ ‘word of honor’”, thus, “the condition under which you are

free is language, human awareness" (MacAdam). In other words, when an understanding of the translational moment is approached via research rather than approximation, the intertextual reference to Paz's poetry collection can function as part of the broader themes of the story.

This reference also has important implications for the end of the story. Once the narrator has told the framed story of his past, which is explored in detail through the next translational moment, the framing story returns and he reflects on what his life has become in Paris. He personifies the city as a woman in "haughty decline", turning "her warty face to the watching world", her "leprous beauty" moving and incestuous. He refers to himself as "a phantom haunting the streets of Paris" (Lê "Speak to me" 146), seeking out those who have been "dispossessed", beginning with a "thin old woman dressed in a torn raincoat, who stalks past agitatedly, insulting passers-by, targeting foreigners in particular" (146). He also realises in this moment that "it's in vain that [he begs], speak to me" (147), that Paris cannot offer him the atonement he seeks. He had been hoping to enact a "confession" that would relieve him of the burden of his past (146), but instead he is fated to continue walking the streets of Paris seeking communication, a phantom crying out "Speak to me". The final image is of him "[advancing] into the night and, groping [his] way, hopelessly astray, stripped of the possibility of redemption, [and he joins] the choir of the lonely" (147). In these final passages, we return to the surrealist discourse, if the Anglophone reader is able to recognise it, which had been introduced earlier through the intertextual references to the female figures. It should be noted that Octavio Paz has been linked with the surrealist movement in France (Echevarria), and if this emerges from the reader's research into the background of *Liberté sur parole*, there is more likelihood that other surrealist references will be picked up as a result. In particular, it is important to note that the female figure was central to early surrealist thought, thanks to Breton's tendency to draw on women as a representation of the unconscious mind, or as a muse for automatic writing (Conley 1). In "Speak to me" we can identify the presence of the unconscious in the narrator's Vietnamese wife who haunts his memory and his conscience, just as we can identify the impact of the muse in the fellow Vietnamese exile. In this final part of the story the female personification of Paris looks back to the earlier intertextual references to the *femme-enfant*, the unknown woman of the Seine and Iphigenia, three mythologies which have given way to a mythologising of the city of Paris itself, the "city of ragged speech, city of drowning stares, city of hands reaching into the void" (Lê "Speak to me" 147).<sup>11</sup> The connection here between the city space and the female figure recalls Breton's surrealist work *Nadja*, which explores the ghostly relations

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<sup>11</sup> We could parallel these three descriptors to the three earlier female figures: the "drowning stare" relates easily enough to the woman of the Seine, while "ragged speech" can be related to the automatic writing associated with Breton's "femme-enfant" and "hands reaching into the void" can be related to the helpless position of Iphigenia.

between a narrator and the woman he encounters on the city streets. He proceeds to haunt her, or it is perhaps she who haunts him, and there is a similar ambiguity here between the haunting and the haunted among the narrator, his dead wife, his fellow exile and Paris itself.<sup>12</sup>

### Distant reading

We can expand this close reading into a transdiasporic analysis via further contextual research by starting with the fact that the text *Liberté sur parole* was written by someone involved with Parisian surrealist circles. Moreover, the discourse of freedom that it highlights was one that these surrealist circles related to French-Vietnamese relations at the end of the colonial period. This is evident for example in the surrealist tract *Liberté est un mot vietnamien* (Peret), later translated into English as “Freedom is a Vietnamese word” (Richardson and Fijalkowski). The text related the ideology of surrealism to the movement against the Indochina war, what it called an “imperialistic enterprise” that ensures freedom “cannot be pursued [in France] so long as the country supports a form of servitude elsewhere” (Peret).<sup>13</sup> By extending the intertextual web of “Speak to me” to encompass this link with the imperialist relationship between France and Vietnam, we can consider the relevance of the imperialist venture of America and the position of servitude experienced by Vietnam in the decades following the Indochina war.

Under the Eisenhower government, the official American position on the role played by the French in the Indochina war was that it signified an attempt to “hold on to [France’s] colonial empire”, and as such, it was a motivating factor behind the intervention of America in Vietnam (Statler 3-6). This position is supported by the fact that in 1946, the same year the war broke out, the US freed the Philippines from colonial domination, and in 1959 Alaska and Hawaii were freed from the colonial label by being drawn in as American states. In other words, although America’s later domination of Vietnam is difficult to classify as anything other than neo-colonial, in the 1940s-1950s there was evidence of a policy that viewed the maintenance of colonial empires as unfavourable (Statler 3-6). Thus, although they were based on different motivations, the Eisenhower government and the French Surrealists were essentially aligned as anti-Indochina war. Ironically, the US perspective of the French as an “unreliable and weak ally” during this time was a factor underlying their later rejection of “the lessons that the French experience in Indochina had to offer” (4). In other words, rather than learning from the French defeat at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the US government of the 1960s insisted on escalating its

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<sup>12</sup> The notion of a female haunting is one that has been explored at length in surrealist discourses. For discussions, see Kirsch; Johnson.

<sup>13</sup> My translaiton – “Il est faux que l’on puisse defendre la liberté *ici* en imposant la servitude *ailleurs*”.



military presence in the hope that it would overpower the Vietnamese. There is therefore a discernible chain of events linking the colonial relations between France and Vietnam and the defeat of the Americans in Vietnam in 1975, creating the Vietnamese diaspora.

Bringing this chain of events to bear on a contemporary diasporic context, we can observe that any comparison between the French and Anglo-American host cultures must be contextualised within a long history of triangulation with Vietnam. This history relies just as much on the political and military relations between the three nations as it does on mythology and contemporary developments in art and culture. In the English translation of Lê's text, the translational process represented in *Liberté sur parole* is highlighted through the use of vehicular matching, drawing the reader's attention to its cultural associations, and the links these have with the broader narrative. By applying a transdiasporic analysis and identifying how these links in the Francophone context can be understood in the framework of an Anglophone context, we recognise that Francophone-Anglophone relations prior to the Vietnamese diaspora can play an important role in determining their nature as diasporic hosts. Thus we emerge with a unique perspective on the Vietnamese diasporic network represented in the translation of this text.

### 3.3.3 "Charlie": or, allegory and the American war in Vietnam

The second translational moment used here to approach a transdiasporic analysis of "Speak to me" is the reference to "Charlie:", a euphemism of American origin used to refer to the Viet Cong during the war in Vietnam. The reference is made when the narrator, recalling his recruitment to the underground group in Saigon, reflects on the character of his recruiter and their respective relations to the power of American influence; it can be viewed as lending an allegorical quality to the narrative, positing the Viet Cong recruiter and the narrator as two competing aspects of the Vietnamese culture. As a French text represented in English translation, the use of this Anglophone term is doubly translated, having been transferred once already into a Francophone context, and in being transferred back to the Anglophone, carrying with it aspects of the French perspective. By exploring this double translation in relation to the Francophone and Anglophone cultures as hosts of the Vietnamese diaspora, we can produce a transdiasporic analysis of the story that explores how a Francophone perspective sheds light on the historical relationship between America and Vietnam. Extending the conclusions reached in the previous analysis, this outcome demonstrates the value of triangulating host cultures to understand how their historical relations impact on their perspective of one another as diasporic hosts.

## Close reading

The above reading of “Speak to me” draws only on the framing narrative, but the second translational moment that can lead us toward a triangulated understanding is located within the framed narrative. As the narrator begins telling his fellow exile the story of his past in Saigon, he illustrates clearly the importance of its location, differentiating it from Paris and personifying both cities (in a move that pre-empts the female personification discussed above) so that they play an active role in his narrative. According to De Certeau, “stories about places...are composed with the world’s debris”, filled with what he calls “the leftovers from nominations, taxonomies, heroic or comic predicates, etc”, with “heterogeneous and even contrary elements” (107). In the case of this story about Saigon, there are two heterogeneous nominations that belong to a taxonomy of Anglophone nicknames used during the war in Vietnam: “Charlie” and “Yankee”. They are introduced soon after the story has set its scene; we have returned to the narrator’s twenties, when he was married and addicted to gambling every night. He felt happy but there was “an emptiness inside [him] that needed filling” (Lê “Speak to me” 144); he believes he “would have continued to lead this life if an envoy of destiny had not come along to propose another way” (144). This man was Charlie, a communist recruiter for the Viet Cong who convinces the narrator to “play with bombs” rather than with dice (145). His name is used seven times, the first as a general description referring to the man’s occupation – “he was an agent of the north, a Charlie, as the Yankees called them” (145) – and the remaining six as a personal name given to him by the narrator. Interestingly, it is the only name used in the framed narrative, as the narrator never names his first wife. Moreover, its use stands out in “Speak to me” because the only other name employed is that of the narrator’s second wife Elena, who is mentioned twice in passing in the framing narrative. “Yankee” meanwhile is used twice in the framed narrative, but both times as a general nomination for Americans, once by Charlie when describing the foreigners in his country, and again by the narrator as seen above, in reference to the origin of Charlie’s name. While Elena and Yankee therefore appear to perform a practical function, the one referring to an individual person and the other to a general population, Charlie performs a double function, referring to both a person and a general population. This suggests that we can use the nomination to read the narrative simultaneously as a fictional story and as an allegorical representation.

An allegorical reading of the narrator’s story can be contextualised within Jameson’s concept of national allegory.<sup>14</sup> While this has been extensively critiqued, particularly from a postcolonial

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<sup>14</sup> Frederic Jameson coined the concept of “national allegory” in “Third-world Literature in the era of multinational capitalism”, and contextualises it within the field of world literature. He follows a Marxist approach to world literature, understanding it as a global system as put forward by Wallerstein and Moretti. He identifies a need to

perspective that is suspicious of its homogenisation of cultures into an idea of the third world,<sup>15</sup> Imre Szeman revisits Jameson's broader framework and re-asserts its value. For Jameson, he explains, there is a "genuine, material difference between the first and third worlds that is expressed socially and culturally" (52). This difference has been the consequence of striving to "maintain a different form of social life while accepting the material and technological advantages offered by the West", and it is manifested in "a different organisation of private and public in societies that were the subjects of colonialism as opposed to its agents" (52). Thus Jameson claims that one fundamental difference between literature of the so-called first and third worlds is that the former is premised on a separation of the private and the public, so that the individualist nature of the western novel does not directly lend itself to a broader public reading, but in third world cultures the private narratives of the individual are inseparable from broader public narratives, so that a literary text can "always" be read as an allegory for the nation itself (Jameson 69). In this context, Vietnamese literary production becomes a potential site of national allegory, and thus the narrator's story can be viewed as a national allegory embedded within the diasporic narrative that is "Speak to me". This offers an interesting case in which the nationalist aspects of allegory can be explored within the context of the transnational aspects of the diasporic.

The contrast between Charlie and the narrator is central to understanding the story as an allegory. Charlie is a serious man who is prepared to "give his life for his country" (Lê "Speak to me" 144), while the narrator is a coward (146) who, when offered a mission, opts instead to take the poison he had been given to swallow in case he is caught by the enemy; this is the point at which he discovers his wife, neglected at home, has taken it first, and thus he flees Vietnam feeling he has betrayed both "love and country" (146). However, Charlie is also someone who contrives and resorts to threats to get what he wants, so his depiction as a brave man is complicated by the notion that he is not to be trusted. The depiction of the narrator as a coward is therefore also complicated by the notion that he was cornered into committing himself to a mission he did not want to undertake. On an allegorical level, Charlie represents the contradictions of courage and recklessness by embodying the threat of an underground Communist recruiter who would not treat kindly those who let him down; this is evident in his use of nationalist metaphors such as "the soul of the homeland" and "the country was bleeding", and in the physical aggression implied in the fact that "certain words – 'American imperialism', 'freedom', 'patriotic fervour' sprang from his mouth like little balls of fire" (144-5). The narrator

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explore within this system the idea of a "first world" and "third world" literature. He understood the latter to be created under fundamentally different conditions to the former both socially and politically.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Bill Ashcroft replaced "third world literature" with the more nuanced "post-colonial literature" whose "dominant mode of representation ... is allegorical and hence allegory becomes the site of cultural struggle, a prime site of counter-discourse" (*Postcolonial Transformation* 105).

meanwhile represents the contradictions of fear and indifference by embodying the vulnerable who are taken advantage of under a harsh political regime; this is evident in the helplessness portrayed in his “fever, heart palpitations, the shakes” when faced with what he calls “the gambling demon” (144). The interaction between Charlie and the narrator therefore allows “Speak to me” to engage with the politics of the war in Vietnam through a representation that resists the “naïve mode of one-to-one mapping” that the concept of allegory has traditionally implied (Szeman 49). Instead, the ambiguity in these characters breaks down the binaries of hero/enemy and dissenter/victim, representing Jameson’s notion of an “allegorical spirit [that] is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogeneous representation of the symbol” (Jameson 73).

The translational moment of the framed narrative is embedded in this allegorical reading, because Charlie represents an Anglophone nomination translated into a Francophone context. Moreover, in “Speak to me” as an English translation, he becomes a translational element in translation because he has moved again from his Francophone context into an Anglophone context; in other words, the Francophone host perspective has been swapped for an Anglophone host perspective. In the first instance, the figure of Charlie highlights the differentiation between the American war in Vietnam and the colonial history of French Indochina, and in the second instance he is reinvested with a greater range of Anglophone associations that must be considered in light of the Francophone context he now carries with him. As a translational concept in translation, Charlie has the potential to offer triangulated insight into the relations between the Francophone and Anglophone contexts of the Vietnamese diaspora.

### **Distant reading**

To explore this further we need to establish a deeper understanding of the American and French attitudes toward the war in Vietnam, and their associations with the concept of Charlie. Considering first the French attitudes, it is important to return to the mid-1960s, when America’s intervention in Vietnam was being outwardly opposed by many prominent French figures. In 1966 President Charles de Gaulle delivered a speech in Phnom Penh denouncing US intervention in Vietnam (“Discours de Phnom-Penh, 1er septembre 1966”). In the same year Jean-Paul Sartre delivered a speech claiming that the war in Vietnam was “the fight against American hegemony, against American imperialism” and “the defeat of the Vietnamese people...would politically be [France’s] defeat, the defeat of all free people” (Keenan xi). In the following year an article was published by renowned French scholar of Vietnam Philippe Devillers, who wrote that “concerning the problem of Vietnam, for over six years now France has adopted a view

that is becoming increasingly different and even opposed to that held by the United States" (569).<sup>16</sup> Claiming for France the role of "the western country who knows Indochina best" (587),<sup>17</sup> Devillers asserts that the official national position on the US intervention in Vietnam from the 1950s and in particular from its escalation in the early 1960s is "erroneous, cruel, inconsistent with the central facts of the situation, and potentially very dangerous for the future of Asian-European relations" (587).<sup>18</sup> He explains that the official position believes the Vietnamese need to "recover their independence and their sovereignty" (589), but the only way this can be achieved is if "the United States, like China, ... *accept* that they need to remain outside the Indochinese space" (589)<sup>19</sup> so that the "South Vietnamese can freely decide on their fate" (592).<sup>20</sup> The ideas espoused by de Gaulle, Sartre and Devillers mirror to some extent those of "anti-Vietnam war" spokespeople in the United States from 1965, however they are fed by a very specific political position. Devillers cites Vietnamese prime minister Pham Van Dong as naming the French responsible for ensuring the Geneva accords are respected in Vietnam (572); the fundamental idea of the accords was that "Indochina ... would constitute from that point forward a politically- and militarily- neutralised zone, free from the intervention of bigger powers" (570),<sup>21</sup> and yet this is clearly violated by the US intervention. As a factor contributing to France's failure to fulfil its responsibility, Devillers cites the distraction caused by the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962), and while the error was recognised and General de Gaulle called for a re-sitting for the Geneva Conference in July 1964, hoping to examine the extent of the problem in Indochina, President Johnson declined and proceeded instead to increase his military support in Vietnam (586). This history behind the Francophone context of the war in Vietnam highlights the fact that resistance to American imperialism was not a position restricted to Indochina; this means that the apparent dichotomy in Lê's story between Saigon and Paris, or Vietnam and France, is complicated by the idea that France was, at least on an official level, sympathetic to Vietnam when it came to American intervention. Read in this way, Charlie and the narrator become two complex figures who both represent the side fighting against

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<sup>16</sup> My translation – "Sur ce problème du Vietnam, la France a adopté, depuis plus de six ans maintenant, une attitude et une politique qui, de plus en plus, divergent de celles des Etats-Unis et même s'opposent à elles".

<sup>17</sup> My translation – "c'est le pays occidental qui connaît le mieux l'Indochine"

<sup>18</sup> My translation – "on considère [la politique et la stratégie adoptées au Vietnam par l'Administration américaine] à la fois comme erronée, cruelle, sans rapport avec les données profondes de la situation et potentiellement très dangereuse pour l'avenir des relations entre l'Asie et l'Europe".

<sup>19</sup> My translation – "Il s'agit aussi d'aider les Vietnamiens à recouvrer leur indépendance et leur souveraineté... il n'y a donc de solution durable au conflit que si les Etats-Unis, comme la Chine, *acceptent* de demeurer complètement en dehors de l'espace indochinois"

<sup>20</sup> My translation – "laisser les Sud-Vietnamiens décider librement de leur sort"

<sup>21</sup> My translation – "l'Indochine...constituerait désormais une zone politiquement et militairement neutralisée, où les grandes puissances s'abstiendraient d'intervenir"

American imperialism. This common enemy of course becomes the cultural context of the translation, which necessarily shifts the ways in which this power dynamic is understood.

Looking at the American perspective on the war in Vietnam is a considerably more challenging task, as there has been an extensive range of critique and contrary views (Ringnalda vii). While we can say that the official government position was in favour of the intervention and was thus very different to that of France, there was a general antiwar movement that had much in common with that described above, even if it originated in different social and historical circumstances. As Paul Joseph states in a recent re-assessment of the American antiwar movement, “during the Vietnam War, millions of US citizens not only opposed the policies of their government but mobilized themselves in a conscious effort to stop it” (165). While there are varying opinions as to the impact of this effort, the labels of success were certainly clearly articulated. For example, sociologist Todd Gitlin referred to it as “the most successful movement against a shooting war in history” (qtd. in Joseph 165), political scientist Guenter Lewy said it “had a significant impact on both the Johnson and Nixon administrations” (qtd. in Joseph 165-6), and historian Gabriel Kolko said it “fixed to the war an unprecedented social price” (qtd. in Joseph 165). In 1967, opinion polls even showed that “Vietnam had eclipsed civil rights as the nation’s top problem” (Anderson 245); it was an undeniably visible movement within the American and broader Anglophone consciousness of the war in Vietnam, and must therefore be taken into account when considering the Anglophone context of Lê’s story.

As in the case of the French opposition to the war, the local political context must first be acknowledged. While past colonial ties and treaty responsibilities were factors at the roots of the French antiwar movement, there were various factors behind the movement in the US. First were the values of the Beat generation and of the Hippie movement, which questioned the legality and ethics of a war declared to be saving American soil when America was yet to be attacked (Anderson 249). Second were the politics of the civil rights movement as voiced by Martin Luther King Jr in 1967 when he claimed that the “Great Society has been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam” (qtd. in Anderson 250); this was largely in response to the drafting process, which gave unfair advantage to white Americans and resulted in a disproportionate number of war fatalities among minority groups including Hispanic and Black Americans (250-1). Over the course of the 1960s the antiwar movement grew exponentially, and one factor in this growth was the government’s ongoing resistance to addressing the public’s concerns. Anderson attributes this largely to pride (255): both President Johnson and his successor President Nixon declared they would not be the first American president to lose a war, and they both believed that the way to win was to persist and win by military strength. In other words, they attempted “to change opinion in America instead of changing policy in Vietnam” (254). Importantly, neither of them

had extensive knowledge of Vietnam (250; 257), and as Ho Chi Minh himself has been recorded as saying, “the Americans greatly underestimate the determination of the Vietnamese people” (qtd. in Anderson 250). This lack of knowledge is relevant in a comparison with the French response to the war, as it is an indication of the different positions held by America and by France: while America as a neo-imperialist force held a misunderstood view that was premised on its own national identity and position in relation to global politics, France as an ex-colonialist force held a more understanding view that was premised on past experience and knowledge of Vietnamese culture.

In the context of this comparison we can now consider the French and American perspectives on the figure of Charlie. Derived from the NATO Phonetic alphabet letters VC, Victor-Charlie was used by American soldiers during the war in Vietnam to refer to the Viet Cong, and the shortened form Charlie came to refer to communist forces in Vietnam in general. In practice, however, the nomination Charlie picked up a more hybrid meaning than this etymological understanding allows. As Lanning and Cragg demonstrate, among American attitudes toward the Viet Cong, there were those who respected Charlies as heroes who could make war through “ambush, booby traps, torture, assassination, and terrorism”, and were therefore worthy opponents (193). There were also those who referred to them as “gooks”, “slant-eyes”, or “slopes”, which created tension and even for some “an antipathy for their own countrymen that sometimes exceeded the outrage they harboured for their Communist enemy” (193). While “gook” was the most common term used to designate the Viet Cong, and Victor Charles or Victor Charlie were widely understood, “Mr. Charles or Mr. Chuck, profoundly respectful terms, were also frequently used” (193). In other words, the usage of the term Charlie was nuanced in an Anglophone context, and for the Anglophone reader of “Speak to me”, this is supported by Charlie’s ambiguous role as discussed above: he is both a national hero who defends his country, unlike the narrator he is compared with, and a demon who goads the narrator into committing himself to something he cannot do. The acknowledgement however that Charlie is being used in a Francophone context within the narrative means that these nuances must take into consideration the added associations of that context. That is, while the Anglophone context allows Charlie the position of hated enemy or worthy opponent, the Francophone context allows him the position of ally. In the narrative, this highlights the narrator’s belief that he “would have continued to lead [a dissatisfying] life if an envoy of destiny had not come along to propose another way” (Lê “Speak to me” 144), suggesting that on some level the two figures were allied against a shared perspective on a lifestyle.

When the reader of the translation takes all three of these possible positions for Charlie into consideration, a unique perspective emerges regarding the French-American relationship. That is, if the figure of Charlie as an allegorical representation of North Vietnam can be considered both an enemy of

America and an ally of France, it might be possible to read “Speak to me” as a representation of the tensions between the two western countries. Furthermore, this tension might be seen to impact upon their perspective of one another as host cultures for the Vietnamese diaspora; more specifically, we could posit that the Anglo-American host culture might be viewed with suspicion by the French host culture in light of an allied connection based on a colonial past with Vietnam. Thus, through a transdiasporic approach we are able to consider the significance an American term has gathered through its multiple translation processes, and access a unique Francophone perspective on the historical relationship between America and Vietnam. In addition to underscoring the importance of considering the historical relations between host cultures, this analysis creates the potential for further study into how such relations might impact on one host culture’s perspective on and judgement of another.

### 3.4 Overview and further application

Linda Lê’s short story “Parlez-moi”, translated by Nicholas Royle as “Speak to me”, presents us with a reversed host culture perspective: its Francophone and Anglo-American elements are framed within the Francophone perspective in the source narrative, but in the translation they are re-framed within the Anglophone perspective. We can explore this shifting perspective in detail via specific moments in the text: when we explore them via the reference to the publication *Liberté sur parole*, the linguistic connotations in the French context are overtaken by legal connotations in the Anglophone context. This demonstrates a shift from the artistic context of the French surrealist movement and its opposition to the Indochina war, to the political context of the American protests against the American war in Vietnam, bringing to the surface important aspects of the history of these two cultures that impacted on their developing relations to Vietnam. When we explore the shifting perspective via the reference to the figure *Charlie*, his position of ally in the French context is replaced by his position of opponent in the American context. This is a shift from the French opposition to the American war in Vietnam, to the American culture that supported its escalation, bringing to the surface important aspects of these two cultures that impacted on their developing relations with one another. Together, these discussions bring to light the important history of relations between France and the USA, which led to the creation of the Vietnamese diaspora in 1975. This history includes the French loss of Indochina as a colony, the American assistance subsequently offered to Vietnam, the escalation of the American presence and finally the war against the Vietnamese communist party, which had its opposition and supporters in both France and the US. The ways in which the French-American relationship changed over this period, and the ways in which authorities of one country accepted or dismissed the lessons learnt by the other,



also has an important impact on the nature of both as diasporic hosts from 1975 onwards. Factors that were an influence included the number and type of refugees received, the development of an environment based on established networks with the home culture, and the attitudes held by the general public and authorities toward migrant populations. What emerges from this transdiasporic analysis is a reflection on how the historical relations between two cultures can impact upon their position and relationship as host cultures in a diasporic network.

I will consider two brief follow-up case studies. Doan Van Toai's autobiography *Le Goulag vietnamien* (1979) tells the story of his involvement in South Vietnamese resistance to American intervention in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1971 he went to the US and delivered antiwar lectures at Berkeley and Stanford. At the time, he believed that "the Hanoi regime at least had the virtue of being Vietnamese, while the Americans were foreign invaders like the French before them" (Toai). Following the fall of the South to the Communists, however, he found he did not agree with the Communist government's new policies, and he spent time in jail before leaving Vietnam in 1978 to live in France. Like Lê's story, this narrative presents us with a French-framed view of Vietnam as a site of engagement between what would become the French and American host cultures, and the diasporic home culture. In the English translation by Sylvie Romanowski and Françoise Simon-Miller, *The Vietnamese gulag* (1986), this perspective is reversed to offer an Anglo-American view of that site. In particular, Taoi's travels to the US in 1971 would offer a narrative context in which local references can be understood in new ways, allowing us to re-assess their impact on Taoi and on his reception in the US. This re-assessment can then open new questions about the American perspective on Vietnamese-led antiwar movements, and about the ways in which this perspective differed from that of the French. Ultimately, this can contribute to a reading of the text as a representation of how well France and the US understood each other's position in relation to Vietnam, in the decade prior to the Vietnamese diaspora.

Monique Truong's novel *The Book of Salt* (2003) is a diasporic text that explores the home-host relationships between America and Vietnam and France and Vietnam, via an Anglo-American perspective. Its translation into French by Marc Amfreville, *Le Livre du sel* (2007) then reverses the perspective from English to French. The narrative tells the story of a Vietnamese cook living in Paris, following a childhood spent in French-colonised Vietnam. In Paris he meets the American couple Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas. While the narrative does not reach to the time of the American war in Vietnam, it explores the colonial conditions of Vietnam under French rule, and the life of a diasporic subject in Paris prior to the main diaspora. Moreover, it addresses the historical relations between America and France by looking at the literary relations they shared in the first half of the twentieth

century. Thus, while Lê's narrative in translation raises questions about the relationship between French surrealism and American-French relations with Vietnam, Truong's raises questions about the relationship between American Modernism and American-French relations with Vietnam. For example, if we can establish a relationship between Stein's work and Vietnam, we can explore the extent to which the French played a role in introducing the two. Ultimately, this can contribute to a reading of the text as a representation of how artistic and literary engagements between France and America played a part in developing their respective relations with Vietnam.

These two texts present an expansion on the discussion pursued in this chapter. They illustrate further instances of the potential that a transdiasporic analysis must enable the reader to focus on a translated text's representation of historical relations between host cultures. They also demonstrate how a transdiasporic analysis, when applied to multiple texts in which the host culture perspective is reversed through translation, can underscore a range of factors that impact on these historical relations. In the case of historical relations between host cultures of the Vietnamese diaspora, these factors include shared social movements related to war, and literary cultures of the Western canon.

#### Chapter 4: Anglophone-Vietnamese diasporic literature in French translation

Case study two considers a translation that has moved in the opposite direction to that of case study one: a French translation of an Anglophone text written by a Vietnamese migrant living in the United States. The author Nam Le was born in Vietnam but was relocated to Australia at the age of one and then moved to America as an adult. His short story "Love and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice" (hereafter referred to as "Love and Honour"), was translated by France Camus-Pichon as "L'amour, l'honneur, la pitié, l'orgueil, la compassion, le sacrifice" (hereafter referred to as "L'amour, l'honneur"). It concerns a young Vietnamese migrant coming to understand the experiences of his father in Vietnam during the war, and the challenges of integrating these experiences with their lives in Australia and America. It explores the relations between the Australian and American host cultures and the Vietnamese home culture, but in translation the French host culture is added to re-frame these relations from a new perspective. A transdiasporic analysis reveals that by triangulating the source and target cultures with the diasporic home, we can access in the translation a representation and critical comparison of the power held by each host on a global scale. The analysis therefore enables us to consider the impact of their hegemony on the role they play in the diasporic network.

#### 4.1 Anglophone-Vietnamese diasporic literature

The concept of Anglophone-Vietnamese literature is not commonly referred to, in contrast with the concept of Francophone-Vietnamese literature, which has been clearly defined as “a body of literature written in French by writers of Vietnamese origin” (“Francophone Vietnamese Literature”). The longer history of relations between the Vietnamese and French cultures, along with the ideological undertones of the term Francophone, have both played a role in this. While there exists a body of literature written in English by writers of Vietnamese origin, in academic discourse this body remains segregated between the national contexts of America, Australia, Canada and the UK, and thus the general concept of Anglophone-Vietnamese literature has not taken hold. Instead, it is common to find discussions about Vietnamese American literature (Trương; Christopher; Powell) and Vietnamese Australian writing or literature (Hoang; Pham and Brook; Jacklin). This issue has been raised by Australian critic Wenche Ommundsen, who states that “limiting writing by transnational writers to particular national traditions is always problematic; it may make better sense to read texts by both Asian American and Asian Australian writers simply as Anglophone writing from Asian diasporas” (“This story does not begin on a boat” 503). At the same time, this should not obscure the differences between national traditions. For example, as Ommundsen goes on to observe, Asian American and Asian Canadian are “more established traditions” than Asian Australian (504), while “‘Asian American’ looms so large in [the Anglophone discourse of the Asian Diaspora] that it may obscure other diasporic traditions” (503). There are also differences in how these national contexts employ their terminology. For example, Jacklin has observed that where the Vietnamese community is concerned, the significant profile it has achieved in Australia (2) means that it is more often identified in scholarship; in America, by contrast, it is more common to find the broader labels of “Asian-American” or “ethnic” used, even when referring specifically to the Vietnamese (Goellnicht; C. Lee). However, regardless of any claim to distinctiveness that the Australian-Vietnamese tradition may have,<sup>22</sup> the development of the concept of Anglophone-Vietnamese literature remains useful on the broader level of language representation because it allows us to better compare Anglophone and Francophone literary traditions of the Vietnamese diaspora.

Looking more specifically at the American and Australian contexts of Vietnamese diasporic literature, we can note some important differences that will help to distinguish between the two diasporic host cultures. Australian scholars have described a recent boom in the production of and interest in Vietnamese-Australian writing, despite the community having come into being there, for the most part, three decades ago (Nguyen *Memory is Another Country* 163). However, it has also been

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<sup>22</sup> See for example later in this chapter a discussion of the boat image in the Australian context.

argued that the tradition has its roots in the early production of Australian-based Vietnamese-language and bilingual newspapers and journals of the 1990s, in which creative literary work would often appear in Vietnamese and in English (Jacklin 3-4). In a similar move, American scholars have recently acknowledged the need to consider earlier literary productions of Vietnamese-born writers, though there is more scope in this context for discussion of earlier texts. As Michelle Janette explains, a type of “sojourner literature” can be identified from the 1960s, when Vietnamese visitors published fiction that appears to pre-empt some of the thematic concerns of the later diasporic literature. Janette identifies the following characteristics: “based in memoir”, they “offer strident political critiques of Viet Nam’s government, and seek to change America’s view, thus hoping to change America’s behavior” (107). A more recent overview of Vietnamese-American literature comments on a perspective that supports and extends this political agenda:

Pelaud is more specific and claims that such literary production often becomes “deeply entangled with national dissemination of images of America as a successful multicultural society and fighter for the free world”; thus “glossing over racial inequalities and tensions”, as befits a neocolonial agenda. (Oliver-Rotger 85)

This politicisation of Vietnamese-American literature stands as an interesting comparison with recent overviews of Asian Australian literature, which have recognised more of an isolation from political intent; as Wenche Ommundsen comments, “most [Asian Australian writers] are reluctant to play the part of cultural warriors: as *writers* first and foremost they insist on their right to speak for themselves, and to let their writing speak, without the constraints of social or political agendas” (“Transnational imaginaries” 6).

While statements comparing the Australian and American communities of the Vietnamese diaspora cannot be produced on the basis of these literary critical commentaries, we can use the latter to identify a single element of the two host contexts that may contribute to their differentiated representation in diasporic fiction. In the American context, Vietnamese diasporic fiction might be less likely to avoid politicisation, paralleling the higher level of political involvement between home and host cultures in this case. In the Australian context, meanwhile, Vietnamese diasporic fiction might expect to be allowed more space to work as literature, rather than as political commentary. Ommundsen does suggest that critics have tended to argue for the political value of diasporic writing while the authors have shown a desire to distance themselves from it, going so far as to “incorporat[e] their scepticism into their writing” (“Transnational imaginaries” 6). The case study of Nam Le, addressed below, is a strong example of this authorial response to critics; this renders his incorporation of American and Australian contexts into his writing all the more interesting to explore as a diasporic space.

## 4.2 “L’amour, l’honneur, la pitié, l’orgueil, la compassion, le sacrifice”

### 4.2.1 Nam Le’s source text

Within the context of Anglophone-Vietnamese literature, the case of Nam Le’s debut collection of short stories *The Boat* illustrates clearly the tension between the national and the transnational. On the one hand it has been related to the individual national spaces of Australia and America (C. Lee; Ommundsen “Transnational Imaginaries”), and on the other it has been regarded as clearly transnational, given the variety of settings it covers across its seven stories, each exploring “people in transit, people who, for one reason or another, have come unmoored and find themselves among other unmoored people, all of them trying to find their way to safety and stability” (A. Wilson). It also illustrates the difficulty in employing the Anglo-American label of ethnic, as its opening story “Love and Honour” presents a metacritique of what it refers to as “ethnic literature”. This story, arguably the most commonly discussed and most popular of the collection,<sup>23</sup> will be the focus of the case study below. It narrates three days in the life of a young writer-in-training at the Iowa creative writing school in the US. Brought up in Australia by his Vietnamese parents, he left a promising career in law to pursue his ambitions as a writer, disappointing his father; now he finds himself struggling to live up to the expectations of the American literary market. His identity clearly overlaps with that of his author, as his name and backstory appear to parallel those of Nam Le, however there is no commentary explicitly claiming an autobiographical approach. Protagonist Nam has three days to submit his final writing assignment, and he is struggling to find a topic. The school has been urging the students to draw on their life experience, and Nam is being encouraged to draw on his family’s history of migration from Vietnam to Australia because ethnic literature sells well on the American literary market. We can identify here the overtly political element of the American context for the Vietnamese diaspora, as discussed above. In contrast, the narrative’s engagement with the Australian context hinges on those aspects of Nam’s life not related to his writing or to its politics, focusing instead on the strong community-centered nature of Nam’s family life and the more mainstream ambitions of the legal world. Meanwhile, Nam’s resistance to the political views of the American literary market illustrate the author’s scepticism toward the literary critic’s politicisation of diasporic literature, also discussed above; even when his father arrives for a three day visit from Australia and Nam begins to see this differently, the narrative continues to question the diasporic writer’s capacity and right to present his work as a form of political representation. Nam attempts to write the story of his father’s experience in the My Lai massacre of 1968, hoping to convince his father that as a writer, he can encourage others to understand. While the process of writing the

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<sup>23</sup> It is, for example, the only story that has been published as an independent text in the *Penguin Special* series, 2012.

story does encourage the two of them to talk more openly to each other, repairing some of the damage in their relationship, the story is burnt by the father on the day Nam is due to hand it in. At first, Nam does not understand the significance of this act, but the narrator assures us that he later comes to see it more clearly, acknowledging that the creation and burning of the story was an important step in his own and his family's progression into the future. It also appears to valorise the sceptical position regarding the politicisation of diasporic literature, suggesting that the value of the writing is not in the understanding shared through its dissemination, but rather in the healing allowed through its production.

There are interesting metafictional links between this story and the rest of the collection, and as a result the latter forms a *mise-en-abyme*, where we find within the work of art, the work of art itself, placing it within an endlessly repeating sequence (Bal 117-18). For example, in "Love and Honour" there is an oblique reference to the title story of the collection, where Nam considers writing a refugee narrative (36-7). The story, "The Boat", is a straightforward narrative of a Vietnamese girl on a refugee boat bound for Australia, and given that it ends the collection, it would seem to respond to the opening story's critique of ethnic literature. This bookending presents the collection as a self-consciously ethnic Vietnamese text, engaging with this culturally distinctive identity and reinforcing it through the cover which across different editions, generally maintains a focus on the notion of the boat journey (Figures 5, 6, 7).

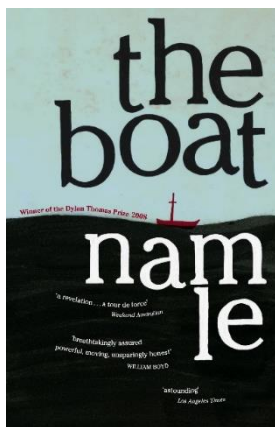


Figure 5 - Penguin Books Australia, 2008

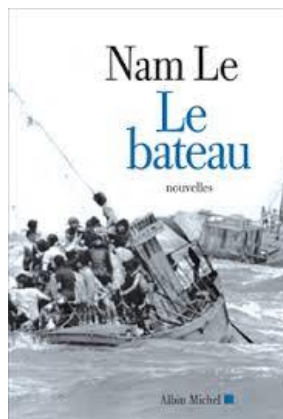


Figure 6 - Albin Michel France, 2008



Figure 7 – Canongate Books Ltd, UK 2009

However, the stories in-between the opening and closing narratives focus on cultural identities other than Vietnamese, presented through the eyes of protagonists living in Columbia, Japan, New York, Australia and Tehran. This may be read as an extension of the metacritique of ethnic literature: while we can refer to this text as a product of the Vietnamese diaspora by virtue of its single authorship by a Vietnamese boat person, its status as ethnic literature rests on the understanding that it presents us

with multiple ethnic experiences. This is supported in the *mise-en-abyme* relationship, as there are also references in “Love and Honour” to those stories that resist the temptation to “exploit the Vietnamese thing”, as Nam’s fellow writing student puts it (21). That these stories reject Vietnamese-specific themes suggests that they oppose ethnic literature; and yet, if we understand this category to refer to literature that engages with a culturally distinctive identity, where that identity is related to the author’s biographical background, all of the stories in *The Boat* comply. Ultimately, this questioning of ethnic identity and the category of ethnic literature reflects Le’s own acknowledgement that “[he does not] completely understand [his] relationship to Vietnam as a writer”, and that “this collection is a testament to the fact that [he is] becoming more and more okay with that” (Knopf Q&A).

#### 4.2.2 France Camus-Pichon’s target text

Camus-Pichon’s translation of the collection, titled *Le Bateau*, was commissioned by Albin Michel following the numerous awards received by Nam Le’s original. It was published in 2010 and has also received extensive high praise (Grangeray; Devarrieux; Courty). Camus-Pichon is a literary translator in high demand, trained with a Masters in Translation at Paris 7 and employed since her graduation as a regular translator for the French publishing houses Albin Michel and Gallimard. Among the authors she has translated are most recently Richard Flanagan, whose *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* she completed for the French publishing house *Actes Sud*, and most notably Denise Chong, whose *The Girl in the Picture* told the story of the girl in the Pulitzer-prize winning photograph taken after a napalm bomb explosion in Vietnam in 1972. For Camus-Pichon, the experience of translating Chong’s novel gave her the courage to take on the work of Nam Le when it was offered to her by Albin Michel (private correspondence, August 2015).

Approaching this text for transdiasporic analysis, we identify the diasporic home culture as Nam’s and his father’s Vietnamese background, and the host cultures as the American and Australian environments they have experienced as diasporic subjects, as well as the French environment presented via the translated representation of the narrative. The text therefore represents relations between the American, Australian and French host cultures and the Vietnamese home culture, where the French relations have been added through the process of translation; I categorise this as Type 2, Additional host culture perspective (Figure 8).

**Case Study 2**  
**Additional Host Culture Perspective**

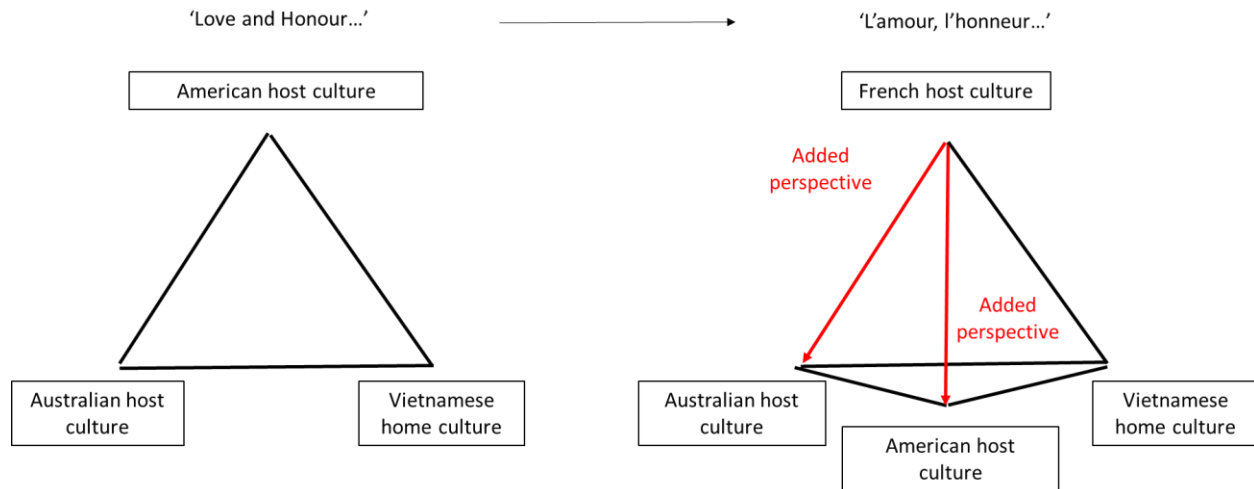


Figure 8

### 4.3 Transdiasporic analysis

#### 4.3.1 Identifying translational moments

The translation presents a range of representations of the translation process, and given the critical exploration of its English original as a representation of global movement, it is interesting to note that there has been very little discussion that addresses either its multilingual or translational nature. This is perhaps because, as Lachlan Brown observes, the stories of *The Boat* are “less hybridized” and “far more celebratory of monocultures” than other transnational short story collections, despite the hybrid nature of the collection (5). Moving through the stories, Brown considers what might be seen as the limits of their linguistic hybridity, suggesting that the narrative voice of “Hiroshima” displays a “naïve mixture of desire, Japanese propaganda and immediate sense impressions”, “Halfhead Bay” relies on an almost stereotyped “pitch-perfect vernacular” and “Cartegna” draws heavily on a plethora of “Spanish insertions” (5). While on the one hand these multilingual forms might be understood as what critic Peter Craven calls “worked-up exoticism” (qtd. in Brown 5), they still have the potential to be read within a translational framework and posited as integral to a critical interpretation (Trevitt “Fluid Borders”). However, it is their representation in translation that begins to produce more nuanced sites of multilingual and translational exploration.

In “L’amour, l’honneur” there are representations of the translation process on both a broad thematic level and a more explicit multilingual level. The former is manifested more specifically in the protagonist’s development from someone who resists the presence of his father and the culture he represents, to someone who embraces that culture; this could be understood as a form of self-



translation. The development can be charted via Nam's increasing use of the Vietnamese language, culminating in a proverb like the ones his father has been directing at him, which is also the only full sentence in Vietnamese that we hear Nam pronounce: "*Mot nguoi lam quan, ca ho duoc nho'*, ai-je répliqué. Un étudiant est une benediction pour ses proches" (*Le Bateau* 40). This suggests his capacity to think within the Vietnamese language and culture has developed to the point where he can engage with his father's use of cultural materials; it is the moment at which his self-translation is demonstrated to have been successful. While this is not a self-translation in the strict sense of a "double writing process", where an individual re-writes their own text into another language (Nikolaou 24), it is more akin to Wilson's metaphorical expansion of self-translation to describe individuals who translate their own "self that took shape in their native language" ("Response" 108). However, Nam is not necessarily translating from English as his native language: while details of his mother tongue are not provided in the text, we do learn that his parents speak with him in Vietnamese, so it might be assumed that this was the first language he learnt growing up, and that it took a back seat once he started attending school in Melbourne. In this case, he would be translating himself *back* into his native idiom, suggesting an interesting reversal of the self-translation process, where rather than simply performing a linguistic exercise to learn how the target language has expressed the source text, Nam is performing a translation of his own identity to learn how his Anglophone self relates to his native Vietnamese self. Alternatively, and perhaps more accurately, it is a repeated self-translation process, where rather than simply translating a text that has already been translated, Nam is performing a new translation of his identity that that can be considered independently of the first.

As an additional thematic representation of the translation process, we also see Nam grappling with the role of cultural mediator or bridge, as a 1.5 generation migrant who has fluency in both Vietnamese and Anglophone cultures and yet feels also that he belongs to neither. This role is important to him not just on a personal level but on a professional level, where he is trying to enact a process of cultural translation by bringing a Vietnamese narrative to an Anglophone audience. His success with the process however relies on his capacity to self-translate himself back toward Vietnamese culture, so it is ultimately his successful self-translation from Anglophone to Vietnamese that enables him to complete the broader cultural translation from Vietnamese to Anglophone. If we draw on these two broad representations of the translation process, and in particular the translational moment when Nam's Vietnamese proverb demonstrates his successful process of self-translation, we could use a transdiasporic analysis of "*L'amour, l'honneur*" to reveal a French perspective on this movement back and forth between the Anglophone host culture and the Vietnamese home culture. In particular, it could comment on the Anglo-American and Anglo-Australian responses to narratives of the war in Vietnam,

and on the difficult position of 1.5-generation writers who seek to create understanding between home and host cultures without a sense of betrayal or selling out. The question of whether these challenges might be understood differently if positioned within a French context would open a comparison of Anglophone-Vietnamese relations and French-Vietnamese relations. This would ultimately lead toward an understanding of the source-target relationship of this text, as established via a triangulation with its diasporic network.

This demonstrates one potential avenue for transdiasporic analysis based on the story's broader representations of the translation process. There are other representations, however, that emerge from translational moments created by explicit multilingualism. While there is extensive multilingual interaction throughout the story, much of it remains beneath the surface of the French language, through the technique of referential restriction. For example, some sections are set in Vietnamese-speaking environments, such as when Nam reflects on his father's past in Vietnam or on his own childhood with Vietnamese friends and family in Melbourne, and we can assume that Vietnamese is the language being used in these cases. These contrast with Nam's interactions in the US with his girlfriend and with his fellow writing student, who are presumably communicating with him in English. Thus, the French hides the distinction between the Vietnamese and the English, one of which, the Vietnamese, has been doubly translated from Vietnamese to English for the source text, and then from English to French for the target text. Interestingly, this double translation process becomes more visible with the narrator's explicit references to the fact that Vietnamese is being spoken. For example, Nam reflects that "ça me faisait un drôle d'effet de parler vietnamien" (*Le Bateau* 11), and at one point he observes that his father is speaking in "un vietnamien plus soutenu" (23). The latter is followed by a question in French with a particularly formal construction, "Comment va la mère de Nam?", presumably mirroring some aspect of the formal Vietnamese that the narrator has flagged. These are multilingual translational moments that consider the relations between the Vietnamese and English languages, re-framed within the context of the French language, and from a transdiasporic point of view they may produce interesting insight into how these host and home cultures relate on a linguistic level.

The most interesting representations of the diaspora emerge from translational moments based on the few instances of vehicular matching that we can find among the dominant technique of referential restriction. Some of these instances occur during conversations between Nam and his father, when Vietnamese terms are visibly maintained among the French, just as they were maintained among the English in the source text.<sup>24</sup> The narrator provides translations for most of them: some are direct

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<sup>24</sup> Note that the use of visible Vietnamese here does not include diacritical marks. While this is not an uncommon practice in Anglophone and Francophone literature, it does underscore the fact that the targeted readership is not

translations only, as in the case of the father's proverbs ("*Trau buoc ghet trau an'...* Le buffle captif hait le buffle libre" [39]), and some are given further explanation, as in the case of food dishes ("*Des do nhau – des amuse-gueules... D'énormes huîtres bien grasses baignant dans un mélange de sel, de poivre et de citron*" [26]). Only one visible Vietnamese reference remains untranslated, and presumably this is because its meaning is understandable in context: this is Nam's exclamation "*Thoi*" that expresses impatience with his father's attempts to clean his living space (14).

Apart from vehicular matching with the Vietnamese, the translated text also includes vehicular matching with some English terms. These have gained visibility in the translation process, as they now contrast with the surrounding target language, when they did not do so in the source text. Two of them reflect Vietnamese diasporic relations: first, is the visibility of the Anglophone name Faulkner, and second the visibility of the Anglophone concept "boat people". The reference to the American writer William Faulkner is implied in this story from the outset, because the title comes directly from his well-known Nobel prize speech of 1951. He is then referred to more explicitly in a conversation between Nam and his fellow writing student (*Le Bateau* 19). Faulkner has had an important impact on the literary culture of France (Woodworth), and through the colonial empire his work has also been a presence in Vietnam. By exploring this reference first through a close reading of the translated text and second through a distant reading of its diasporic context, its significance is re-framed through a French representation; this opens a comparison between France and America as two diasporic host cultures with a history of literary influence in Vietnam, raising questions about host culture power over literary circulation through the diaspora. This will be explored in detail below.

The concept of "boat people" is referred to twice by the father, who uses the term to describe himself and his son (*Le Bateau* 24). This is significant because it reveals the Anglophone domination of terminology related to international refugees, and in particular to Vietnamese refugees post-1975. By exploring this reference first through a close reading of the text and second through a distant reading of its diasporic context, it has the potential to open up a comparison between the vocabulary employed by Francophone and Anglophone contexts of the diaspora, raising questions about host culture power over terminology in diasporic discourse. This will be explored in detail below.

This analysis considers these last two translated engagements between the Anglophone source host and the Vietnamese home. The fact that we can only identify engagements with one host culture,

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Vietnamese-speaking, for whom such phrases will have lost their meaning, or at best, appear ambiguous, without the appropriate markers to indicate letters and tones. Most Anglophone scholarly work will take a more middle ground by including diacritics for all Vietnamese words except those already familiar to their readership, as in these cases it might simply act as a distraction. See "Note on Diacritics" in Pelley; Schwenkel.

rather than with both the source and target host, is a result of the text being an “additional host culture perspective”: the narrative itself incorporates only the source host culture, which is then compared with the target host culture through the translation process. Being limited to these home-host engagements is therefore particular to texts that we can identify as this second transdiasporic type.

#### 4.3.2 Faulkner: or, the writer as measure of diasporic relationships

The first translational moment used here to produce a transdiasporic analysis is the reference to American writer William Faulkner, which alerts the reader to the role this figure plays in the overall structure and interpretative framework of the story. The reference appears in an episode toward the beginning, when Nam is talking with a fellow writing student about the values of the American literary market. Their conversation distinguishes between different perspectives on the concept of “la littérature ethnique”, and its representation in French contextualises these perspectives – as well as the Anglo-American concept of ethnic literature – within a literary history. Therefore, the reference is understood to be a translational moment that re-frames in a French context the literary capital attributed to Faulkner, and more broadly, the literary genre referring to what Lebrun described as “a littérature produite par les ‘ethnies’ minoritaires résidant sur le sol national, qu’elles soient issues ou non de la migration” (135).<sup>25</sup> In relation to the genre label, it is important to note that the concept of ethnic literature is a predominantly Anglo-American one, and where used in Francophone contexts, it is often related to its American definition, which in itself has changed over time (Lebrun 135). A comparison of the concept within the two host culture contexts will reveal, through a transdiasporic analysis, an interesting representation of literary relations within the diasporic network. In relation to the Faulkner reference in particular, it will be demonstrated that a transdiasporic analysis opens an exploration of the Vietnamese reception of the American writer, which changed over time according to the shifting power relations between the French and American literary cultures. The history of this reception opens a comparison between the French and Anglo-American host cultures, and in particular how exchange between their literary networks influenced their respective relationships with Vietnam.

#### Close reading

As Nam and a fellow writing student walk home from a literary event, they reflect on the culture it represents. The student contrasts the kind of literature that the American literary market expects of ethnic writers with the kind of writing idealised by Faulkner in his acceptance speech for the 1950 Nobel

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<sup>25</sup> My translation – “literature produced by ethnic minorities living on national soil, whether they arrived through a process of migration or by other means”.

Prize.<sup>26</sup> He notes that while some might think “la littérature ethnique...dit des choses importantes”, in reality it only produces stories full of stereotypes and predictable metaphors (*Le Bateau* 19); instead, as encouraged by Faulkner, one should focus on writing about “les vérités éternelles...l’amour, l’honneur, la pitié, l’orgueil, la compassion, le sacrifice” (20). By clarifying the intertextual source of the story’s title, this statement suggests that the story is claiming for itself an identity that would dissociate it from the label of ethnic literature. However, as the student is talking, Nam becomes distracted by what appears to be armed men in the street. He exchanges a glance with one of them who allows them to pass, and the student continues to talk above the screams of the women being threatened by the guns. They have passed them when the student starts congratulating Nam on his resistance to writing “la littérature ethnique”, saying this is the reason he likes Nam’s work so much. While the reader is not given any detail as to the ethnicity of the student in question, the frustration he has been expressing in light of the market’s attitude toward ethnic writers, and the admiration he admits to feeling for Nam’s response to this attitude, suggests that he himself is not of an ethnic background, but rather that he represents the white American figure rallying for the cause of the diasporic writer. And yet there is a disjunction between his relaxed conversation and Nam’s serious distraction with the apparently imaginary gunmen. This disjunction grows when Nam reflects to himself that the gunshot he hears is like “une touche de machine à écrire géante” (20); in performing just the kind of stereotypical metaphor his fellow student has been praising him for resisting, he underscores the essential distance between the two of them. This episode is important in a story that presents a metafictional reflection on “la littérature ethnique”, as it highlights a critique of the genre based on the fraught relationship between its well-meaning intentions and the often violent history of the heritage it evokes. That is, the gunshots seem very real to Nam but they go unnoticed by the non-ethnic American who is too busy rallying for Nam, talking about Faulkner’s eternal truths. This suggests that ethnic writing cannot represent the violence of its heritage effectively, simply because it can go unseen or misunderstood by its western readers. This could be why, as the student points out, Nam has resisted so far, and why he has chosen to focus instead on non-Vietnamese topics such as “des goules lesbiennes, des tueurs colombiens, des orphelins d’Hiroshima – sans oublier les peintres new-yorkais et leurs hémorroïdes” (21). It could also be why there is just one passage in “L’amour, L’honneur” that directly represents Nam’s heritage, but which clearly states the problems of that representation. In this passage, Nam’s father tells the story of the massacre of the Vietnamese

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<sup>26</sup> In this speech, he states that “it is [the poet’s, the writer’s] privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet’s voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail” (“William Faulkner – Banquet Speech”)

villagers of My Lai in 1968, but it is Nam who is remembering his father telling it, as opposed to recounting it in his own words, and he immediately follows it with the acknowledgement that his memory of the story may not be correct, and that his inclusion of it is only intended as an homage to his father's memory of the event.

Given these observations about the text's critique of ethnic literature, and its exploration of the fraught relationship between that label and its violent heritage, what role is played by the "eternal truths" espoused by Faulkner in his speech? They may be what the student is valuing in contrast to the stereotypes of ethnic literature, but what value do they really have, given that he is also in that moment blind to the very violence the genre might be seeking to reveal? It could be concluded that Faulkner's values represent their own form of blindness, one that is associated with the western literary institution that has appropriated them as truth. We could posit for example that the desire on the part of the American literary market to see ethnic writers drawing on their heritage, emerges from the idea that the dramatic narratives this heritage may evoke engage with the core human experiences of love and pride, eliciting feelings of pity and compassion and compelling readers to value acts of honour and sacrifice. Thus, they represent a translation of ethnic literature according to western values. An alternative view however is represented toward the end of the story: when Nam's father burns the ethnic story he ends up writing, he seems to be suggesting that the experiences of love and pride that can be evoked by narratives of their heritage can lead to acts of honour and sacrifice that are not so much about one's behaviour in the face of hardship, but one's respect for the narrative of that hardship. That is, the burning ensures that the text cannot elicit feelings of pity and compassion among people who did not experience it, containing it instead within a sphere of people who understand its many nuances and implications. The question then is whether a work of ethnic literature can respect this memory without representing it as a performance for readers of other cultural heritages; perhaps this is exactly what "L'amour, l'honneur" is seeking to do through its metafictional reflections.

### **Distant reading**

The reference to Faulkner in the text, and in the title, invites the reader to view the story through the framework of the universal literary values he was promoting in his 1950 speech, encouraging a reading such as the one above. However, when drawing on this framework, it is imperative to note the different views on Faulkner in the French and Anglophone contexts. In this translated text, the Faulkner reference is being received in a Francophone context, and it is generally known that Faulkner's reputation as a writer developed very differently in France than it did in America or Australia. In fact, as Sapiro recently put it, "Faulkner *became* Faulkner" largely thanks to the reception of his works in France ("Faulkner in

France” 392). Stanley D. Woodworth argues that a critical response to Faulkner began developing in France from 1937 and was well-established by 1939, when the first critical publications on Faulkner were only just beginning to appear in America (99). By 1945, in the wake of the French experience of Occupation and Liberation, Faulkner had become “a God”, as Jean-Paul Sartre famously declared, “for young people in France” (qtd. in Blotner 466), who responded to the somewhat dark and existential world view that his works seemed to be exploring. In contrast, it was not until his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1950 that he became an undeniable icon of the Anglophone world and of the individual within the process of Americanisation. Thus, from the 1950s his fame was premised on reasons quite different to those behind his earlier fame in France, and the French context can offer a very specific position from which we can understand the impact his ideas have on the structure and interpretation of “*L’amour, l’honneur*”. Moreover, by identifying how this early Francophone position and its subsequent understanding differs from that which emerges from the Anglophone, we can open up a transdiasporic understanding that has the potential to offer unique insight into Francophone-Anglophone relations within the Vietnamese diaspora.

Faulkner’s position in France must be contextualised within the wider trend of American literary influence following the First World War. Viewed from the perspective of polysystems theory, the status of French literature between the world wars presents a typical example of a “turning point, crisis or literary vacuum” (Even-Zohar 47-8), as the “classical French novel” was perceived as “worn out [*épuisé*] and weakened, in need of a technical renewal that could only come from elsewhere” (Woodworth 11)<sup>27</sup>. According to Even-Zohar, it is at such points of weakness that translated literature becomes more valuable, functioning as an active system whose norms influence the target culture and result in new original writing (Even-Zohar 46). In the case of France in the first half of the twentieth century, the active system produced through French translation was American literature, especially crime fiction. Critics have attributed to Faulkner’s work a privileged place in this translational influence,<sup>28</sup> and Sapiro’s recent study, “Faulkner in France”, underscores the importance of his influence. Out of a “fascination with darkness [*le mal*]” (Woodworth 111), Faulkner constructed a philosophical viewpoint that appealed to the growing European interest in existentialism. He also employed what Woodworth refers to as novel approaches to the technical aspects of writing, typified in his “use of interior monologue, subjective

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<sup>27</sup> See also Coindreau 85.

<sup>28</sup> Other influential authors included John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck and Erskine Caldwell, who introduced into fiction-writing the use of violence, of cinema techniques such as flashback and simultaneity, of objectivity and a certain energy and human character (Woodworth 11). For Woodworth, Faulkner was among a second wave of authors who, writing in America during the Great Depression, dealt with narratives where “misery, violence, and amorality play important roles” (13).

chronology and unusual complexity" (113), but also in his way of constructing characters "who cannot or will not express their thoughts", amounting to a striking representation of the human experience of solitude and silence (90). As Jean Alter put it in 1966, Faulkner was an alleged forerunner of the *nouveau roman*, and was cited as an influence by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor and Nathalie Sarraute (qtd. Woodworth 101; Novac 4).

One of the most influential writers who had been influenced in turn by Faulkner was Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1939 Sartre described Faulkner's work as having "greater subtlety" than that of John dos Passos, who only a year earlier he had dubbed "the greatest writer of our time" (qtd. Coindreau 85). But it was more than just technical skill: for Sartre, reading Faulkner was a "symbol of resistance" under the Occupation, when American literature was shared on a black market (Bradley 117). This association was very possibly related to the way in which Faulkner represented the notion of time: for Sartre, Faulkner's work as it was available in French in the late 1930s revealed a unique perspective on contemporary world affairs, because it considered any experience or view of the future as "barred", meaning that as a result of the tumultuous political and social developments that were taking place on a global scale, human kind can only conceive of events being in the past.<sup>29</sup> Sartre stated that "we live in a time of incredible revolutions", the kind that must inspire the response "it ca not last much longer", and that any end to it must necessarily be a "violent" one (Sartre 232). What he identified in Faulkner's writing was the idea that we cannot see, nor conceive of, this end. Importantly, Sartre rejected this idea, arguing instead that "the nature of consciousness implies that it is projected into the future; we can understand what it is only by what it will become" (231); however, he also conceded that Faulkner's experiments with time in his writing demonstrated an existentialist response to the challenging social developments of their world. Thus, to read his work was inherently to engage with this approach to the contemporary political climate.

The Anglo-American perspective on Faulkner also developed in parallel with the political climate, prompted in the late 1940s by Cold War sentiment and the rise of Americanisation. In this context, Faulkner's work was viewed as part of the modernist aesthetic that was "integrated into the culture of the new conservative liberalism of postwar America" (Schwartz 28), and he was accepted as "an emblem of the freedom of the individual under capitalism, as a chronicler of the plight of man in the modern world" (4). Not only did he take on a central position in American literary history at this point, however, but he was also taken up alongside Kafka, Conrad, Proust, Eliot, Yeats and others as a writer of

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<sup>29</sup> As Coindreau describes it, "time" for Faulkner appeared to be a prison from which his characters "try vainly to disentangle themselves, because Time does not permit anyone to escape. Past remains and cannot be forgotten" (Coindreau 90).



universal value; indeed, as Schwartz reports, Faulkner's significance can be said to have progressed from a national level to an international and through to a universal level (31). This association with pro-capitalist sentiment and the superiority of American culture brings Faulkner's work into a sphere relevant to the American war in Vietnam. Thus, our reading of the French translation of Nam Le's "Love and Honour" can lead not only to a comparison of French and American literary reception in the context of contemporary politics, but to a transdiasporic understanding of the relationship between the two national receptions of Faulkner and each nation's respective connections to Vietnam.

Interestingly, in a study on the American presence in Vietnam prior to 1950, Bradley observes that among the Vietnamese translations of western literature in the revolutionary journal *Impartial Opinion [Thanh Nghi]*, "several issues from the summer of 1944 contained a serialised translation of William Faulkner's short story 'Smoke'" (117). He notes the unusual choice of content this story represented for a Vietnamese readership, but given "its focus on money and property" he interprets its publication as "a veiled criticism of the Vichy colonial regime" put forward by a journal that was kept "under close French censorship" (117). Moreover, given its availability in Vietnam in the first place was because "Faulkner was one of the few American authors popular with French elites, and a number of his writings were available in Vietnam in French translations", it illustrates "the persisting French prism through which perceptions of the United States by many Vietnamese revolutionaries continued to be formed" (Bradley 117). In other words, in 1940s Vietnam, Faulkner's work was being appropriated for a *third* national agenda, one which sought to undermine the imperialist culture of the French. This agenda then shifted in the 1950s in parallel with the new view of Faulkner in the west, as the intellectual milieu of South Vietnam began drawing upon his work to undermine the imperialist culture of the Americans, rather than the French. His associations with French culture, however, were now being drawn upon as a source of strength and independence. This can be seen in an observation made by Bradley where he noted that Faulkner was among the Francophone influences on intellectual leaders such as Trinh Cong Son, who were using newspaper columns and anti-war songs to express "the belief that a neo-colonial United States had put in place a parasitic ruling class in the south" (124). This shift between the 1940s and 1950s in Vietnam may be no more than the appropriation of Faulkner by different social groups, but it does seem to mirror the shift in Faulkner criticism in the west. That is, when his recognition is at its height in France as a symbol of resistance, he is being drawn upon in Vietnam as a symbol of resistance against the French themselves, and when his recognition grows in America as a symbol of Americanisation and "universal truth", he is being drawn upon in Vietnam as a symbol of resistance against the Americans and their brand of truth. It is clear at least from these observations that across all

three national contexts Faulkner's work was active on a level of national allegory, its circulation being enabled and promoted by different political agendas.

The relationship between these allegorical appropriations demonstrates how the postcolonial resistance in Vietnam toward France drew strength from the symbolic capital represented in the American dream, and the later resistance in Vietnam toward America drew strength from the cultural capital that had been inherited from their colonial past. Thus, it underscores the transdiasporic hypothesis that Francophone-Vietnamese relations are inherently influenced by the role of Anglophone culture and that Anglophone-Vietnamese relations are inherently influenced by the role of Francophone culture. We could conclude then that through the prism of Faulkner's ideas, which are given significance through their French representation, this story shows how the ethnic narrative can be re-evaluated in a Western context and potentially re-translated as something in which the ethnic voice has a stronger presence. In other words, Faulkner is being used as a translation methodology that seeks to break down the dominant privilege of the Anglo-American culture and recover the voice of the Vietnamese culture, via the mediation of the French perspective. By applying this transdiasporic analysis, we recognise that the Anglo-American and French cultures are heterogeneous entities whose literary cultures and host relations with the Vietnamese have impacted on the nature of their respective positions as global powers, and on the ways in which they then relate to one another as source and target. Thus we emerge with a unique perspective on the Vietnamese diasporic network represented in the translation of this text.

#### 4.3.3 "Boat people"; or, the hegemony of language in diasporic relationships

The second translational moment addressed here will be the reference to "boat people". It appears twice, once during the interaction explored above between Nam and his fellow writing student, and again during the only interaction Nam's father has with a local American, when Nam acts as a mediator. This is also the only point in the narrative when the father uses the English language, or what Nam observes as "broken English", and he employs the term "boat people" to describe, or translate, himself and his son for the American. Importantly, the French representation of this episode underscores its reliance on an Anglophone discourse of the Vietnamese diaspora, as the term remains in English while the rest of the interaction is represented in French. This Anglophone discourse can be traced back to the emergence of the Vietnamese refugee crisis in the global mass media, and thus in the English language, in the late 1970s; significantly, its dominance today is related to national contexts, underscoring not only a power imbalance between Francophone and Anglophone host cultures, but between different Anglophone host cultures. By exploring the way in which the reference to "boat people" reflects these

diasporic relationships, we can produce a transdiasporic analysis that demonstrates how the power of a globalised language has influenced host culture relationships with Vietnam. Extending the conclusions reached in the previous analysis, this outcome demonstrates the value of triangulating host cultures to understand how linguistic, as well as literary, networks impact on diasporic relations.

### Close reading

The interaction between Nam, his father, and an unnamed American homeless man in Iowa City is a short but important episode, as the dynamic between the three figures and the roles they play illustrate the translational discourses being enacted in the story more broadly between the Vietnamese and Anglo-American cultures. This is because the progression of the episode overall can be understood as a process of translation: first is Nam's observation that his father is standing on the river bank next to "une silhouette barbue et emmitouflée [qui] se penchait sur un feu allumé dans un baril d'essence"; he reflects that "[il n'avait] jamais vu ça à Iowa City" (*Le Bateau* 23).<sup>30</sup> Exactly what it is he has never seen before is ambiguous; if we assume the silhouetted figure is a homeless man, as the beard and the oil drum fire would suggest, we could interpret this in at least three ways: Nam is witnessing (a) an interaction between an older Vietnamese man and a local American man, (b) an interaction between a migrant figure and a homeless figure or (c) an interaction between a migrant from Australia and a homeless man of Iowa City. One's interpretation of this comment influences the interpretative possibilities of the episode, as it determines the primary role played by each figure in the translation process. These possibilities will be examined further below. In all cases, Nam is witnessing an encounter between two entities, one of which is known to him, the other of which is "silhouetted", or "othered". The second step in the episode is what takes place when Nam joins the two entities. His father addresses the "other" to introduce his son, whom he refers to as "l'écrivain". His reference to him as "the writer" as opposed to "a writer" would suggest that he has already mentioned Nam and is now simply pointing him out; this may be why Nam reacts with some unease, perhaps even suspicion, as he glances quickly at his father. The expression on his father's face however remains impenetrable (*Le Bateau* 24), and taking his coffee cup from Nam, he offers it to the homeless man, who politely declines. Taking this moment to study the "other", Nam notices that he has "doigts nouveaux... une voix douce, des vêtements alourdis par la vie", and that he smells "de bêtes, d'essence et de pluie" (24)<sup>31</sup>. These descriptors appear to highlight the man's relationship to an ideal of freedom as well as to a state of

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<sup>30</sup> My translation – "a silhouette, rugged-up and bearded, leant over a fire in an oil drum"; "he had never seen anything like it in Iowa City".

<sup>31</sup> My translation – "gnarled fingers...a soft voice, his clothing heavy with wear"; "animals, petrol and rain".

homelessness. This second step in the process has thus seen Nam introduced into the middle of the encounter between two entities, during which he has interacted with both of them, finding himself less sure about his knowledge of the father and in possession of more knowledge about the other. The third step is crucial, as it represents the movement of one entity toward the other: the father addresses the man again, explaining that his son has written a “nouvelle sur les boat people vietnamiens”, and having stared intently [fixer] at the man for a moment, he launches at him “comme s’il déclamait une réplique de théâtre: ‘Lui et moi, on est des boat people’” (24).<sup>32</sup> This is followed by a silence as the three of them contemplate the flames in the oil drum; when Nam next looks up, night has fallen. There is a clear dramatic element to this third step, where the father appears to be performing the identity of his ethnicity for a local American man, and the performance is deemed significant enough to be followed by a long, reflective silence. While he may just be taking pride in his family’s history, it is also possible that he is aware of and perhaps parodying the western demand that ethnic representatives perform their cultural narrative. In any case, he has used Nam’s identity as a writer to translate the two of them into a recognisable label for their western listener. The fourth and final step that follows reveals the reciprocated movement of the ‘other’ toward this offered translation: the father asks Nam in Vietnamese whether he has any money, and when Nam offers the man some notes, the man accepts them and says, into his beard [“dans sa barbe”], “Bienvenue en Amérique” (*Le Bateau* 24). This welcome from the homeless man to the self-proclaimed “boat people” could be seen as an extension of the performance, where the American local simply responds as one feels one should, his speaking into his beard perhaps indicative of a certain resistance to or even resentment of this performance. It is, after all, interesting that the explicit welcome comes from a homeless man whose condition is in some ways comparable with that of the displaced diasporic subject, and this contrast could be taken as an ironic statement on the poor reception of refugees. However, the moment of silence and the fall of night would seem to indicate the conclusion of the drama, and thus the man’s response can also be read as completely genuine, that is, as reflective of a humbling transnational connection made between two types of outsiders. This would then work as an acceptance of the father’s translation, and a coming-together that represents the outcome of the translation process.

As noted, the crucial point in this process is the third step, when the father uses Nam’s writing and the label of “boat people” to identify himself and his son and translate them for the target culture. Depending on how one interprets the first step of the process, that is Nam’s observation of the unique interaction taking place before him, this third step can be interpreted in one of three ways, each of

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<sup>32</sup> My translation – “as if he were speaking a line from a play: ‘We are boat people’”.

which can contribute toward a transdiasporic understanding of the text. First, if Nam is witnessing an interaction between an older Vietnamese man and a local American, we foreground the home-host dialectic. In this case, when Nam joins the interaction in step two, he is positioned as a mediator or a metaphorical translator between home and host, underlining his status as a 1.5 immigrant and as a writer of ethnic literature; in step three he is then the medium through which the source translates itself for the target. This interpretation renders the episode an illustration-in-miniature, or a *mise-en-abyme*, of the diasporic interactions explored in the story as a whole, reflecting the broader *mise-en-abyme* structure of *The Boat* as a collection, as discussed above. When we consider the father's use of "boat people" in this light, the reference underscores the fact that the English language is necessary for the translation of his own and his son's identity; this supports the idea of the Anglophone hegemony over Vietnamese diasporic discourse.

Second, if Nam is witnessing an interaction between a migrant figure and a homeless figure, our interpretation of the translation process they undertake will foreground two strata of diasporic host contexts that can each represent a position of either privilege or lack-of-privilege. In this case, when Nam joins the interaction in step two, he is positioned as a mediator or metaphorical translator between two subjective points of view, capable of understanding both the migrants position as an outsider who lacks the local homeless man's privilege as a rooted individual, and the homeless man's position as trapped in a single culture, lacking the migrant's privilege of being able to travel. In step three he is then witnessing another *mise-en-abyme* of home-host interactions, but in addition, he is observing a form of movement between two figures negotiating a single host context. This negotiation underscores nuances of the concept of "boat people", namely its negative associations with exile alongside its positive associations with the privilege of movement, highlighting the way language contributes to the construction of any diasporic position. This reaffirms the power of language hegemony, and the value of paying close attention to how translated texts can alert us to such hegemony.

Finally, and most interestingly for the present transdiasporic analysis: if at the beginning of this episode we understand Nam to be witnessing an interaction between a Vietnamese migrant from Australia and a homeless man of Iowa City, we can focus on what it might demonstrate about social norms in the two host contexts. In this case, when Nam joins the interaction in step two, he is positioned as a mediator or a metaphorical translator between the Australian and American contexts, and his initial reaction suggests that in the former it might be more common to see interactions with homeless individuals, while in the latter it might be comparatively rare. In step three he is then observing a clear form of transdiasporic movement between two different diasporic host contexts. Seen in this light, the reference to "boat people" underscores the fact that a single English term is being used

transnationally and thus potentially covering up the differences between Anglophone host cultures; in contrast to the previous two interpretations of the episode, here we focus not only on the hegemony of the Anglophone, but on its homogenised nature across Anglophone-Vietnamese discourse.

This interpretation raises an important question about the father's use of the term "Vietnamese boat people", and about Nam's reaction to it: can we view the reference differently depending on whether we approach it from an Australian or an American perspective? We can draw some insight into this from the earlier episode in which Nam and his friend discuss the values of the American literary market and of William Faulkner. As already noted, it is when Nam's friend congratulates him on his resistance to the market's expectations, that is, his refusal to write about "les boat people vietnamiens" (20), that Nam hears the gunshot. More specifically, Nam feels he has been shot in the leg from behind, and he realises that if this were true he would have to tell his story from a hospital bed or maybe even a prison cell. This appears as an ironic and self-conscious metaphor for the way American society treats ethnic writers, depriving them of their independence in a way that forces them to tell the kind of dramatic life story that "sells". In light of this, one must question Nam's perspective on his own father presenting them as "boat people" in a dramatic display before the homeless man; we now have a basis from which we can hypothesise that his father's actions are related to an Australian perspective, and Nam's reactions are related to an American perspective. By exploring the nuances of the term "boat people" in the different Anglophone contexts, we will begin to see how diasporic discourse can too easily be homogenised unless we distinguish between different host contexts. This distinction is at the heart of the transdiasporic approach, which in this case has been enabled here through the French translation of the story; the translation draws the reader in to identify points at which Anglophone hegemony prevails, and thus points at which homogenised views of it might be present.

### **Distant reading**

The translational site identified above in the reference to "boat people" must be contextualised in the framework of English as a dominant language within Vietnamese diasporic discourse. While discussions of the Vietnamese diaspora in French emerged in the media in the late 1970s, even at this point, key concepts such as "boat people" were almost universally represented in English. The archives of *Le Monde* record the first usage of "boat people" in May 1978; the first academic appearance was in the 1979 article "Réfugiés du Vietnam et minorités chinoises" by François Houtart and Geneviève Lemercinier, published in *Civilisations* Volume 1. Previously, there appears to be no record of "boat people" in French usage, though the French equivalents "gens du bateau" and "peuple de la mer" were commonly used in reference to other historical occurrences, namely an invasion of Egypt via the river

Nile in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries BCE (Reinach), and to the South-east Asian “sea nomads” (Chou). Once the term “boat people” was picked up it seems to have been employed in a French context exclusively in relation to refugees, and most often in reference to Vietnamese refugees.<sup>33</sup> The impetus for this was the global publicity about the ship *Hai Hong* when it was left with 2,500 Vietnamese refugees off the coast of Malaysia. The ship was seen displaying a banner in English that read “UN please save us”, and the event brought the plight of Vietnamese refugees to the attention of international media, whose response ensured that “the euphemism ‘boat people’ became a household word”, regardless of one’s language (Ai). While the term came to refer to south-east Asian refugees escaping by boat from the 1970s up until the present day, a report on the crisis from the American Jewish Committee in December 1978 defined it precisely as “those escaping by sea to Malaysia”, tracing its origins to the *Hai Hong* incident (“The Southeast Asian Refugees: Background Memorandum”). As a result of this increased international attention, the organisation of humanitarian aid also increased. In the context of France, this was seen most directly in the operation launched in late 1978-early 1979 under the name of “Un bateau pour le Vietnam” (“Réfugiés: en 1979, l’élan humanitaire pour les boat-people d’Asie”). Organised by French doctor Bernard Kouchner and supported by significant socialist figures in France including Jean-Paul Sartre, the operation oversaw the collection of donations to fund a hospital ship in New Caledonia that was to be sent via a circular route through South-east Asia, picking up stranded “boat people”. If the *Hai Hong* incident had brought the plight of the Vietnamese refugees to the attention of the global Anglophone world, which then coined the term “boat people” so that it was taken up internationally, operation “Un bateau pour le Vietnam” was the French response to that plight that established the idea of “boat people” in a localised Francophone context.

While a comparison of the use of “boat people” in Francophone and Anglophone contexts illustrates the hegemonic influence English has had over the Vietnamese diasporic discourse, it is a comparison of its use in different English-speaking contexts that will illustrate its homogeneous nature. In “L’amour, l’honneur”, the Francophone representation contrasts the contexts of America and Australia, where the term “boat people” has distinct associations. In Australian literary and cultural discourse, for example, the image of the boat has a range of signification that extends beyond the Vietnamese refugee crisis to a history of boat stories and to political debates over refugees throughout the twenty-first century. In an American context, on the other hand, while there is a somewhat comparable history of boat stories and refugee debates, the term is associated more closely with the

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<sup>33</sup> There is evidence of some use of the term in the Francophone context of Haitian refugees, however this begins appearing around the same time and is thus more likely to have been transferred from the Vietnamese context rather than having developed independently.

American war in Vietnam because of the impact the event had on late twentieth-century American culture and identity. By exploring this difference further, we can produce a transdiasporic understanding more complex than that produced in response to the previous case study on Linda Lê; that is, through an “additional host culture” rather than a “reversed host culture”, we introduce a new perspective that allows us to draw out elements already buried in the Anglophone contexts of the narrative.

Looking first in more detail at the Australian host context, it has been observed in literary studies discourse that the publication of Alice Pung’s *Unpolished Gem* (2006), with its opening line “This story does not begin on a boat”, highlights just how closely the idea of the boat in Australian literary culture is associated with “refugees, trauma, or persecution”, and with “victimization” (Ommundsen “This Story Does not Begin on a Boat” 504). Additionally, however, Pung’s personal narrative of being born in Australia to a family who fled China, then Cambodia, then Vietnam, demonstrates how even the acceptance or rejection of this popular boat narrative is not only contained within Vietnamese culture, but within Asian cultures more broadly. Ommundsen traces this broader Asian association with the boat narrative through Brian Castro’s novel *Birds of Passage* (1993), which tells the story of a Chinese boat immigrant in the Australian Gold Rush, and to the visual work of Shaun Tan, Tom Roberts, Hou Leong and Guan Wei, who have each explored the Asian-Australian boat narrative in their own way. Finally, she explores Le’s collection *The Boat* as a text which, like Pung’s, resists the pull of the boat story at the same time as it appears to centralise it. Interestingly, Ommundsen then relates these Asian-Australian narratives to broader Australian boat narratives, arguing that “their preoccupation with boats is not one which sets [them] apart from other Australian literary or cultural traditions, if anything, it brings them closer” (“This story does not begin on a boat” 506). Among these broader narratives she includes “the First Fleet... the ‘children overboard’ affair... the ‘dream’ or ‘ghost’ ships observed by indigenous Australian at first encounter...tales of convict ships [and] those of free settlers, from ten-pound Poms to post-World War Two European migrants”, and among the writers who have drawn on them, “Thomas Keneally, Eva Sallis, Morris Gleitzman, Robert Drewe, and Libby Gleeson” (507). In other Australian contexts, this broader understanding of “boat people” is also evident. Conferences, for example, speak to the “boat people” phenomenon as a sweeping pattern throughout the history of the country,<sup>34</sup> and humanitarian organisations use the term as a referent to contemporary problems with incoming waves of migration (Broinowski). As such, the narrative of Vietnamese “boat people” in Australia is part of a much broader national heritage.

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<sup>34</sup> For example, in June 2014, Western Sydney University hosted a conferenced titled “‘Boat People’: The Long History of Immigration”.



While there are similar historical narratives in American history related to sea-bound journeys, the more specific boat narrative as a trope has not been developed in American literary studies discourses. Instead, the historical link between the notion of “boat people” and the refugees of Vietnam means that in an American context the term is inevitably related to perceptions of the American war in Vietnam, which in turn are related to America’s perception of its own culture (Jamieson x). The national heritage within which the term is placed, then, is much narrower than in the Australian context, holding out the possibility that despite the stronger history of relations between America and Vietnam, and despite the stronger tradition of Asian-American diasporic literature, there is here a broader platform for exploration of the Vietnamese diaspora in the Australian host context. We could note, for example, that despite the number of Vietnamese refugees being considerably less in Australia than in either France or America,<sup>35</sup> and despite the Australian Vietnamese community being considerably smaller than other Australian ethnic minorities, it has received significant media attention due to it being concentrated in the urban spaces of Sydney and Melbourne, and in need of social and linguistic support (Cunningham and Nguyen 129; Thomas 1141). As already noted, its visibility continues to increase through the impact of its cultural activities, and it has developed a strong presence in academic discourses (Nguyen *Memory is Another Country* 163). The presence of Vietnamese students in Australian universities is another important factor, with statistics by the turn of the century showing that “the Vietnamese are over-represented in university attendance, with twice as many of those born in Vietnam at a university than the Australian-born population” (Cunningham and Nguyen 130). More recent statistics show that while there are fewer Vietnamese students than other ethnic identities in university courses, the community represents by far the most consistent university presence over the first decade of the twenty-first century (“International students in Australia up to 2014”). Compared with equivalent studies in France, a much larger number of Vietnamese students are present in Australian universities and American universities,<sup>36</sup> and recent cultural production in Australia reflects this presence, with texts like Hoa Pham’s *Wave* (2015) focusing on Vietnamese-Australian university experience.

While these constitute only surface-level observations of the Australian context, they demonstrate the potential for a diasporic study comparing the French and Australian Vietnamese communities, and their triangulation with other Anglo-American communities. Importantly, this potential emerges from a transdiasporic approach that acknowledges an added host culture

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<sup>35</sup> About one million travelled to America and 400,000 to France, while only 200,000 travelled to Australia (Chan and Dorais; Nguyen *Memory is Another Country*).

<sup>36</sup> In 2014, 4,331 were enrolled in French universities (see “Etudiants étrangers en mobilité en France”), compared with 27,623 in 2013 in Australian universities (see “International Students in Australia up to 2014”) and 28,883 in 2015 in American universities (see Ashwill).

perspective. Drawing on a French representation of an Anglophone-Vietnamese narrative, it identifies “boat people” as an element of Vietnamese diasporic discourse that is dominated by the English language, and can therefore consider the extent to which this idea carries different weight in different Anglophone contexts. This observation demonstrates the potential for a transdiasporic analysis to reveal unique textual representation of global networks, in this case one that highlights a critique of the hegemony of Anglophone host cultures in the Vietnamese diaspora.

#### 4.4 Overview and further application

Nam Le’s short story “Love and Honour”, translated by France Camus-Pichon as “L’amour, l’honneur”, presents us with an addition of a host culture perspective: the Anglo-American and Anglo-Australian perspectives present in the source narrative are expanded to include the French perspective in the translation. We can explore this additional perspective in detail via specific points in the text: when we explore them via the reference to American author William Faulkner, the French perspective reveals a different understanding of his value as a writer, and an understanding of how he was present in the context of Vietnam. This underscores the power of the global Francophone system of literature, and the ways in which it works with and against the global Anglophone system, particularly within Vietnam. When we explore them via the reference to “boat people”, the French perspective reveals an explicitly Anglophone discourse surrounding the Vietnamese diaspora, and an understanding of how this discourse developed. This underscores the power of the global Anglophone media, as well as the need to critique its power in relation to different national contexts. Together, these two discussions bring to light the ways in which the French and English languages have worked through global systems to construct interactions with and perspectives on Vietnamese culture and its diasporic peoples. Incorporating both academic and popular networks, these systems draw on the power of international awards and communication channels to influence cultures globally; in being influenced by these systems, Vietnamese culture developed a relationship with hegemonic aspects of the Francophone and the Anglophone, and these aspects were then present in Vietnamese diasporic communities post-1975. What emerges from this analysis is a reflection on how the power of global cultural networks impacts on host culture relations.

I will consider two brief follow-up case studies. Andrew X. Pham’s novel *Catfish and Mandala* (1999) is a memoir of his bicycle tour from the US back to Vietnam. Prompted by a feeling of isolation from other Americans, both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese alike, Pham feels the need to connect with his family who have remained in the home country. He spends a year travelling by bicycle, passing through Japan and ending up in Vietnam where his identity as a Viet-kieu causes an ongoing sense of

isolation. In its French translation by Isabelle Delord-Philippe, *Le Souffle du cobra* (2001), this narrative of self-discovery and insight into the identity of Vietnamese-Americans is seen through an entirely new host culture perspective. Within a French framing, the figure of the Vietnamese-American can be compared with that of the Vietnamese-French: is this double, even triple, isolation, part of the experience of the latter? By identifying points at which that sense of isolation relates specifically to its Anglophone context, we can explore the extent to which they are a part of the hegemonic nature of the Anglophone host culture. Moreover, by viewing the position of Japanese culture in relation to Vietnamese-American we can explore the extent to which the hegemonic status of the Anglophone has enabled it to develop a relationship with the Japanese which differs from that shared between France and Japan.

Minh Tran Huy's novel *La Double Vie d'Anna Song* (2009) tells the story of a French-Vietnamese woman growing up as a musician in Paris, and then coping with a debilitating condition that interrupts the rise of her music career. While its connections with Vietnam as a diasporic home culture are not central to the narrative, there is some exploration of the experience of Vietnamese families in France, without any reference to Anglophone culture. In the English translation by Alison Anderson, *The Double Life of Anna Song* (2010), the French framing of this experience is therefore considered from a new point of view, one which takes a largely localised narrative out into a global context. While Le's text had taken a global Anglophone narrative into the more localised context of France, here we see the reversal of the translation direction reversing the movement from localisation to globalisation. It therefore not only raises questions about how the experience of Vietnamese families in France compares with those in Anglophone host contexts, but it considers as a factor in this comparison the extent to which host contexts might be connected to a more globally-dominant network, as in the case of the Australian and American host contexts for Le's story.

These two texts present us with an extension of the discussion pursued in this chapter. They illustrate further instances of the potential that a transdiasporic analysis has to enable the reader to focus on a translated text's representation of the hegemonic nature of different host cultures. They also demonstrate how a transdiasporic analysis, when applied to multiple texts in which there is an additional host culture perspective, can underscore a range of factors that impact on this hegemony. In the case of the Vietnamese diaspora, these include the shift of global literary networks, the heterogeneous nature of a language shared between different national host contexts, engagements with third host cultures and the comparison of more localised and more globalised host contexts.

## Chapter 5: Québécois-Vietnamese diasporic literature in English translation

Case study three returns to the translational direction of French > English, but it considers an English translation of a North American Francophone text, written by a Vietnamese migrant living in Québec. Kim Thúy's novella *Ru* (2009) was translated into English as *Ru* by Sheila Fischman (2012). It narrates the boat journey of a Vietnamese girl and her experiences settling into the Québécois, Canadian and American cultures. It explores relations between the French Canadian, Anglo-Canadian, Anglo-American and Vietnamese cultures, contextualised within the Québécois host culture. However, its translation re-contextualises these relations within the perspective of the Anglo-Canadian host culture. This demonstrates another reversed perspective, as in case study one, but here there are multiple languages and host culture environments involved in the narrative, each of which is re-framed through the translation process. A transdiasporic analysis reveals that by triangulating the source and target cultures with the diasporic home, we can access in the translation a representation of the heterogeneous nature of these host environments. The analysis therefore enables us to consider the impact of this heterogeneity on the diasporic network.

### 5.1 Québécois-Vietnamese diasporic literature

#### 5.1.1 Historical Forces

It is a complex task locating the Vietnamese-Québécois literary tradition in relation to both the Vietnamese-French and Vietnamese-Anglophone literary traditions discussed in previous chapters. First, this is due to Canada's history caught in the crossfire of colonial relations between Britain and France, and later to its connection with both the USA and France, whose relations almost pivot around their own connections with Vietnam. Second, it is due to Canada's internal political history of nationalist and separatist movements that have placed enormous weight on any representation related to tensions between the Francophone or Anglophone languages and cultures.

Québec, formerly known as New France, was an official French colony from 1663, but the British forcibly took control in 1760. For the following two centuries Anglophone culture and language dominated the region and in particular the metropolitan centre of Montreal, pushing the Francophone population out into Québec City and the smaller towns. The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s led to a reversal of this power balance, bringing the Francophone back into the centre of Québécois culture; however, this most recent shift may not have been possible without the influx of immigrant cultures over the course of the twentieth century. Québec has been host to several diasporic communities,<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Ireland and Proulx for a useful outline of these traditions.

most significantly the Jewish which arrived largely during the first half of the twentieth century (Simon 130) and the Italian which arrived en masse around mid-century (Mormina). While these populations have maintained independent ethnic identities, any assimilation has generally tended toward the Anglophone culture of Québec rather than the Francophone (Simon 130; Mormina), and this bolstering of the Anglophone culture prompted concern in Québec over the reduction of the French-speaking majority. This concern turned to active conflict in the 1960s, and became a major factor in the re-instatement of the French language and Québécois culture in the 1970s. An important moment in this history was the passing in 1977 of Bill 101, more officially known as *La Charte de la Langue Française*; it made French the “official language of government and of the courts in the province of Québec, as well as making it the normal and habitual language of the workplace, of instruction, of communications, of commerce and of business” (Behiels and Hudon). This law had implications for Canadian immigrants, and therefore for diasporic literature, as it gave national delegations in refugee camps the authority to prioritise French language capacity in its selection of refugees, and to ensure that French was the language in which refugees were assimilated once back in Canada. Thus while diasporic communities which arrived before the 1970s were largely assimilated into the Anglophone culture, those which arrived during and after the 1970s were largely assimilated into the Francophone culture. The position of diasporic writers such as Kim Thúy is the direct consequence of this immigration history: her family was chosen in the Malaysian refugee camp by Canadian officials because her parents spoke some French (Hong), and she now describes herself as “a child of Bill 101”, feeling closer to French than to English (“Kim Thúy”).<sup>38</sup>

### 5.1.2 A Translational Host Culture

Much of the tension that resulted from this history was centered on Montreal, where interactions between French and English are visible in its physical as well as cultural space. Montreal constitutes one of Sherry Simon’s multilingual cities that experience “distancing” and “furthering”; it has “the presence of two historically rooted language communities who feel a sense of entitlement to the same territory”, and the relations between these languages are rarely “peaceful and egalitarian”, but rather “include indifference and negation as well as engagement and creative interference” (2013: 3). This environment

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<sup>38</sup> The Canada 2011 Census shows that the population of Québec, at 7,815,955, comprised 78% French native speakers, 7.6% English native speakers, and 12.3% or 961,700 native speakers of other languages, including autochtone and immigrant languages. The balance of other languages due to immigration was highest in the region of metropolitan Montreal, where native speakers of French comprised 63.2%, of English 11.6%, and of other languages 21.9% (see “Population by Mother Tongue...”).

provides the opportunity for “a broad spectrum of language interactions and cultural mediations” and “more productive areas of exchange where cultural memories engage with one another” (4-5). Literary production from the area naturally reflects these interactions and exchanges, for example in the work of Mavis Gallant and Gabrielle Roy (136); however, they are inherently also reflected in the literature of the diasporic communities that made Québec their home.

Given that in 1979 the Vietnamese were the “largest immigrant population arriving in Québec in two categories (country of birth and last place of residence), accounting for 20% of all immigrants” (Yeager “Bach Mai’s Francophone Eurasian Voice” 54), a significant amount of the diasporic literature that has come out of the region is of Vietnamese origin. As Yeager explains, “certainly the fact that a Vietnamese Francophone writer has produced a novel in Canada raises questions, some new, some familiar, about the repercussions of cultural assimilation, but also about the possible responses by both the Anglophone and Francophone communities” (57). We could ask, for example, what value the Francophone Québécois would place on regional diversification in the direction of Vietnamese culture, if they had been fighting so long for diversification in the name of the Francophone identity? The fact that the influx of Vietnamese immigrants coincided with this critique of regional identity entangled their diasporic literature in a unique context of identity politics.

A further element of the Québécois environment that made it a unique diasporic context was the interrelations between diasporic literature and local literature, as the migratory aspect of the former was understood to be an inherent element of the latter. This idea was expressed in Pierre Nepveu’s 1988 survey of migrant works which acknowledged that “since the 1960s, the Québec imagination has largely been defined by the concepts of exile (psychological and fictional), loss, distant or unreachable homes and, emerging from the same negative consciousness, it has been made up by migrant, plural and often cosmopolitan ideas” (qtd. in Urro 9).<sup>39</sup> This experience of exile had been another consequence of the cultural upheaval of the 1960s-1970s, in that Francophone Québec had rallied against the state of exile it had been in for 200 years. Thus the experience of migrating from the periphery to the centre was an inherent part of Québécois identity, but perhaps one which only gained a vocabulary and a sense of understanding from the diasporic literature that was created by the influx of international migrants.<sup>40</sup> This fluidity between migrant and local literature suggests that the Canadian host context of the

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<sup>39</sup> My translation – “l’imaginaire Québécois lui-même s’est largement défini, depuis les années soixante, sous le signe de l’exile (psychique, fictive), du manqué, du pays absent ou inachevé et, du milieu même de cette négativité, s’est constitué en imaginaire migrant, pluriel, souvent cosmopolite”.

<sup>40</sup> As Simon Harel (2005) put it, “migrant writing can be read...as the presentation of an unease that represents the nature of Québec on the issue of identity”. My translation – “les écritures migrantes peuvent être lues...comme la présentation d’un malaise qui traduit l’état des lieux au Québec sur la question de l’identité”.

Vietnamese diaspora demonstrates an integration of other and local that is more complete than in any of the French, American or Australian contexts.

However, the Canadian host context of the Vietnamese diaspora has some important overlaps with those of France and the USA. Due to the French colonial history with Vietnam, Francophone references in Québécois literature can be in reference to the European context, just as Québécois writers themselves can identify as Eurasian due to personal ties with France through family or education. For example, Kim Thúy's work often makes references to colonial history and French sites in Vietnam and in the case of *Mãn* features a Vietnamese protagonist who moves back and forth between Québec and France. An earlier example is Vietnamese-born author Bach Mai, who studied in France and lived in Montreal from 1977, giving her a double duality as Francophone-Vietnamese and French-Québécois. Yeager describes her position as "twice removed", first as an ex-colonised minority among the colonising and second as a colonising minority among a different ex-colonised ("Bach Mai's Francophone Eurasian Voice" 54). Her ambiguity as a Eurasian immigrant in Québec is underscored by the fact that her novel *D'ivoire et d'opium* was published in Québec in 1985, decades before Kim Thúy's *Ru*, and yet it is the latter that has been cited as the first published Vietnamese-Canadian text (V. Nguyen). Moreover, it is Kim Thúy who has been dubbed the "first Québécois author of Vietnamese descent" (Dusaillant-Fernandes 75).<sup>41</sup> This suggests that the notion of a Vietnamese-Québécois or a Francophone Vietnamese-Canadian identity that is independent of French and European influence is a very recent phenomenon.

The overlap with the diasporic context of the United States emerges from the American neo-colonial history in Vietnam and the impact it has had on immigrants. For example, the American presence in Indochina constructed the concept of the "American dream" within Vietnamese culture to such an extent that it was a common idea held by refugees upon their arrival in Québec. Any exploration of it in Vietnamese-Québécois literature thus becomes a part of the history of Québec-American relations. In particular, it raises a critique of the monolingualist values of the dream, given that many refugees would arrive in Québec surprised to find a Francophone region of North America (Miraglia) because their exposure to the American dream had constructed North America in their imaginations as a wholly Anglophone entity.

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<sup>41</sup> My translation – "première écrivaine québécoise d'origine vietnamienne".

### 5.1.2 A Translational Discourse

These tensions and overlaps between the Anglophone and the Francophone in the context of Québec are evident also in Canadian scholarship on diasporic literature. As Carrière and Khordoc explain, there has been a “lack of sustained dialogue between French and English criticism in Québec and Canada”, resulting for example in different uses of critical terms (3). While Anglophone Canadian scholarship draws liberally on literary concepts such as “multicultural, ethnic or diasporic”, Francophone Québécois scholarship does not, opting instead for terms such as “interculturel, transculturel, métisse and hybride” (3-4). These preferences reflect a broader attitude toward diasporic literature: while Anglophone Canadian scholarship tends to designate hyphenated literary identities such as Vietnamese-Canadian, emphasising a distinction between cultural and linguistic entities, Francophone Québécois scholarship tends to avoid hyphenisation, resulting in “a discourse that aims to be inclusive, allowing for the literary representations of a society that seeks to come to terms with its internal plurality” (5). Both of these approaches are present in the broader idea of the “mosaic” that is often used to describe the nation’s ethnic heterogeneity, but which has been critiqued as a “re-inscription of the limits between Anglo-Canadian and ethnic others”, pursuing a “manipulation of otherness to make it more consumable” (T. Lee 76). It can nonetheless be distinguished from the American equivalent of the melting pot idea, which has been critiqued as an “obliteration of individual cultural identity” (Darragi 86),<sup>42</sup> and has in more recent scholarship been replaced by a tendency to hyphenate, as in “Asian-American”, aligning American scholarship with the Anglophone-Canadian approach.

Simon’s concepts of “distancing” and “furthering” (2013) can be applied to link these observations to the notion of the translational. While she coined the terms in relation to literary works, they are useful for identifying general tendencies in the scholarship of diasporic literature. She applies “distancing” to works whose translational representations highlight the separation of linguistic and cultural bodies and thus reflect the tendency in Anglophone scholarship to hyphenate identities and underscore difference; she applies “furthering” to works whose translational representations construct new modes of interaction between linguistic and cultural bodies, and thus reflect the tendency that is perhaps stronger in Québécois scholarship to combine identities in a way that encourages transcultural thinking (Simon 12).

Of the critical terms utilised in the Québécois context, the most common is that of “écriture migrante”. Defined by Robert Berrouet-Oriol in the mid-1980s as “a micro-corpus of literary works

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<sup>42</sup> My translation – “... le ‘melting pot’ américain, qui brasse les nationalités jusqu’à oblitérer l’identité culturelle de l’individu...”.



produced by migrant subjects” (qtd. In Ireland and Proulx 36),<sup>43</sup> it was discussed by Ireland and Proulx as a genre that creates “new styles and forms, while avoiding categorization based on ethnic origin” (36). They describe its narrative and structural elements as emerging from the trajectory between “the homeland and the new country” and the dialectic between “belonging and exile, roots and uprooting, center and periphery...present and past” (37), focusing on the concepts and processes of memory and storytelling (39-40). These are of course ideas already raised in the preceding chapters in relation to diasporic literature, and more specifically in relation to the work of Nam Le and Linda Lê; they are equally valid in relation to the work of Kim Thúy.

## 5.2 *Ru*

### 5.2.1 Kim Thúy’s source text

Kim Thúy Ly Thanh was born in 1968 in Saigon and fled Vietnam by boat in 1978. Despite a harrowing journey to Canada, she studied law, linguistics and translation at the Université de Montreal, and she went on to work as a translator, interpreter and lawyer. Her work took her back to Vietnam temporarily, after which she returned to Montreal and became a restaurateur and food commentator. It was during a period of recovery from an increasingly stressful lifestyle that she began writing, first as something to do, then because she found that she loved doing it (Hong). Her first three works, *Ru* (2009), *À toi* (2011) and *Mãn* (2014), all written in French, are based on autobiographical experience, and in particular on Thúy’s migrant history. The first and third are structured in vignettes and the second in epistolary form through emails exchanged between Thúy and French-Slovak writer Pascal Janojvak. While Thúy’s representation of her experiences often explores their traumatic side, as one critic maintains, “in general, in Thúy’s literary world, the misery of exile is told but the lexicon and thematics that the author draws upon are associated with compassion, goodness, purity, happiness and justice” (Urro 13).<sup>44</sup> This tendency toward an “optimistic spirit” (15, “esprit optimiste”) is something Urro relates to Thúy’s strong reception both in Canada and internationally. It is reflected in the idea that the text is “the emblematic case of the Vietnamese refugee success story” (V. Nguyen) and is perhaps what the judge of the 2012 Giller Prize was referring to when he described *Ru* as a work that “rewrites the traditional immigrant narrative in a completely new way, [making] it whole and wondrous once more” (“2012 Giller Prize”). As these reviews would suggest, *Ru* has received extensive critical attention and has been the recipient of

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<sup>43</sup> My translation – “un micro-corpus d’oeuvres littéraires produites par des sujets migrants”

<sup>44</sup> My translation – “En général, dans l’univers littéraire de Thùý, la misère de l’exil est racontée, mais le champ lexical et les thématiques que privilégie l’auteure sont associés à la compassion, à la bonté, à la pureté, au bonheur, à l’effort récompensé”.

several prizes, including the Canadian Governor General's Literary Award for French-language fiction, the Québécois Prix du Grand Public Salon du livre, the French Grand Prix RTL-*Lire* at the Salon du livre de Paris and the Italian Mondello Prize for Multiculturalism.

It is worth considering the different terms used to define it as a text, however. Nguyen's use of "refugee story" is quite specific, referring to texts connected to experiences of forced migration; in these cases there is a greater level of risk, making the narration of a successful arrival and adaptation a distinct phenomenon. Giller's use of "immigrant narrative", on the other hand, refers more generally to the idea that there is an established structure underlying texts that narrate such experiences, whether forced or voluntary. Both of these categorisations place the text within the broader context of migrant literature as discussed in chapter 1, that is, "literature written in a host language and connected to experiences of migration" (Polezzi 350). We should also, of course, consider how it relates to the Québécois term "écriture migrante", and while linguistically this is a direct translation of the English term, it is worth noting the more specific emphases in Ireland and Proulx's definition, as noted earlier. In particular, they emphasise its creation of new styles, which interestingly is mirrored in Giller's response to *Ru* as a new manifestation of the immigrant narrative. While this element is not necessarily contrary to Polezzi's use of the term migrant literature, its specification could be seen as a result of the need to identify in a Québécois context the potential differences between literature written by migrants and literature written by displaced peoples within the history of Francophone-Anglophone conflict.

We can identify the potential for each of these different terms when we look at the text in more detail. It is told through the eyes of narrator Nguyễn an Tịnh, who relates her experiences as a young girl growing up in Vietnam in the 1970s, as an adolescent boat person, refugee and immigrant in Québec, and eventually as a Canadian resident and the mother of two boys. It is structured in vignettes that are connected thematically, and to a lesser extent by narrative flow: while some vignettes continue the narrative of the previous vignette, others expand upon a single idea it has raised or apply its central theme to another situation. The text overall moves chronologically, beginning with the narrator's birth and ending with her reflections in the present as she writes the story, but the vignettes tend to move back and forth between the various phases of her life, identifying transnational and transcultural links between her ideas. For example, the opening sequence focuses on the narrator's self identity, first in relation to her family (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 1-2), second as a "boat person" (3-7), and third as a migrant in Canada (8-13). These reflections lead her to appreciate the strength and foresight of her mother, especially during her family's time in a Malaysian refugee camp (14-18). Her experience with languages in the camp links forward to her slow integration into Canada as she begins to understand the local culture (19-25), and the reflection on power relations that this develops leads back to Vietnam

when communist soldiers took over the family's house (28-33). The division between Vietnamese communists and non-communists expands into a reflection on divisions within families and between loved ones (23-37), and to an extended series of vignettes on the narrator's family background, her Chinese heritage and her various family members (38-73). A reflection on the dreams of her family then links to a discussion of the American dream (74-80) and of the inspiration and insight she has gathered from other Canadian and American immigrant stories (81-93). Finally, she returns to her own story, considering the importance of love, of women, of food, beauty, faith and children, and she ends with a reflection on how her family has managed to remain together, to resurface from its history and to start anew (140-141).

### 5.2.2 Sheila Fischman's target text

*Ru* was translated by the well-known Canadian translator Sheila Fischman, and was published in 2012 under the same title. Kim Thúy thoroughly approved of Fischman's voice for the work (Hong), and the translation was very well received, attracting a significant amount of critical and popular acclaim. It was shortlisted for the Canadian Governor General's Literary Award for Translation and the Scotiabank Giller Prize, was nominated for the Amazon.com First Novel Prize, and was the 2015 winner of CBC's Canada Reads competition. *Ru* has been translated into at least eight other languages, and the rights have been sold to over twenty countries; Thúy herself has expressed surprise at the global recognition and appreciation of its account of the migrant experience (Hong).

Approaching this text for transdiasporic analysis, we can identify the diasporic home culture as the narrator's Vietnamese background, and the host cultures as the various North American environments she has experienced as a diasporic subject, as well as the Anglo-Canadian environment presented via the translated representation of the narrative; the latter is of course already present in the narrative within the heterogeneous entities of North America. The text therefore represents relations between the Franco-Canadian, Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American host cultures and the Vietnamese home culture, where the translation process has reversed the main perspective from the Franco-Canadian to the Anglo-Canadian, and reframed the Anglo-American through the Anglo-Canadian; I categorise this as Type 3, Multi-directional host culture perspective (Figure 9).

**Case Study 3**  
**Multi-Directional Host Culture Perspective**

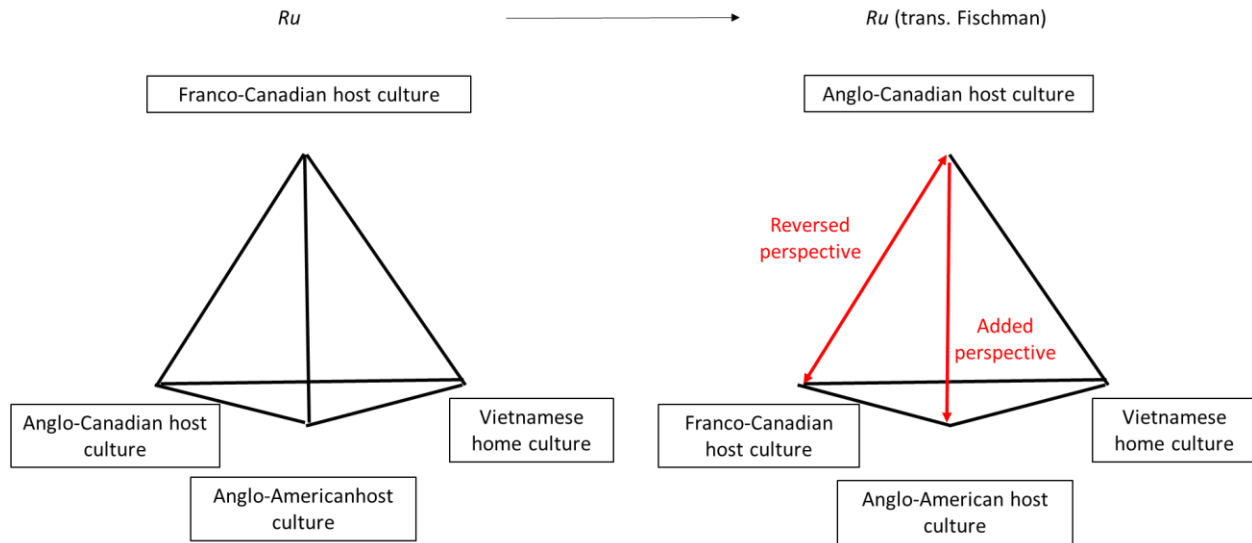


Figure 9

### 5.3 Transdiasporic analysis

#### 5.3.1 Identifying translational moments

*Ru* presents an extensive range of representations of the translation process, both on a broad thematic level and a more explicit multilingual level. The range is due not only to the complex layers of linguistic and cultural interaction produced by its North American context, but also to the central role played by language and translation in the narrator's experiences. A thematic representation of translation is present in the recurring use of imagery related to the experience of movement, as manifested in the flow of water, and in the experience of motherhood, as manifested in passing on one's identity or rocking one's baby to sleep. As a migrant narrative, *Ru* is telling the story of the narrator's self-translation from a Vietnamese identity into a Canadian one, and her experience of this process is framed by these two experiences; self-translation is after all a process of movement, as well as a process of birthing a new self. Thus, at the beginning she reflects on how the boat passage through the "Gulf of Siam" "stripped" her of her native identity and ended a relationship she had with her mother (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 2), and at the end she reflects on how the South China Sea is holding the remains of Vietnamese treasures that will be uncovered in the future (138) and linked with a native land that exists as a "lullaby" in memory (140). Significant moments in her transition between these two points can also be related to these themes; for example, the strength she gained from her mother's support in Canada (20) can be linked with the role played by women in Vietnam during the war, tending to the farms with the sweat running down their wrinkled skin like "a brook that traces a furrow in the earth" (38). The

poetic nature of this text and the way in which it jumps back and forth between periods of time and place in the narrator's life encourage the reader to explore these thematic links, and to read the text as a network of ideas that constitute the migrant's process of self-translation.

These overarching representations of the translation process are connected to more explicit multilingual representations when we consider that the title *Ru* has a dual meaning, one related to movement and the other to motherhood: in French, it means "a small stream" and in Vietnamese it means "lullaby". Not only does this dual meaning relate to the overarching themes, but it leaves the term in a state of permanent translation between French and Vietnamese, between the familiar and the other. By maintaining this term through vehicular matching in the English translation, this state of translation is highlighted further because there is no longer any way in which it can be interpreted as native to the language of the text; it is now entirely othered. There is a short preface – also present in the source – that works to explain this othered term to English readers, but from a transdiasporic point of view the explanation also reveals the fact that French shares the word with the Vietnamese language, while English does not. This frames the entire text within a source-target comparison that is based on a triangulation with the diasporic home culture, making it a strong case study for a transdiasporic analysis. It raises questions, for example, about how the term creates meaning in the English language, how this meaning reframes the thematic threads of movement and motherhood throughout the narrative, and how this reframing comments on both the Anglophone-Vietnamese and French-Vietnamese relations present in the text.

Beyond this overarching multilingualism, there are many passing instances that draw on both referential restriction and vehicular matching. The majority of the text is represented in English through referential restriction, although there is vehicular matching with both French and Vietnamese. Sometimes these are simply references to idioms (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 12; 95) or cultural items (35; 114), and in other cases they are part of a direct reflection on language, creating interesting comparisons with the surrounding English. For example, when the narrator reflects on her son's pronunciation of the French words "maman" and "poire" (7), or on the nuances between the Vietnamese interpretations of "love" as "thích", "thương", "yêu", "mê", "mù quáng", and "tình giả" (96), the Anglophone reader is exposed to the ways in which these languages differ from English. In the case of the French, the focus is on different sounds, and the difficulty of pronunciation. In the case of the Vietnamese, the focus is more on the visibly complex diacritical markers, which indirectly relate to the difficult pronunciation of tones. In addition, the reader who is conscious of this text as an English translation of a French narrative will understand that the difference being explored is actually between French and Vietnamese, and this difference is being represented in English. This raises the question of

how pronunciation differences between Vietnamese and French differ from those between French and English, or Vietnamese and English. The comparisons work beyond language difference too: a reference to the place Cercle Sportif in Saigon might appear as a French-English translational moment, but its location in Vietnam encourages us to consider how it works first as a French-Vietnamese moment, drawing on the colonial history of the place, and then to compare this with how it might work as a Vietnamese-English moment, drawing on the same place in the context of American occupation. In other words, wherever there are visible multilingual relationships in *Ru*, there is always the potential to relate them to each of the three languages and cultures that simultaneously construct the text.

In other examples, vehicular matching with English from the source text becomes hidden within the language of representation in the target text, though in some cases the narrator's direct reflection on language means that these moments are still visibly translational. For example, she remembers learning some basic English in the refugee camp and wants to use it to communicate her boat number and her gender during her assessment by the Canadian delegation (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 18). Here, we can focus on her desire, in the context of migration to North America, to show her capacity as a young translator from Vietnamese into English; alternatively, we could consider what this episode says about translation from English into French in the context of Canada, where an attempted use of English might represent a misunderstanding of the delegation's primary language. She also recalls singing the theme song to the musical *Fame*, "I sing the body electric", noting that at the time she "did not understand the words", and when she begins learning English in a Québec military garrison and mistakes the words "Bye, asshole" for a polite form of address (19). In these cases we see how a migrant settling into Québec as a host context has two languages to learn, as well as the relationship between them. These instances highlight the fact that transdiasporic analyses can draw on translations within single but heterogeneous host cultures, rather than having to rely on translations between separate national contexts.

One final example of a term newly hidden through the translation process comes from a more indirect multilingual representation in the source text. This is the recurring reference to the concept of the American dream. While the term is represented in French in the source text, and so presents an example of maintained referential restriction more than it does of vehicular matching, its close links with Anglo-American culture make it an Anglophone concept that we could consider as having been translated into French for the source text, then translated back into English for the target text. It is introduced halfway through the narrative in relation to the narrator's neighbours in Québec who appear to conform to its idealistic image. By comparing them with her own family, whose journey to North America has been built on the idea that it will give them their own American dream, the narrator comes

to believe that those who have grown up in America tend to value the concept less than those who have more literally dreamed about it. The translational context of the term however raises the question of how the American dream can be understood differently in the Anglo-American culture once it has picked up elements of the Franco-American culture, and how this understanding can shed light on the way in which both relate to the Vietnamese culture.

In the transdiasporic analysis below, the two translational moments that will be explored in detail are the overarching multilingualism of the title *Ru* and the recurring references to the American dream. The first will allow us to explore how linguistic relations have impacted on the diasporic relations between Canada, Vietnam and America, and the second will allow us to explore the impact of broader cultural ideas and their interpretation within certain historical contexts. These discussions will serve to highlight the more complex nature of this text as a case of a “multi-directional host culture perspective”, where the multilingual nature of the host cultures already present in the narrative interact with each other in new ways once the translation swaps the primary perspective from French to English.

### 5.3.2 “Ru”; or Multilingual representation in North America

The first translational moment to be addressed in this analysis is the title word, “ru”. As a term that has meaning in both Vietnamese and French, it highlights Thúy’s position as a translingual writer, or one who has “recourse to [her] own mother tongue, inserting [it] into [her] adopted language” (Wilson “Parallel Creations” 57). As such, it is a term that frames the text within a process of translation between two languages other than English. This process is then played out through the narrative where Francophone and Vietnamese contexts interact, and where their representation in English presents the reader with a potentially critical perspective on their relationship. If we also consider translingual writing as that which “feeds on the relation between different languages” (Van Dyck fn 1), we can see it as something that creates new meaning through this relationship. In the case of “ru”, the concept of the “mother tongue” emerges from the combination of its French and Vietnamese meanings, as will be explored below, and by reflecting on what this means within an Anglophone context, we can produce a transdiasporic analysis that compares the source and target cultures of this text via their translingual engagement with a diasporic home culture.

#### **Close reading**

*Ru* functions as both the title of the work and the basis of the text’s thematic and structural framework. As the title of the original French text, its foreignness for the Anglophone reader is somewhat alleviated through a brief preface that explains its dual meaning:

In French, *ru* means a small stream and, figuratively,  
A flow, a discharge – of tears, of blood, of money.  
In Vietnamese, *ru* means a lullaby, to lull.

It becomes clear in the opening vignettes that these ideas are critical to the narrative itself. The narrator begins by telling us that the purpose of her life was to “prolong that of [her] mother” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 1), and she shows how this blood connection is reflected in a linguistic connection: her name, which means “peaceful interior”, is an extension of her mother’s name, which means “peaceful environment” (2). This is made possible through the diacritical markers of the Vietnamese language, and when the narrator and her mother took their boat journey across the Gulf of Siam, becoming refugees in Québec, she says their names were “stripped of meaning” because these markers and their sounds became “strange to the French language”. This opening episode works as a simultaneous manifestation of both the French and Vietnamese significations of “ru”, showing how the migrant journey, or the notion of water and movement that can bring experiences of pain and poverty, as implied through the French meanings of “ru”, can interrupt the connection between mother and child that is implied through the Vietnamese meaning of “ru”. This sets up a power relationship in which the French meaning of “ru” threatens the Vietnamese meaning, analogising the narrator’s experience of having her native identity threatened by the process of migration to French Canada. Importantly, through the reference to the diacritical markers of the Vietnamese names, these associations are all connected to the concept of language, analogising her experience further as one which threatens her relationship with her mother tongue.

The relation between “ru” and the concept of the mother tongue is maintained as the narrative develops, as the narrator’s experience of the tension between migration and motherhood is constantly reflected in and related to her experiences with language. For example, her mother’s strict position on her language skills helps her at various points through the migrant journey. In the Malaysian refugee camp her mother supports all the children by helping them learn English. She finds a man who is able “to flaunt joy and light-heartedness in the midst of our dull and empty daily lives”, and his English lessons help them “glimpse a new horizon” and hold on to the “desire to reach out our hands and catch our dreams” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 17). Once in Montreal, the mother insists that her daughter learn both English and French, and she puts her through the challenging experiences of buying groceries by herself and living in an Anglophone military garrison (19-20). The importance of language learning in this context is highlighted by the fact that the protagonist’s parents were both denied opportunities to improve their language skills, and being “unable to look ahead of themselves they looked ahead of us, for us, their children” (10).



As she appreciates what her mother did for her language skills, the narrator also reflects on other mother figures around her. She remembers a mother singing a lullaby in the pitch dark hull of the refugee boat, putting everyone to sleep (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 5). The Vietnamese “ru”, or lullaby, expresses more than comfort for a sleeping child; it is often sung by women to “consign their fates” and to express “homesickness” (Duy), two feelings that must be very strong among any group in such circumstances. The communal role played by the mother here is reflected in those who in Vietnam had farmed the rice fields until their backs were bent “while their husbands and sons carried weapons on theirs” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 38). The protagonist says that these women “bear the weight of Vietnam’s inaudible history on their backs”, making sacrifices to hold onto the memory of their country for the sake of their family gone to war. Like these women, the protagonist’s own parents “passed on to us the wealth of their memories, allowing us to grasp the beauty of a flowering wisteria, the delicacy of a word, the power of wonder”. Once again, language is threaded through these acts of sacrifice and love, whether in the expression of song or in the protection of memory and culture.

The narrative also presents a more critical perspective on the relationship between motherhood, migration and language by exploring the idea that the mother tongue is not a single, unified ideal. This critique reflects the translingual nature of “ru”, whose meaning can never rest upon a single idea, but rather must incorporate the power struggle between the French and Vietnamese meanings. We see this critical perspective emerge upon the narrator’s arrival in Canada, when she experiences what she calls a “rebirth”, as if she has emerged from a second mother. Her French teacher is instrumental to this rebirth, as she treats the young refugees “with all the sensitivity of a mother for her premature baby” (9). When she says to the protagonist “Je m’appelle Marie-France, et toi?”, the girl finds herself so infatuated with the sound of the French language that she inadvertently renames herself by copying the teacher: “Marie-France”. She says she feels “lulled” by the language, as by a lullaby (9-10). By demonstrating the protagonist’s “rebirth” as mediated by a new language, a new mother figure and a new identity, this episode challenges the idea that one’s mother tongue is a single, unchangeable language.

This challenge continues much later in the narrator’s life, first when she returns to Vietnam and second when she gives birth to two boys. When back in Vietnam she has to “relearn [her] mother tongue, which [she had] given up too soon. In any case, [she] had not really mastered it completely because the country was divided in two when [she] was born” (79). This shows that a connection with a given mother tongue can be severed, and that political conflict within a nation can prevent one’s full understanding of that language. The protagonist suggests that the separation of North and South Vietnam created two different forms of Vietnamese, because the north had words “to describe how to

shoot down an airplane with a machine gun set up on a roof”, while the south had words “to express the sensation of Coca-Cola bubbles on the tongue” (80). Nonetheless, the fact she believes that her lack of understanding of northern Vietnamese means that she does not fully understand her mother tongue reflects the idea that the “imagined community” of Vietnam has a single national language. This link between language and politics only further deconstructs the notion of a singular mother tongue, given it suggests that a national language can be considered simultaneously unified and disparate.

At another point in her life, she gives birth to two sons Pascal and Henri who do not immediately resemble her in physique or name, and because of this she fails to connect with them at the moment of birth. This lack of connection suggests that cultural, as well as linguistic, connection is related to the flow of blood between mother and child. In addition, her son Henri has autism and his personal isolation is a barrier to any emotional bond. Once again she expresses this idea about motherly connection in relation to language: he will “never call me *maman* lovingly, even if he can pronounce the word *poire* with all the roundness and sensuality of the *oi* sound” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 7). In this case the child’s use of language does not support his connection with his own mother, deconstructing further the singularity of the mother tongue bond.

These observations demonstrate how the translingual nature of “ru” as a term carrying connotations of motherhood in Vietnamese and migration in French works as a framework that highlights the deconstruction of a concept like mother tongue. This produces an interesting space in which we can pursue a transdiasporic analysis, because the representation of the mother tongue concept in English translation raises the question of how it can be understood in different diasporic host contexts. The following will explore the extent to which an Anglophone perspective on this concept, and on the linguistic interplay that frames it, allows us to re-evaluate its role within the French-Vietnamese relationship, and compare this with the Anglophone-Vietnamese relationship.

### **Distant reading**

Having interpreted the framework of “ru” as a translingual network that centralises the concept of the mother tongue, it is important to recognise the different associations that this concept might have within the different host cultures of the Vietnamese diaspora. Its origins in modern thought can be traced to late eighteenth-century German thinkers including Johann Gottfried von Herder and Friedrich Schleiermacher who, in the context of the developing connection between language and nation, argued that one’s relationship to one’s mother tongue was “circumscribed by inheritance and nationality”, and thus it was “internal and innate” (Yildiz 8) and of “unique, irreplaceable, unchangeable biological origin” (9). This fed the belief that one could only create original work in one’s mother tongue, resulting in what

Yildiz calls an “historical amnesia” about non-native and multilingual textual productions, and a basis for upholding assumptions of monolingualism, even within a decidedly multilingual world (10). Yildiz critiques the emotional underpinning of this modern conception of mother tongue, that is, its connection to a nation which, like the gendered figure metaphorised within it, is understood to perform a role in the development of any individual. Emerging from this critique for Yildiz is a renewed value in a pre-modern understanding of mother tongue. For example, in the medieval period, mother tongue referred to lay vernaculars as opposed to Latin, so that one’s mother tongue was an origin concept that did not rely upon an emotional bond (10). In a globalised context where the extent of our movement renders the multilingual and the translingual the norm and the monolingual the exception, this earlier understanding allows us to break through the assumed connection between mother tongue and nation, even between mother tongue and family, raising the possibility of re-imagining the term in ways that may be more appropriate for contemporary use.

The term has undergone a process of re-imagining even in national contexts since the 1990s. A useful context for gathering insight into this process is documentation of the national census, which has the potential to reveal in a given country the official government attitude toward language use and the idea of a mother tongue. That is, the use of the term or of a considered alternative can generally be related to the country’s position in relation to multilingualism and immigration. For example, of the various Anglophone and Francophone census contexts, the Canadian has shown the most consistent and detailed concern with the concept of the mother tongue. Since 1991 it has defined it as “première langue apprise à la maison dans l’enfance et encore comprise par le recensé au moment du recensement” / “first language a person learned at home in childhood and still understood at the time of the census” (“Langue: Langue maternelle”). The specification of “in the home” was added to the definition for the 1991 census as a way of “specifying the context where the person learnt the language” (“Langue: Langue maternelle”); this reflects the idea that contemporary circumstances were beginning to allow one’s “first acquired language” to be disassociated from the home environment, or the family environment, and thus the definition needed to be re-conceived to maintain its association with this emotional bond.

In other Francophone contexts, the extent to which “la langue maternelle” appears in the census tends to depend upon the nation’s state of multilingualism. In the officially multilingual Switzerland, for example, the census asked about “la langue maternelle” up until 1990, when it shifted to asking about the “language habitually spoken” (*Les Migrations internationales* 78). In contrast to Canada, this shows a shift away from the emotional associations of the concept, and an embracing of contemporary circumstances that do not prescribe such a privileged bond between an individual and a

given language. The officially monolingual France presents quite a different picture, with the census only beginning to investigate language use from 1999. At this point it drew on the Canadian census as a model for its question construction (Bachoc), and used the term “langue maternelle” to refer to the language one spoke in childhood, further specifying it at a later census as the language that one’s parents used when one was 5 (“Éducation et maîtrise de la langue”). Thus like Canada, France maintains a usage of mother tongue with an emotional bond. Interestingly, while the instigation of its census language questions was a response to the Basque community petitioning for the statistical recognition and exploration of regional languages, the discussion has since become a more prominent part of immigration statistics (“Éducation et maîtrise de la langue”). This suggests that the shift toward using “la langue maternelle” in its modern emotional understanding is taking place in light of both growing multilingualism and immigration, contrasting again with Switzerland where there is established multilingualism and relatively little immigration.

In Anglophone contexts outside Canada, a similar contrast can be identified. In the context of the United States with its significant history of migration, language questions were being addressed in the census for most of the twentieth century. As in Switzerland, the term mother tongue was deleted, though much earlier, in the 1970s. As in Canada, however, the emotional associations were somewhat retained, as the relevant question shifted from “what language, other than English, was spoken in this person’s home when he was a child?” to “does this person speak a language other than English at home?” (“Language Use: Historical Language Questions”). In the Australian census, the term mother tongue has never been employed (“Main Language Other than English Spoken at Home”), although language questions have been steadily present under the term “first language”. There is acknowledgement that this is related to the mother tongue concept, but the latter is not as appropriate in the Australian context, because it is “first language” that is used in “government policy documents ... and linguistic journals” (“First Language Spoken”). One could suggest that this usage is more common in general because the country lacks an official, national language, and therefore the emotional bond of nation and individual that is at the heart of the modern conception of mother tongue is fundamentally lacking. The UK context is different again, with 2011 being the first time a language question was included in the census, and the term of choice being “main language”, defined as “a person’s first or preferred language” (“2011 Census Glossary of Terms” 30). One scholar reflects that the difference between mother tongue and “main language” comes down to the currency of language use that each would tend to target; while a mother tongue *can* be perceived as an original language that has been forgotten, a “main language” is unambiguously referring to current language usage (De Vries 61-2). In the UK context, then, we see no tendency to affiliate language use with the emotional bonds of the

mother tongue concept. This is reflected, finally, in the Indian context, where the term mother tongue has been consistently used, but its definition has shifted far away over time from its emotional associations, starting with “the language spoken by the individual from the cradle”, and moving to “‘parent tongue’, to ‘language ordinarily spoken in the household’, and most recently to ‘language ordinarily used’” (Love and Ansaldo 589).

While each of these Francophone and Anglophone contexts presents a slightly different approach, they do show a common tendency to either maintain or move toward a conception of language use that is less connected to the emotional bond of the home or family environment. The Canadian context is the exception, with its clear maintenance of an explicit “langue maternelle/mother tongue” term, defined in relation to the home environment. It is worth noting at this point the unique nature of Canada among the contexts listed above, in that it is the only one that is both officially multilingual and has experienced a significant history of migration. One consequence of this is the increased visibility of diasporic communities, including the Vietnamese, in Canadian census data. The Canadian census website, for example, dedicates a detailed page to discussion of Vietnamese statistics (“The Vietnamese Community in Canada”), reporting on the percentages of Vietnamese who claim English, French, Vietnamese or a dialect of Chinese as their mother tongue. In contrast, the American census website dedicates a detailed page to the discussion of Asian statistics (Hoeffel), comparing the Vietnamese community with other Asian communities, but not providing any data on language use. From this observation one could suggest that the Canadian host context is one in which certain aspects of the Vietnamese community are more widely understood, or more readily available, and we can relate this potential difference to Simon’s concept of “furthering” in the context of translational processes (Simon 2013). This would underscore the potential in a Canadian context for translational engagements to create something new, as opposed to simply identifying differences; that is, the data made available through the Canadian census may be more likely to enable new forms of understanding or new ways of connecting between immigrant and local communities, rather than simply identifying difference on a surface level as the American census data would seem to do.

The fact that this “furthering” of home-host relations is enabled through the multilingual and translational nature of Canada as a cultural context, is reflected in the translation of *Ru*, where a reader’s potential understanding of French-Vietnamese relations is furthered through the representation of these relations in Anglo-American and Anglo-Canadian English. One furthering aspect occurs in a closing passage of the text, where the narrator is reflecting on how her family has been reborn: they have “resurfaced like a phoenix reborn from its ashes, like Vietnam from its iron curtain and [her] parents from the toilet bowls they had to scrub” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 140). She says that

this onward movement is continued again through the language of the narrative she is writing, continuing “all the way to the possibility of this book, to the moment when my words glide across the curve of your lips, to the sheets of white paper that put up with my trail” (140). The notion that this continuation, this furthering, occurs through the physical motion of the lips is reminiscent of the various points throughout the text where the physical production of language has been linked with motherhood, as in the pronunciation of “poire” and “maman”, and the difference created by the diacritical markers between the names of the narrator and her mother. Only now, the reader is being brought into this process of rebirth, and there is the inference that in this translated text, the physicality of the words that cross the reader’s lips reminds one that this physicality will be markedly different, as its sound and rhythm will conform to a different language than the one in which the narrative was originally written. Thus, the paper trail to which the narrator refers is being extended further through English translation beyond what she herself was constructing, illustrating in practice the process of translational furthering and a revised usage for contemporary society of the emotional bonds implied in mother tongue.

Another way in which the English context furthers the translational relations of the mother tongue concept is the signification of *Ru* as the title of the text. On the one hand, it is immediately clear to the Anglophone reader from its foreign nature that this sign does not exist in English. On the other hand, as the title of an Anglophone text it inherently carries a form of meaning, even if that meaning is more evocative than directly semantic, relying heavily on the aesthetic context of the book cover. For example, the 2012 Vintage Canada edition (Fig. 2) shows the title in the centre of a circular design of oriental features, laid across a background split between white and light blue; the blue section at the top shows a landscape of bare trees and a lone figure walking with a red umbrella. The two-letter title appears to complement and even enhance the overall aesthetic of division, which is reflected in the geometrical qualities of the design as well as in the potential interpretation of oriental/occidental imagery. Importantly, the title and the circular design is centered on the cover, but this centre does not align with that of the colour split, so the overall effect created is of a softened division, as if there were a partial overlap or a process of integration. The meaning of “ru” in this context therefore carries connotations of encounter, contrast and balance.

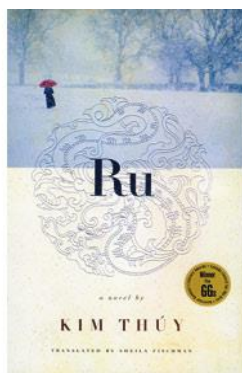


Figure 10.

When the sign is accorded direct semantic meaning through the prefatory explanation of its various meanings, its foreignness is further balanced with the familiar because it becomes useable as a borrowed term in the English language. In addition, the distinction between its meanings in different languages encourages further meanings to be attributed in English, including for example the connotations that emerge from its homonym “rue”, meaning to bitterly regret. The associations of this concept with that of memory would seem to complement those already presented in the preface, however their negative connotations can also shift what is a very delicate balance. For example, where the link between the lullaby and the experience of pain might have implied an act of motherly comfort, as in the episode where the woman sings a lullaby in the refugee boat, if it is associated with the act of ruing it can imply a feeling of regret for the events leading up to that point. Instead of being a comfort in this case, the lullaby becomes as a means of hypnotically denying or forgetting what has taken place. Similarly, where the link between motherhood and a flow of blood might have implied a strong connection or bond, as in the episode where the protagonist realises her love for her son is greater than their linguistic and cultural divide, in the context of ruing it can be associated with the feeling of regret for this divide. In this case the circumstances of motherhood can create resentment. From these alternative understandings of the text emerges a revised understanding of the concept of mother tongue, where regret for its loss aligns with the idea that it represents a singular, irreplaceable bond. This understanding would appear to run contrary to the mainstream contemporary understanding of the term in Anglophone contexts, as discussed above, and in particular it raises a direct challenge to the Canadian host context in which its emotional associations are understood within a heterogeneous language context.

A final furthering aspect of the English representation of mother tongue can be identified very simply in its *lack* of signification in English. That is, if it becomes clear that the language of the translation does not share a certain relationship present between the languages of the source text, the fluidity created by this shared relationship must be interrupted in translation and rebuilt through other

means. More specifically, if English does not share a relationship that is present between French and Vietnamese, we have cause to explore the histories of French-Vietnamese, English-Vietnamese and French-English relations, working with the hypothesis that “ru” as a site of differentiation and connection between French and Vietnamese is the result of a kind of relationship that English has not developed with either language. There is no evidence to suggest that the shared usage of “ru” in French and Vietnamese is anything other than coincidence; the significance of connection is understood here to be purely symbolic of the relationship between the two languages brought about by the colonial period. Specifically, the French colonisers in Vietnam created the contemporary written form of Vietnamese by combining its oral form with the Roman alphabet. One outcome of this process was the need for an extensive range of diacritical markers due to the range of tones present in oral Vietnamese that cannot be represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet. This is represented in *Ru* when the protagonist regrets the loss of the diacritical markers of her and her mother’s names. While her point is that these markers have no meaning for French speakers, an Anglophone reader of the translation will note, if not from general knowledge then from the few French words scattered throughout the text, that the French language has its own system of diacritical markers, while English has none. Just as the two languages share the sign “ru” then, they also share the use of diacritical markers, although in this case the reason is bound up in an historical relationship that neither have shared with English. This idea underscores an element of the ongoing dominance of the Francophone host culture within the Vietnamese diasporic network, a focus which would seem to run contrary to many diasporic narratives in which Anglophone contexts tend to be dominant. Interestingly, this idea has surfaced in the Canadian French context, rather than in the European French context, suggesting that such ongoing dominance draws not only on the historical relationship between France and Vietnam, but on the contemporary relationship between North America and Vietnam. Thus, the centre of the Francophone-Vietnamese relationship has the potential to shift toward Canada, rather than remaining in France.

This discussion has shown how a focus on the translational moment inscribed in the title *Ru*, and in particular the way in which it centralises the concept of the mother tongue, reveals a unique transdiasporic perspective on Thúy’s text in English translation. It demonstrates how the linguistic interplay behind “ru” is furthered by its Anglophone representation through the physicality of language use, through the aesthetic of the text’s cover art, through its homonymic meanings in English and even through its *lack* of signification in English. This furthering reflects the idea that the Canadian culture is a very particular context for diasporic communities, as demonstrated in its ongoing usage of mother tongue in reference to an emotional bond; it offers a revision of the term for contemporary society and consequently privileges Canada as a dominant space in global diasporic discourse. As the outcome of a



transdiasporic analysis, this observation shows how linguistic interplay between the Franco-Canadian host culture and Vietnamese home culture can be extended through an Anglo-American host culture perspective, re-evaluating that interplay and what it reveals about both cultures. Thus emerges a reading of the translated text that triangulates its source and target cultures via their linguistic engagement with a shared diasporic home culture.

### 5.3.3 American dream; or the heterogeneity of the North American host culture

The second translational moment addressed in this analysis is the concept of the American dream. The narrator reflects on the meaning of this idea on two levels: specifically, in light of her family's desire to move to North America and her Canadian neighbours' apparent achievement of it, and more broadly, in light of Vietnamese and Canadian relations to American culture. As a concept that originates in the Anglo-American context, it has been translated into the French Canadian context for the purposes of the narrative and its movement back into the Anglophone context via Fischman's translation enables a perspective on it that takes account of the different cultural environments through which it has passed. By exploring the American dream in the context of French Canada, Anglo-America and Anglo-Canada as host cultures of the Vietnamese diaspora, we can produce a transdiasporic analysis that explores how a Francophone perspective engages with concepts that have been shared between Anglophone host cultures and the Vietnamese home culture. Extending the conclusions reached in the previous analysis, this outcome demonstrates the value of triangulating source and target cultures to understand how the conceptual engagements, as opposed to linguistic engagements, of one host culture with the home culture can be re-evaluated through the perspective of another host culture.

#### **Close reading**

While the broad concept of "dreams" is threaded throughout the text, the American dream is first mentioned about half way through, when the narrator is discussing her family's process of integration into North America. While she expresses appreciation for what they achieved by chasing their dream, she also critiques its manifestation in American society by observing its elements of superficiality, privilege and disadvantage. She begins by describing the Girard family, who had hired her mother to clean their house. They were "the personification of our American dream": Madame looked like Marilyn Monroe, Monsieur owned an antique car, their daughter was a competitive roller skater and they all lived in a white house with "perfectly mown lawn and flowers lining the entrance and a carpet in every room" (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 71). Her reference to "our" American dream is important because it demonstrates the fact that when the Vietnamese family first arrived in North America they "were

obliged to have the same” dream (75), suggestive of it being a more cohesive and communal concept when viewed from outside America, while its manifestation within America is prone to being more scattered and individualist. The potential strength of the former and weakness of the latter is reflected in the fact that thirty years later the Girard family separated and lost their dream home, while the protagonist’s family remained together and moved into a big house. She wonders whether they had not “unintentionally stolen” the Girard’s American dream simply by wanting it too much (72), and perhaps, we might add, by virtue of holding a more cohesive and communal understanding of it. In addition to this difference in attitude between local and immigrant families, she observes a difference in the processes undertaken to achieve the American dream. She explains that as she grew up in North America she went through a slow process of learning that was “atypical, full of detours and snags, with no gradation, no logic”, its path relying heavily on her contact with other people. Thus, rather than learning words like “tanning salon” and “horseback riding”, as your typical middle-class girl in North America might come across in the course of her adolescent years, the protagonist learnt the word “surgeon” because that is what her friend Johanne wanted to be (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 73). In other words, local families can follow a privileged and yet uncritical progression toward the American dream, while the immigrant family must make the most of what comes its way. This also means that once the dream is achieved, the immigrant family is more likely to be aware of the price one pays for it. The protagonist for example explains that her aunt and uncle, who had lived in poverty in the Malaysian refugee camp, eventually got a house in a neighbourhood “strewn with rose gardens, hundred-year-old trees, stone houses” (74). At the same time, the lack of intimacy at family gatherings in this enormous house would make them nostalgic for times when they had to squeeze into smaller dwellings. She also explains that “once it’s achieved, the American dream never leaves [the immigrant], like a graft or an excrescence” (77). The image of physical invasion used in this metaphor refers to the fact that while the dream gives the immigrant a sense of self-confidence, it simultaneously takes away the identity associated with their home culture, because they no longer had “their fragility, their uncertainty, their fears” (78). The dream, then, while ostensibly bringing comfort and equality, means giving up a part of one’s identity.

This exploration of the American dream is carefully located in the text across both Canada and the United States. The protagonist recalls seeing the kind of houses her family was dreaming about in “Washington, Québec City, Boston, Rimouski or Toronto”, and the family gatherings she reflects upon take place in Montreal, with family members coming from “Fanwood, Montpelier, Springfield, Guelph” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 74). This unmarked fluidity between the two nations is supported by the occasional reference to a Vietnamese immigrant in the United States. For example, the narrator recalls

her time working as an interpreter for the New York Police, when she met a child born of an African-American GI and a Vietnamese woman. Brought to the United States as part of a rehabilitation plan centered on mixed children who had been stigmatised in their native country, the girl had not been able to adapt to her host country environment and was now living homeless in the Bronx (81). The narrator also recalls the time she travelled to see Anh Phi, a family friend from Vietnam who was now living in Texas in a university residence (91). The first draws attention to the “Amerasians” who immigrated as a result of the 1987 Homecoming Act and went on to face enormous challenges in their integration process due to lack of education and support (Phan). The second draws attention to the significant population of Vietnamese who were settled in Texas due to the 1975 Indochinese Assistance and Refugee Assistance Act which identified Houston as a Refugee Resettlement Site. This community had more opportunity than the first for integration, particularly if they came from fishing or shrimping backgrounds in Vietnam (Rodriguez 40). These instances refer to two different communities of the American host culture, reminding the reader of the host culture heterogeneity even within the Anglophone context of the United States. In the English translation, these Anglo-American sites of the diaspora can be re-considered not only in comparison to the Francophone Canadian sites, but also to the Anglophone Canadian, raising new questions in a complex set of transdiasporic relations.

The variety of American host contexts referred to throughout the narrative serves to highlight further the cohesive and fluid perspective that the Vietnamese home culture appears to produce. However, the narrator goes on to problematise this fluidity by noting that “Québec had given me my American dream” at the same time as it was isolating her through media statements such as “the ‘Québécois nation’ was Caucasian” (Thúy *Ru* trans. Fischman 79). This stems from the local desire to strengthen the Francophone element of Québec, resisting primarily the growing Anglophone contingent but by default resisting also the growth in Allophone cultures. In response, the protagonist makes no allegiance to the wider Francophone or Anglophone cause: she chooses to like “the gentleman from Saint-Félicien who asked [her] in English to grant him a dance”, “the rickshaw driver in Da Nang who asked [her] how much [she] was paid as an escort for [her] ‘white’ husband”, and the woman in Hanoi “who told her neighbours that [the protagonist] was from Japan, that [she] was making good progress with [her] Vietnamese” (79). In other words, wherever she is welcomed, regardless of whether she is perceived as local or foreign, or whether or not she speaks the local language, she is happy. The implication is that her experience of the American dream has been interrupted by differences in language and ethnicity; these appear to be the primary challenges to equality in the diasporic host context of Québec. Interestingly, she parallels these linguistic and ethnic tensions in Canadian society with those of Vietnam: “Like Canada, Vietnam had its own two solitudes” (79), meaning that the

Vietnamese spoken in North and South Vietnam was so different it was as if they were two different languages. The reference to ‘two solitudes’ is culturally loaded, as when the novel *The Two Solitudes* by Hugh MacLennan (1945) became a classic, the phrase became ‘emblematic of Canada’s most troubling legacy: the relations between English and French Canadians’ (Besner). Thus, the text uses the political and colonial history of the Francophone-Anglophone conflict in Canada to bring to the fore the internal political struggles behind the two solitudes of Vietnam. When taken in conjunction with the apparent fluidity between Canada and the United States, the transdiasporic aspects of the narrative of *Ru* focus on the comparison between the Francophone and Anglophone contingents of the North American continent, suggesting that any differences in their host culture contexts can be traced back through their linguistic histories.

### **Distant reading**

To pursue a transdiasporic analysis based on this exploration of the text’s use of the American dream, it is important to give a brief historical background of the concept in both Anglophone and Francophone contexts. It was popularised as an idea in America by James Truslow Adams, in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*. He defined it as “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (Adams 404). Its origins have been traced back to the first European settlers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for whom America represented “freedom from religious persecution, a life purged of the filth, corruption and inhibitions of European city life... [and] escape from poverty”; in the hardship of their early experiences of the continent many of these new Americans came to rely on a Puritan work ethic in which we can see the roots of the American dream as every man’s drive to “succeed” (Baseballe et al 59-60). These roots were reinforced with the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776, which states “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (“Declaration of Independence”). This pursuit of happiness was both the pursuit of success in a new, foreign land and the pursuit of the equality and the freedom that had not been attainable in Europe. This was all distilled into the concept of the American dream when it was coined by journalist Walter Lippmann in 1914 (White and Hanson 2-3) and then popularised by Adams in 1931.

In 2009 Harold Bloom observed that the concept of the American Dream might have seemed to have reached its end, but that its invocation in Barack Obama’s victory speech demonstrated its ongoing presence in American society (xv). Indeed, by including it in his series of *Literary Themes*, he posits it as a “crucial topic” that constitutes part of the “concern of human existence now in the twenty-first century”

(xi), and that is despite it being “devoid of clear meanings” (xv). We can find it evoked in a range of texts, including government documents and speeches, products of popular culture and discourses of migration and diaspora. On a social level, economic and political debates rage around the impact of immigration on the opportunities available to local Americans (Stoll), and on a cultural level it is common to find the American dream represented in literary and artistic productions on the subject of diasporic communities (Muller 2; Bucci 138). For example, much literature that explores the diasporic journey can be related to the dream through its tendency to focus on figures who strive to overcome adversity (White and Hanson 3). For immigrants already exposed to the idea of the American dream in their home lands, the Vietnamese diaspora being a good example, the general struggle toward success that can be framed by the American dream becomes a struggle to assimilate into American society by actively participating in its discourses (Lieu xv).

When this concept is employed in a Québécois context, it creates quite a different network of associations, as its foreignness can be understood through the simultaneous connection and distance that exists between Québec and the United States. There is first an ambiguous perspective on the value of anything American in Québec. In a 1991 study of the relation between American and Québécois literature, it was noted that “France and the United states ... are the two magnetic poles that continue to pull on Québec and nourish the Québécois identity” (Miraglia 37). The pull toward France creates a general sense of alienation (36) between the Québécois and American identities, at the same time as the pull toward the United States is based on an attraction toward the “new world” dream of “freedom, happiness, the possibility of forgetting everything [and] starting all over again” (42). The latter creates the idea that the American dream can also be a Canadian phenomenon, an idea that has been echoed in more recent public media sources (Kristof; King).

A lack of distinction between the United States and Canada as sites for pursuing the American dream can be found among refugees who arrive with the expectation that they will be able to pursue the dream they have already been exposed to through neo-colonial or neo-imperialist influences in their home country. In an article on Vietnamese refugees in transition to Québec, Lucille Guilbert explains that refugees tend to sense the possibilities of freedom for the first time in the camps in Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia, where their “western dream becomes mixed up with the idea of the American dream” (96).<sup>45</sup> It is often at this point that they learn some English because it incarnates that dream, unlike French, which as an ex-colonial language is seen as “useless” (99, “inutile”). When they are chosen by the Canadian, rather than the American, delegation, however, refugees are often unaware

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<sup>45</sup> My translation – “C'est aussi le premier lieu où s'essouffle le goût de l'aventure et s'ébrèche le rêve occidental qui se confond pour un grand nombre avec le rêve américain”.

that there is a French-speaking region, and an important part of their experience settling into Québec becomes the negotiation of the American dream they have carried over with them, and the complex Québécois-American relations of which they find themselves a part.

However, if we focus now on the fact that the English translation of *Ru* was done by a prominent Anglo-Canadian translator, we can expand that transdiasporic reading by adding a perspective specific to English Canada. While a reading based on the relations between Québec and America centralises the role played by language barriers, one that is based on the relations between Québec, America and Anglophone Canada centralises instead the role played by national barriers and international conflicts. That is, from a Canadian, as opposed to a Québécois point of view, the internal conflict in Vietnam that runs parallel to the internal conflict in Canada represents a political and military decision made by the United States that was an important factor in the rise of Canadian nationalism and its accompanying critique of the United States. Stephen Azzi explains that conservative Canadian nationalism was born around the time of the American revolution, when about 40,000 American refugees settled in Canada because they did not agree with the rejection of the British monarchy. This group nurtured a political view that valued the “order, stability, and community” that Canada was supposed to have inherited from Britain, opposing the “violent, aggressive, individualistic” nature of society in the United States (Azzi 214). After the Second World War the focus of this nationalist agenda, which as a “pan-Canadian vision” made no distinction between Francophone and Anglophone, became the opposition between Canada and the USA, leaving behind the importance of the British connection. Over the 1950s and 1960s, such Nationalist views were taken up beyond Conservative circles, in Liberal and New Democratic parties, being encouraged by general disagreement with the American approach to the war in Vietnam. In fact, Azzi claims that “the most important factor in spurring nationalism in English Canada was the American war in Vietnam” (216). News coverage and documentaries made in Canada during the 1960s represented a barbaric American army reveling in the destruction of Vietnam, and the difference in army recruitment policy between the two countries meant that Canada became known as a safe place if you wanted to avoid being drafted. Canadian journalist and author Peter C. Newman explains that the disagreement with American policy on the war “jolted us out of our bemusement with the external aspects of the American dream” (R. Wright 127). This idea was repeated in a 1960s editorial from *Canadian Dimension* which claimed that “Canadians wanted to be part of the American Dream; we have no wish to become part of the American nightmare” (Azzi 215-216).

One idea that emerges from this discussion is that the Vietnamese diaspora, largely the result of the decisions made by America during the war in Vietnam, can be said to represent in Canadian terms a consequence of something that was opposed to pan-Canadian nationalist values. In the English

translation of *Ru*, this changes the way we understand the parallel set up between the divisions within Canada and Vietnam. The narrative is using them to critique the idea of the American dream, but when this critique is related to the international divisions between Canada and the United States, the primary challenge to the equality of the dream is no longer linguistic and ethnic difference, but difference in national policy and international relations. That is, Anglophone Canada's reaction to the division in Vietnam is more relevant to its separation with the United States than it is to its own internal divisions with the Francophone. The English representation of *Ru* therefore presents us with an entirely new focus when it comes to comparing the significance of the American dream in different Vietnamese diasporic host contexts. In addition to the Francophone-Anglophone comparison based on linguistic interplay, as highlighted in the previous analysis focusing on the term "ru", this observation creates the potential for a comparison based on conceptual interplay, further centralising within Vietnamese diasporic discourse the complex case of the French Canadian environment.

#### 5.4 Overview and further application

Kim Thúy's novella *Ru*, translated by Sheila Fischman as *Ru*, presents us with a multidirectional host culture perspective: the Franco-Canadian, Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American perspectives present in the source narrative are framed within the Francophone context, but in the translation they are re-framed within the Anglo-Canadian context, constructing an altered perspective on the multiple Francophone and Anglophone cultures involved. We can explore this altered perspective via specific points in the text: when we consider it via the reference to "ru", a translingual term in French and Vietnamese, the Anglophone perspective reveals that the elements of cultural and linguistic similarity between Vietnam and Canada are part of an overlapping history of heterogeneity. This underscores the importance of addressing any potential heterogeneity in host culture contexts, and critiquing this in relation to the home culture. When we consider it via the reference to the American dream, the Anglophone perspective reveals the distinction to be made between Franco-Canadian-US relations and Anglo-Canadian-US relations, in light of their mutual connection to Vietnam. This underscores the importance of re-assessing relations between host cultures depending on the entities of their heterogeneous cultures that are being foregrounded. Together, these two discussions highlight the ways in which home-host and host-host relationships can interconnect and overlap when so-called "singular" host country environments are considered as made up of different cultural groups. This suggests that a text in translation that moves within heterogeneous host countries can be read as a representation of these particularly complex diasporic relations.

I will consider two brief follow-up case studies. Thúy's second novel *Mãn* (2013) works within the same heterogeneous host context of Canada, though the narrative involves a much higher visibility of European French culture. It follows the story of a Vietnamese woman who works as a chef in Québec, and later in France. When the Francophone narrative is translated into English as *Mãn* (2014), the multiple directions in which the host cultures move are centred less on the relationship between the Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American perspectives, as in *Ru*, and more on the relationship between the Anglo-Canadian and French-European perspectives. That is, in the original Francophone framing of a narrative that moves between Québec and France, the Francophone comparison will dominate over a comparison between North American and European cultures, despite the presence of the Anglophone in the narrative. With its reframing in an Anglophone light, however, the comparison becomes an Anglophone–Francophone one, potentially constructing an entirely different perspective on the North American and European cultures involved. Thus, by considering multiple texts of Francophone Québec origin, we can explore in more depth the ways in which the different Canadian cultures relate to different Anglophone and Francophone cultures outside Canada.

Like Kim Thúy's work, Caroline Vu's novel *That Summer in Provincetown* (2015) is Vietnamese-Canadian, but it has received significantly less publicity. When Thúy is referred to as the first Vietnamese-Canadian writer, no other writers are named in relation to her, and she is therefore implicitly put forward as the "only" one. However, Vu's novel was published in 2015 and received moderate, if very positive, acclaim (I. T. Shaw). Its French translation *Un Été à Provincetown* (2016) received a similar reception (Dubreuil). The narrative traces three generations of a Vietnamese family from French colonial times, through Japanese Occupation, American Imperialism, refugee status and migration to Canada. This provides a rich backdrop for exploring lateral connections within the Vietnamese diaspora, including this time the influence of Japanese culture on the French-Vietnamese relationship. Its translation within the Canadian context from English to French then has the potential to re-assess from a Francophone perspective the Anglophone point of view on this Japanese influence. Thus by considering multiple texts of Canadian origin, we can explore the implications of relations between a wider variety of Vietnamese host cultures, moving beyond Francophone and Anglophone discourses.

These two texts present us with an extension of the discussion pursued in this chapter. They illustrate further instances of the potential that a transdiasporic analysis has to enable the reader focus on a translated text's representation of the heterogeneous nature of diasporic host cultures. They also demonstrate how a transdiasporic analysis, when applied to multiple texts in which there is a multi-directional host culture perspective, can underscore a range of factors that impact on our exploration of



this heterogeneity. In the case of the Vietnamese diaspora, these include the historical and social conditions that have constructed the individual elements of a given heterogeneous environment, their relations with other host cultures that share their language and their relations with other host cultures again who participate in distinctly different linguistic and cultural discourses.

## Chapter 6: Findings and extended applications

### 6.1 Three characteristics of cultural networks

The case studies addressed in the previous chapters demonstrate how transdiasporic analysis of translated literature engages with the complex network of cultural relations that inform the text. Each case study also identifies a characteristic of those relations that is important for understanding the text's source-target relations. The first case study (Chapter 3) identifies the importance of historical relations within the network, demonstrating how the history between France and America influenced the development of the Vietnamese diaspora, the nature of the two countries as hosts, and ultimately their engagement as source and target cultures in the translation. The second case study (Chapter 4) identifies the importance of power relations within the network, demonstrating how the respective hegemonies of France and America need to be subjected to critique to understand how these impact on their engagement as source and target cultures in the translation. The third case study (Chapter 5) identifies the importance of exploring the heterogeneous nature of cultures within the network, demonstrating how the multilingual landscape of the Canadian context presents a particularly nuanced site for source and target culture engagement. Given each of these characteristics – historical relations, power relations and heterogeneity - is brought to the fore by a case study, they demonstrate different ways in which the complexity of cultural networks can construct the relations between the source and target cultures of a translation; there is also the implication that all three characteristics are present in any given network, and therefore each could be considered in turn as part of the one transdiasporic analysis. For example, the analysis of Linda Lê's text could be expanded beyond the consideration of historical relations between France and America, to address also how its translational sites lead us to critique the hegemonic status of these two host contexts, and to reflect on the potential heterogeneous aspects that constitute them. By considering all three characteristics in a single analysis, we can account for a range of influences on the translation, and as a result understand more fully the singular perspective that it represents. This represents a more detailed framework for the application of the transdiasporic method than was proposed at the beginning of this thesis.

It is important to recognise that while each characteristic could be considered in any given analysis, they would work independently of the three transdiasporic types outlined earlier, that is, the "reversed", "additional" and "multi-directional" host culture perspectives. This is because only one of each type can apply to any given analysis, as they rely on the text having a combination of source culture and target culture elements present in the narrative. Thus, while the Linda Lê story translated for an Anglophone target culture can be explored via all three characteristics of the Vietnamese diasporic network, it can only be considered a "reversed host culture perspective", because the target culture is

already present in the narrative, and there are no instances of multi-directional host culture movement. Therefore, while these transdiasporic types are useful for categorising translations within a transdiasporic study, the three characteristics help to shape the reading process itself, and guide the analysis that emerges. The way in which this occurred in each case study will be considered below in more detail, before applying the framework to a range of further applications.

The first characteristic of cultural networks to be considered in this framework for transdiasporic analysis is the historical relations between the source and target cultures, so far as they have each interacted with the third culture that is to become their point of triangulation. This is underscored in Linda Lê's "Speak to me", where the policies of France and the US leading up to the conclusion of the American war in Vietnam reveal important background for understanding their nature as diasporic host cultures in the aftermath of the war. First, as Devillers (587) observes, the official national position in France on the American presence in Vietnam was one of disapproval, stemming from the idea that France as a nation had superior insight into Vietnamese culture from its years of colonialist reign; second, as Statler (3-6) observes, the Eisenhower government's position that France was an unreliable ally who wanted to hold on to its colonial reign led to their rejection of the lessons learnt by the French in their defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. These factors were instrumental in constructing host culture contexts where, on the one hand, colonial ties underscored a sense of understanding that the French tried to capitalise on with the growing Vietnamese communities, and where, on the other hand, neo-colonial ties underscored a sense of attraction to modern values that the Americans tried to capitalise on with the growing Vietnamese communities. These respective attempts on the part of the two host cultures to relate to the incoming diaspora cannot be properly understood without first understanding how their historical ties helped to construct their relations with the diasporic home. It is important, therefore, as part of a transdiasporic analysis, to consider how the translated text represents historical connections between the source and target cultures, and to what extent these connections impacted on their respective relations with the contemporary network.

The second characteristic is the power relations between the source and target cultures within a global context. In the case of diasporic networks, their respective roles as host cultures imply a relative position of cultural and/or economic power in contrast to the home culture, as they each represent a destination that can offer refugees shelter and future possibilities; however, it is important to critique the relative hegemony of each, as any disjunction in their power might impact on their nature as host cultures and on their mutual relations. This is underscored in the second case study, Nam Le's "L'amour, l'honneur", where the respective positions of the US and of Australia are considered in light of the position of the French that is introduced through the process of translation. For example, the global

influence of American literature is brought to the fore in the story, but from a transdiasporic point of view this only highlights the fact that the presence of American literature in Vietnam was mediated by the cultural capital maintained there by the French, even in a postcolonial context. This suggests that the historically supported shift from French to English as the global *lingua franca* (Phillipson 64) is still being played out between the two cultures as diasporic hosts, where the dominance of the Anglophone in international contexts is overpowered by the French in certain localised literary contexts due to their longer history of colonialist power. This observation is important in a transdiasporic analysis as it acknowledges the complex relations between the source and target as hegemonic powers whose pattern of dominance can be constantly shifting; those areas in which one might hold more power than the other can be further investigated to understand the impact it has on its position in the network.

The third characteristic is the heterogeneity of the source and target cultures. While the two previous points rely on identifying the source and target as national entities to some extent, this third point centralises the idea that no single linguistic, cultural or national entity exists as a homogeneous whole, but rather it consists of multiple competing histories of individual and cultural memory. This is underscored in the third case study, Kim Thúy's *Ru*, where the heterogeneous nature of Canada as a host culture constructs multiple perspectives on the local Vietnamese community. For example, the concept of the American Dream, carried over from Vietnam by refugees influenced by decades of American neo-colonialism, holds different associations in Anglo-Canadian and French Canadian contexts. This results in different attitudes toward the reception of the concept as it is expressed by the Vietnamese, and ultimately different responses to that community that tell us more about the internal politics between the multiple identities of Canada than it does about the diasporic community itself. This underscores the fact that any given host context or space within a host context is going to be constructed differently depending on the specific language or culture in which it is being received; therefore, in a transdiasporic analysis, the source and target must be considered not only in relation to the global network, but to their localised networks of communities that might engage with the broader landscape in different ways.

Based on these observations from each case study, a central conclusion of this thesis is that each of these three characteristics of cultural networks should be considered as part of a given transdiasporic analysis, for the distant or extra-textual research to account for the complex range of factors informing the construction of the text. This constitutes a more detailed framework for the transdiasporic than was previously envisaged, and its value will be demonstrated below via three further applications. First it will be applied to translated literature of diasporic networks other than the

Vietnamese, second to translated literature of networks other than the diasporic, and third to the act of translation as performed by the literary translator.

## 6.2 Extended applications

### 6.2.1 The transdiasporic and the Chinese diaspora

When applying the above framework to translated literature that has emerged from diasporas other than the Vietnamese, each of the three characteristics enables us to consider factors that may be markedly different from those considered here. A good example is its application to the Chinese diaspora, the size and diasporic locations of which has allowed it to develop a global literary culture not unlike that of the Vietnamese. There are, however, considerable differences. On the one hand, it has emerged from a very different history. While the Vietnamese diaspora is, for the most part, a contemporary phenomenon that began in the 1970s as the result of the American war, the Chinese diaspora has taken place over a long period in response to various social changes. The home culture of the Chinese diaspora is thus more diverse than that of the Vietnamese, with immigrants originating from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Looking first at the diaspora originating from mainland China, its beginnings can be traced to the 1850s, when Chinese peasants were looking for work across Southeast Asia. The diaspora broadened considerably from the beginning of the century: with the rise of modernity in China and the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, an intellectual body dispersed to pursue a more cosmopolitan education abroad. Writers of this period such as Lu Xun and Hu Shi can be described as diasporic in that their experiences in Japan and the USA respectively brought new ideas to their writing, and introduced a critical perspective on Chinese language and literature (Ning 115-116). With the “opening up” policy of China in the 1970s, the Mainland Chinese diaspora broadened again in class and skill as many workers sought a better quality of life further abroad in the USA, Europe, Japan and Australia (Ning; Ma 2). Ning argues that the advent of globalisation at the turn of the century was another key point in the expansion of the Chinese diaspora and, more specifically, its literature (118).

There have been different, though related, social forces influencing the diaspora of the Chinese from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Hong Kong’s complex history with British colonisation, and Macau’s with the Portuguese, have impacted heavily on their respective roles in the diaspora. While the primary waves of emigration occurred from both areas in the post-WWII period and settled largely in the US, a significant number of Hong Kong emigrants moved to the UK, and a significant number of Macanese, that is people of mixed Portuguese-Chinese heritage, moved to Portugal and Brazil. Riots in Hong Kong in 1967 led to increased diasporic flow, as did the Sino-British joint declaration of 1984 and the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989; by this time, Canada and Australia had become more common

as host countries of choice. The return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 and Macau to China in 1999 also impacted upon diasporic flow, with evidence of some reversal in the case of Hong Kong (Ip 170), and, in the case of the Macanese, the establishment of more independent diasporic communities across global host cultures (Noronha and Chaplin 127). In fact, the Macanese diaspora has recently been estimated as greater in numbers than the population which remains in Macau (Hao 104-5).

Like Hong Kong and Macau, Taiwan's history of diaspora has also been influenced by colonialism, though in this case under the Japanese. Prior to the twentieth century, Taiwan had been a host country for many Chinese from the mainland, and it was only under Japanese colonial rule that the cultural and social influences shifted and diasporic flows changed accordingly. Post-1945, Taiwan's new position within the Republic of China led to a regime intended to ensure the Japanese influence was reversed to Chinese, and it was the pressure of this new environment that created the first diasporic wave of Chinese-Taiwanese people beyond Asia. The highest number fled to the US, with others moving to western Europe, particularly West Germany (Williams 175). The diasporic flow continued well into the 1990s, with a higher percentage of people coming from professional and executive professions, rather than representing a range of social classes as in the mainland China diaspora.

While a complex history underpins the diaspora of people of Chinese ethnic origin, many scholars approach it as a single, if heterogeneous group demarcated as lying outside of mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau (Li and Li 18-19). As of 2009, the number of Chinese overseas was estimated as 39.5 million, dispersed across 130 countries ("Chinese Diaspora Across the World"). The most significant numbers were in South East Asia, where 30 million of the 40 million had settled. Beyond Asia, the largest communities were in the USA (3,347,229 as of 2010), Canada (1,487,580 as of 2001), Australia (749,000 as of 2011), the UK (630,000 as of 2011) and France (540,000 as of 2011). Given the numbers of Chinese immigrants now present in Anglophone countries, a significant amount of Chinese diasporic writers use English as their medium of expression (Ning 111), though literature composed in Chinese and translated into English is also prevalent (Khoo 2). The most significant paths for a transdiasporic approach however, are to be found not only in cases of Anglophone literature translated into European languages such as Spanish (Wang), but also that which has been translated from Asian languages such as Chinese (Guanglin) Indonesian (Kwee), and Japanese (Guo). Unlike the case of the Vietnamese, then, it is important here to consider the distinction between the Chinese diasporic network that extends from Asia to the West, and that which has dispersed within Asia.

Among examples of translated literature of the Chinese diaspora, there are many that compare with those considered in this thesis - written and translated between English and French, and produced by writers and translators based either in France, the US or Canada. For example, Chinese-American

literature has included the work of Maxine Hong Kingston, who was born in California in 1940 to Chinese immigrants. Her short story collection *China Men* (1981) paints portraits of various immigrants who arrive in the US in different locations, including Hawaii, Alaska, and Florida. Its translation by Marie-France de Palomé, *Les Hommes de Chine* (1986) then adds the perspective of the French as a Chinese host culture, which provides a new lens on these various parts of the US. A transdiasporic analysis has the potential to explore the historical power relations between America and France in relation to China, and in particular the heterogeneous nature of the US as a host culture. François Cheng's novel *Le Dit de Tianyi* (1998) is an example of a text translated in the other direction, from French into English (for more see Taylor). It is based on the author's life as a Chinese artist who moves to Paris in the 1940s-1950s before returning to China and getting embroiled in political movements and re-education camps. In its English translation titled *The River Below* (2002), the narrative takes on an Anglophone perspective that provides a more global context for considering the diasporic network at hand. A transdiasporic analysis has the potential to explore historical relations between France and different Anglophone host countries and the heterogeneous aspects of each, and in particular the hegemonic nature of the Anglophone within the Chinese diasporic network.

The complex history of the Chinese diaspora means that its literature presents examples that differ considerably from those of the Vietnamese diaspora, because they involve source and/or target cultures that are not a part of the West. These examples help us take transdiasporic analysis beyond the dominant pattern of diasporic movement from East to West, underscoring the importance of intra-Asian diasporas. We can look, for example, at writers whose backgrounds take them through at least one Asian host culture. Brian Castro's novel *Shanghai Dancing* (2003) tells his family's story as they move between Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macau, before migrating to Australia. As a text that represents early migrations from mainland China to Hong Kong and Macau, we can consider these latter countries host environments for the early Chinese diaspora, so that in its translation into Chinese by Wang Guanglin (2010), which retains the English title, there is a multi-directional host culture perspective and the reversal from English to Chinese sheds new light on the different host cultures involved. A transdiasporic analysis has the potential to explore not only the power relations between these different host cultures and Australia, as well as the heterogeneity of the Chinese national identity between the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, but it could focus in particular on the historical relations between these different host environments as they rise and fall over time.

An example that moves in the opposite direction, translated into English, comes from Chin Shunshin, a Taiwanese-Japanese writer whose knowledge of Chinese and Japanese history has made his historical fiction very popular in its original Japanese. The first English translation of his work was

*Murder in a Peking Studio* (1986), translated by Joshua A. Fogel from the original Japanese *Pekin yūyūkan*, first published in 1971 (Guo). A historical mystery set in early twentieth-century Japan, the novel explores questions of the relationship between China and Japan in relation to the Russo-Japanese war (Guo 73-4). Its representation in English adds a new host culture perspective, one that sheds light on the host relations between China and other Asian countries. A transdiasporic analysis has the potential to explore not only the historical relations between these countries and their respective heterogeneous aspects, but most interestingly perhaps the respective power relations between Japan and Anglophone host countries as dominant cultures of Asia and the West, respectively.

Finally, we can look at writers whose texts are translated from an Asian language into a language other than English. Kwee Tek Hoay was a Chinese-Indonesian writer of the early twentieth century, living in a time when Indonesia was a Dutch colony. His novel *Boenga Roos dari Tjikembang* (1927), originally written in Malay, explores the delicate social arrangements in colonial Indonesia between Chinese-Indonesian men, their concubines, and the Dutch colonial government (Kwee; Sidarto; Orthofer). In its Dutch translation by Sutedja-Liem, *De roos uit Tjikembang* (2007) there is an added host culture perspective, as the Chinese-Indonesian colonial relations are re-framed from a modern European perspective. A transdiasporic analysis here would have significant ground to cover in terms of the historical relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia, their post-colonial power relations and the heterogeneous nature of each.

Overall, the transference of the transdiasporic method to the literature of the Chinese diaspora reveals some notable extensions to the approach, as a result of the diaspora having different host cultures over time, and having host cultures within the Asian region. The above texts represent future case studies for a transdiasporic study, with the potential to give an insight into their source and target cultures via their historical relations, their power relations, and their heterogeneous communities. Importantly, even this brief consideration of their potential as case studies gives some insight into how all three characteristics of global networks might be considered in each analysis.

### 6.2.2 The transdiasporic and non-diasporic networks

When applying the above framework to translated literature that has emerged from networks other than the diasporic, we can consider how the three characteristics can be explored in a much broader range of contexts. It becomes clear that they are not specific to studies of diaspora, but rather are each important to consider in any transnational, transcultural or translingual network. A single text may be used to demonstrate in more detail how all three characteristics of cultural networks can be applied simultaneously to perform a transdiasporic analysis.



*Stasiland* (2002) is a work of creative non-fiction composed originally in English by Australian writer Anna Funder. Based on her interviews with Germans who lived in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the work won numerous awards for its account of East German life. It was translated into French by Mireille Vignol (2008), and through a transdiasporic analysis we can consider the complex relations the translation represents between the Anglophone, German and Francophone cultures that constructed it.

These relations do not rely on a diaspora of German communities that have settled in the source culture Australia and the target culture France, but rather they rely on a more ambiguous network of transnational relations. For example, as a personal account of her experience collecting the stories in Germany, Funder's background as an Australian is acknowledged at certain points in the text in a way that reflects relations between Germany and Australia before and after the existence of the GDR. Funder tells us about her family's response to her learning German in the first place:

I remember learning German - so beautiful, so strange - at school in Australia on the other side of the earth. My family was nonplussed about me learning such an odd, ugly language and, though of course too sophisticated to say it, the language of the enemy. (4)

The notion of Germany as "the enemy" here speaks to an ongoing association with the second world war, and an inability on the part of some to reconstruct a new understanding of German identity.

Attitudes running in the opposite direction are also revealed when Funder reflects on what some Germans from the GDR think of Australia, observing that "if [they] thought about Australia at all, it was an imaginary place to go in the event of a nuclear catastrophe" (80). This suggests that the concept of Australia for those Germans who lived in the GDR continues to be associated with distance and the unknown. When she quotes one German as agreeing to an interview with her because "it is possible that in Australia your media has not tainted people against us, and that at least, we can put our side" (81), it is suggested that Australia also continues to be associated with a relative sense of neutrality. These points at which German-Australian relations are represented in the narrative are re-framed in translation from the added perspective of the French, raising points at which we can compare these relations with those between Germany and France.

The first quote, for example, could be explored by focusing on historical relations: if the German language can be associated with "its distance", will such an attitude be recognisable in France, or will the proximity of the French and German spaces produce a different reading? The second and third quotes may also point to the power relations between France and Australia: if Australia's distance from Europe can render it a neutral haven from international events, how might this reflect the power it has in relation to the centralised European hegemony represented by France? We could then explore the

heterogeneity of the Australian context if we consider how different communities might respond differently to the notion of Germany as “the enemy” and Australia as neutral, differences that can be compared with those one might find in France. This would raise questions about the factors present in Australian society that allow for a mix of attitudes, and how these factors differ from those in Francophone cultures.

These initial observations and questions begin to outline a reading of the French translation of *Stasiland* that does not focus directly on a source-target comparison, that is an Australian-French comparison, but which triangulates that comparison by addressing the text’s representation of Australian-German and French-German relations. Moreover, the application of the three characteristics identified above imposes a certain system to the analysis that allows for a broad range of factors to be considered. This is a reading that will produce a very particular set of ideas about the relationship between the source and target cultures which are only brought to the fore when reading the text via a transdiasporic analysis. It is clear, too, that this form of analysis, while drawing on a diasporic framework, does not require the presence of diasporic relations to be applied: it can be used as a broader literary tool for engaging with the complex cultural networks that construct source-target relationships.

### 6.2.3 The transdiasporic and the literary translator

As Spivak’s observes, “translation is the most intimate act of reading” (“The Politics of Translation” 315). When considering extended applications of transdiasporic analysis for reading translated literature, then, it would be remiss not to consider the value it offers the *process* of translation, insofar as this process represents a reading of a text as it *becomes* a work of translated literature. By applying the above framework to the process of translating literature, we see how the historical relations, the power relations and the heterogeneous aspects of the source and target cultures enable the translator to consider the complex range of potential factors that might impact on the production of their work. As a result, they are in a position to make informed choices based on an understanding of the transnational network from which the text is emerging.

In 2013 I completed a translation of five French Canadian short stories from French into English, and had I had the transdiasporic method at my disposal at the time, I would have been in a position to engage with the text on a much deeper level, and produce as a result a much more nuanced translation. The stories focused on the relationship between Canada and France, and because I had decided to translate them for an Australian readership I needed to make a range of translation choices based on the relations between these three national entities. If I had been able to approach the task via a

transdiasporic lens, I would have been able to reflect on the relations between the Canadian source culture and the Australian target culture via a triangulation with the French culture, which is mutually connected to the two through the global network of French and British colonial empires. Not only would this have impacted on many of my textual decisions, but it would have re-framed my entire approach to the source-target relationship through an understanding of how a global network has shaped them into complex, heterogeneous entities.

The five stories I translated were written by Québec writer Felix Leclerc in the early twentieth century. Dealing with Québec's early steps toward breaking away from its conservative Catholic French heritage, they explore the tense relations between Québec, France and English Canada. I tried to determine the extent to which these tensions might already be represented in the Australian target culture, but very little emerged from this research, and I was forced to conclude that an Australian translation of these stories would have no existing cultural capital to support it as a narrative of interest or relevance. From a transdiasporic perspective, however, I could have considered France as a national culture with mutual - if very different - relations to the Canadian source culture and the Australian target culture. If I had then looked in the source text for points at which the relationship between France, Québec and English Canada was foregrounded, I could have considered how this relationship might be viewed from a new perspective when placed within an Australian environment via my translation. This might have opened for me a more fruitful way of relating source context to target context, overcoming the lack of direct contact that my research at the time had revealed. More specifically, my translation choices might have been able to open new ideas on the historical relations, power relations and heterogeneous aspects of Canada and Australia, based on the colonial relationship with France on the one hand and the more contemporary diplomatic relationship with France on the other.

One story, entitled "Par interim" in the French, presents an allegory of the relationship between France and Québec. The Grandfather Noble, who is on his death bed, represents the colonial power of France, and he calls his son and grandson, who represent traditional and contemporary Québec respectively, to speak with him about carrying on his legacy. The grandfather tells them that he has been infected by "un drôle de microbe, destructeur, tragique, envoyé de loin" (Leclerc 148). The idea that France as a political entity has lost its strength due to an infection that has been "sent from far away" could be inferred as a reflection of changes to France's international power as a consequence of postcolonialism, or as a reflection of changes within France as a consequence of international migration. The grandfather goes on however to speculate that "un microbe venait d'en haut" (148), literally "from on high", or imposed by a God-like figure. From a French perspective in the context of Québec, this is most likely to be a Catholic God, whose influence was very strong in early French Canadian society. With

his illness thus framed as a form of holy retribution for sin, the grandfather decides to accept his decline. However, his son believes that whatever he is guilty of, many others must be guilty of too: “tout le siècle est coupable; tous les pays, d’une mer à l’autre, moi avec” (148). The reader is left to wonder what is this “sin” that the “entire century, and all countries from one sea to another, including myself”, are guilty of committing. It is worth noting too the reference to Canada’s motto, *A mari usque ad mare*, which creates an interesting overlap between the idea of “all countries” across the globe, and the idea of the “global” unity of Canada. As the translator of the story, I had to reflect on these ambiguities and their potential interpretations. I chose to translate the text quite literally, resisting any urge to impose a reading so that the Anglophone reader could grapple with the same range of ideas to which I had had access.

However, approaching this process via a transdiasporic analysis, I could have focused on how the relations depicted between France and Québec compare with relations between France and Australia, and as a result, I could have arrived at a representation of Québec-Australian relations that would be unique to my translated text. The concept of a legacy, for example, does not exist between France and Australia, whose historical relations have not been based on colonialism. Nonetheless, Australia’s position as a colonised country of the British empire enables a similar relationship to be understood between it and Europe more generally, allowing for the consideration of Australian attitudes toward upholding a sense of strength inherited from European colonisers. Could there be a comparable sense of shared guilt for something done wrong, as in the case of Québec, or is there something fundamentally different about the way Australia relates to colonial powers? Insofar as they might represent new powers in the contemporary world, how do their attitudes toward their pasts construct their hegemony? And how do their heterogeneous communities impact on these attitudes? We begin to see how working through this triangulated network using the characteristics of historical relations, power relations and heterogeneity might have helped me consider the reframing of French-Québec relations in an Australian context. As a result, I might have chosen to expand the son’s reference to the guilt of “tous les pays” as the guilt of “all countries, regardless of empire”. By underscoring the notion of empire, I would be drawing attention to the fact that the French empire referred to in the narrative is different to the British empire introduced through a target perspective; this creates in the translated text a point of relationship between the source and target cultures via the nature of their relations with the third, mutually-related culture. In other words, as a translator taking a transdiasporic approach to my reading, I could have produced a text that lent itself to others’ transdiasporic analyses by expanding the capacity of that text to reflect and engage with the complex transnational relations that were constructing it.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to introduce the concept of a transdiasporic method of analysis for reading translated literature, and to demonstrate its value for scholars and other critical readers of translations. The method affords the reader the opportunity to engage with translated works at a deeper level, so that for example the scholar of translation studies might demonstrate how a translation can be read as a singular literary text whose source-target relations are constructed by a heterogeneous network of cultural relations, or the scholar of literary studies might access the insight that the analysis brings to the surface for the purposes of a broader study. The general critical reader, meanwhile, might pursue it with a view to engaging with the complexities of global relations via a unique literary perspective.

In setting out to demonstrate the transdiasporic method, this thesis presented analyses of three texts constructed through the Francophone and Anglophone relations of the Vietnamese diaspora, and it identified these texts as different transdiasporic types based on the combination of source and target cultures present in their narratives. Despite the short length of the chosen texts, the detail and complexity of the discussions demonstrates the depth of insight that the transdiasporic method can produce, and the potential it represents for accessing and understanding the unique construction of translations. In the course of presenting these analyses, however, the thesis also identified a more detailed framework for applying the transdiasporic method. This framework takes the concept of the cultural network in which texts are constructed and underscores three characteristics of that network that can each be considered in the course of an analysis. The thesis arrives at the conclusion that by addressing the potential relevance of historical relations, power relations and heterogeneous aspects of the source and target cultures in question, a transdiasporic analysis can more systematically cover the range of possible factors that might have impacted on the construction of the translation. This conclusion was applied to three extended applications, each of which demonstrated a range of possibilities for future transdiasporic studies.

In the case of its application to literature of other diasporic networks, it was shown that there will be different factors at work in different diasporic networks, depending on how long the diaspora has been developing for, and the range of host cultures to which it has dispersed. The case of the Chinese diaspora, for example, raised the need to address the rise and fall of different host cultures over time, and the possibilities of intra-Asian diasporic movement. This highlights the potential for exploring how transdiasporic studies focused on a range of diasporas can raise awareness of different aspects of this type of network, with multiple studies being able to offer a comparison of the factors underlying the

historical relations, power relations and heterogeneous aspects that can arise between host cultures. In relation to translation studies and world literature, this extended application also has the potential to explore how such factors impact on the circulation of literary translations. For example, while the Vietnamese diaspora has produced a strong network of Anglophone and Francophone translations, the Chinese diaspora has produced a more varied network between less dominant languages, potentially contributing more to the circulation of peripheral world literature. In this sense, a series of transdiasporic studies could be used as a method of identifying on a distant level patterns of global literary movement, and of relating these to a close analysis of how they are represented in the source-target interactions of the text.

In the case of its application to literature of non-diasporic networks, it was shown that the diasporic categories on which the method is built do not need to be present for it to produce textual and cultural insight. The French translation of *Stasiland*, for example, can be read via a transdiasporic analysis if Australian culture and French culture are triangulated with German culture. The respective relationships between the source and target cultures of the translation and the national, cultural and linguistic identity of Germany over the course of the twentieth century produce plenty of opportunity to address historical relations, power relations and heterogeneity via the translational sites that appear in the translated text. What emerges is a reading of the translation that offers a unique approach to this transnational network. Overall, this extension implies a broad range of possibilities for transdiasporic studies that engage with different transnational networks. This would also allow for further critique of the concept of a network and of the three characteristics identified here as inherent to it, because the application of the method can test whether or not a given triangulated relationship conforms to the concept of a network by producing the expected outcomes. It would also contribute to a wider variety of interdisciplinary collaborations with translation studies, depending on the types of networks represented in the texts. It could constitute, for example, a study of how translated literature is circulated through postcolonial networks, or through networks constructed by more obscure cultural relations. All that is required for the process to work is that an understanding of the relationship between the source and target cultures be pursued via their respective relations to a third, mutually-related culture; the nature of these relations is potentially very flexible and open to creative thinking.

Finally, in the case of its application to the process of literary translation, it was shown that the transdiasporic method does not need to be restricted to the process of reading a translated text, but can be drawn on in the process of translating a text, which in itself is an “intimate” form of reading (Spivak “The Politics of Translation” 315). In the case of my own literary translation undertaken four years ago, if I had had the transdiasporic method at my disposal, I have no doubt that I could have produced a

significantly more nuanced translation and tapped into the complex cultural relations at work behind my source and target cultures. This extension represents an exciting possibility for translation studies, namely a unique approach to the act of translation, bringing together what are usually quite distinct areas of the discipline - the practice of translation and theoretical reflection on the translated text. A real-time application of the process to a translation task is a clear next step in this case, to better determine the ways in which the method might require any rethinking for the context. Its possibility demonstrates without a doubt the broader potential of the transdiasporic method, and the value inherent in pursuing further studies into it.

Considered overall, these applications represent three ways in which the method of transdiasporic analysis might be transferred into future studies: the first is a direct transference into other studies of diasporic literature, the second an indirect transference of it into studies of literatures of other genres, and the third a transference of it from the context of reading to the context of translational creation. The original goal of this thesis, to introduce and demonstrate transdiasporic analysis as an approach to reading translated literature, has thus not only been achieved, but it has opened further, tangible possibilities.

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