

Article

Heterolingualism and the Holocaust: Translating the Ineffable in Hélène Berr's *Journal*

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Received: 21 May 2018; Accepted: 28 June 2018; Published: 20 July 2018



Abstract: By drawing attention to Hélène Berr's use of foreign languages and literature as acts of translation, arguably one of the most prominent features of her *Journal*, this paper hopes to lay the foundation for a more sustained discussion of what translation means for victims of Nazi persecution, as well as of what translation does to their voices and for the continued transmission of their memories. The first section of this paper considers how Hélène Berr uses translation as a communicative aid to expression and argues that foreign languages, literary forms of expression, and also literature itself form part of a broader network of substitute vocabularies that function to help Berr to narrate, or even to translate, the ineffable. After considering the important role that heterolingualism and these substitute vocabularies play in Berr's narrative, the paper raises some of the distinct challenges that linguistic plurality poses to translators of narratives of Nazi persecution. By drawing on, and comparing, examples from a textual analysis of the (2008) English version of Berr's *Journal*, translated by David Bellos, and from the (2009) German edition, translated by Elisabeth Edl, and crucially through assessments of citations from the translators themselves, this paper highlights the significant role that translators, and the practice of translation, play in shaping memories of Nazi persecution.

Keywords: heterolingualism; Holocaust; translation; translating; Nazi persecution; Holocaust diaries; multilingual text

Hélène Berr's *Journal* has been the subject of a number of scholarly articles since its first publication in France in 2008 (cf. [Bracher 2010, 2014](#); [Egelman 2014](#); [Jaillant 2010](#); [Sabbah 2012](#)). Yet, despite having been published into more than 30 languages, and scholarship in languages other than French, few, if indeed any, studies have emerged that pay attention to the pertinent issue of how her voice has been reframed in translation. Hélène Berr was just 21 years old when she began writing her diary in April 1942. The first half of *Journal* provides descriptions of the quite ordinary life of a student of English literature at Paris' prestigious Sorbonne University, a young woman who loved music and strolling through the Parisian parks in the sunshine. Berr's *Journal* details her initial love-interest in Jean Morawiecki, who would later become her fiancée, and the original, intended recipient of the scrap pages of the notebook that would make up her diary. On 27 October 1943, however, Berr observes, "Il y deux parties dans ce journal, je m'en aperçois en relisant le début: il y a la partie que j'écris par devoir, pour conserver des souvenirs de ce qui devra être raconté, et il y a celle qui est écrite pour Jean, pour moi et pour lui"¹ ([Berr 2008a](#), p. 213). The date 8 June 1943 was to mark a pivotal moment in Hélène Berr's diary; her status as a Jew in Nazi-occupied France, and the mandatory wearing of the yellow

¹ There are two parts to this diary, I'm noticing as I reread the beginning; there's the part that I'm writing out of duty, to preserve the memories of those things that have to be told, and there is the part that I'm writing for Jean, for him, and for myself (My translation).

star, was to change her life forever. From that point onward, her intimate descriptions of love would become bound-up with the universal horrors of what would later become known as the Holocaust.

These horrors and the increasing incomprehensibility and otherworldliness of the events that surround Berr gives rise to a range of literary forms of expression in her writing, alternative vocabularies that enable Berr to record, in the most authentic way possible, her oftentimes traumatic and ineffable experiences such as loneliness, pain, and grief. The first part of this paper focusses on how Berr uses translation as a communicative aid to expression. Brenner (1997) who has written about writing as resistance in women's Holocaust diaries, argues that: "The insistence on their vocation as artists is reflected in the search for adequate language and literary forms to represent their experiences." (Brenner 1997, p. 132). This paper posits that foreign languages, literary forms of expression, and also, in the case of Berr's *Journal*, literature itself, are primarily acts of translation that form part of a broader network of substitute vocabularies that help Berr to narrate the ineffable, descriptions of moments or events where her own language is inadequate. This paper employs the term "heterolingualism," coined by Grutman in 2006 to infer the use of other languages to supplement the dominant language used for narration. Berr's narrative, written primarily in French, is a patchwork of foreign languages, and citations from works of foreign literature. In a paper entitled, *Lire et être lu. Littérature et catastrophe dans le Journal d'Hélène Berr*, Zoé Egelman (2014) provides an insightful overview of the critical role that literature, in particular, plays in Berr's *Journal*. Egelman's (2014) paper provides some crucial underpinnings for this study which draws on her research, and, then, expands on it, suggesting that Berr's use of literature can be read alongside her use of heterolingualism, her use of poetry, and other linguistic phenomena like her repetition and brevity, and that all of these demand to be thought about as acts of translation, and within acts of translation.

Grutman (2006) argues that, "[...] translators of multilingual texts often find themselves in a catch-22 situation," (Grutman 2006, p. 23), and this is particularly true when translating into a language which corresponds to the foreign language expressed in the "source text."² After considering the important role that heterolingualism and these substitute vocabularies play in Berr's narrative, this paper raises some of the distinct challenges that linguistic plurality poses to translators of narratives of Nazi persecution. By drawing on, and comparing, examples from a textual analysis of the (2008) English version of Berr's *Journal*, translated by David Bellos, and from the (2009) German edition, translated by Elisabeth Edl, and through citations from the translators themselves, this paper highlights the significant role that they, as translators, and the practice of translation, play in shaping memories of Nazi persecution.

1. The Function of Heterolingualism and Literature in Berr's *Journal*

Berr frequently integrates foreign languages into her otherwise French-written diary. These most frequently emerge in English in the form of utterances or citations from authors, or characters, and also through poetry. The co-existence of these substitute vocabularies within Berr's *Journal* most clearly indicate her ongoing process of self-translation and linguistic integration which is synonymous with her mastery of the English language; one could even argue her bilingualism. Hélène Berr was a linguist. She had completed a baccalauréat in Latin languages and philosophy, and she was a student of English at the Sorbonne's *Institut* where she also worked as a librarian (Job 2008, p. 283–84). She surrounded herself with English-speaking people—a private English teacher, "Miss Day," as well as an English nanny, "Miss Child," who worked for her family. Her use of the English-language within her diary allows her to bring together the different cultural matrices in which she finds herself. A keen anglophile, Berr often draws upon characteristically British expressions like "glorious muddle" (Berr 2008a, p. 52)

² The term 'source text' seems problematic when employed to refer to narratives of Nazi persecution. The fallibility of memory, and the need to translate in order to express the ineffable further complicates this, along with writer's decisions about what they choose to narrate, or not. Scholars working with translation and the Holocaust narrative need to be particularly cautious about the use of the term 'original' or 'source-text'.

and “glorious mess” (Berr 2008a, p. 171) in her writing (Egelman 2014, p. 4). By doing so, she is able to foreground the idea that an expression in one language might not find its equivalent in another. Hence, where her own native language, French, is insufficient to convey the realities of her situation, Berr goes in search of substitute vocabularies, like English, to convey them for her. For example, on 11 January 1944, Berr notes: “Or ce qui est l’essence de mon être, c’est l’unité d’esprit, *single-mindedness*.” (Berr 2008a, p. 274). After writing “l’unité d’esprit” [lit. unity of mind], she then insists on making a clarificatory statement through English, “single mindedness” (Berr 2008a, p. 274) as if to suggest that her description in French was not quite accurate, or honest enough (Egelman 2014, p. 4). She also retains, in her diary, English words or expressions such as “hot and bothered” (Berr 2008a, p. 152), “cosy” (Berr 2008a, p. 162) and even “Damn it” (Berr 2008a, p. 258), which do not easily find translation into French and she does so without clarification, highlighting a certain untranslatability in her words.

This untranslatability is most evident in the French edition of Berr’s manuscript, *Journal* (2008), which makes attempts to translate Berr’s use of heterolingualism for the French reader. On the 1 June 1943, Berr writes: “Mais je savais quelque chose de désagréable était at *the back of my mind*” (Berr 2008a, p. 52). The French (2008) edition provides the reader with a translation in brackets: “[me préoccupait confusément]” (Berr 2008a, p. 52). This literal rendering as something like “worried me confusedly” does not capture the intended message of Berr’s English utterance.³ Berr, thus, proves to be not only a linguist, but someone who is consistently engaging in acts of translation. On 11 January 1944, she talks, for example, about being asked to translate the “Defence of Poetry,” an opportunity that she describes as “une planche de salut” (“a life-line”) (Berr 2008a, p. 239). Translation, thus, seems to take on value for Berr not only as a metaphorical, but also literal means of survival. On Saturday 13 November 1943, Berr talks to her family about Winnie-the-Pooh, which she had read the evening before. She says: “J’expliquais mal, je rendais mal le charme du texte, car il est intraduisible en français, et Mlle Detraux est bien plus loin que Maman ou Denise de cette atmosphère [. . .] J’oubliais tout, sauf mon effort pour faire sentir le charme du livre.”⁴ Berr observes that despite her efforts, she ends up boring her family: “[. . .] je les ennuyais” (Berr 2008a, p. 240). Yet despite their perceived lack of interest, and her acceptance that Winnie-the-Pooh is untranslatable, she never gives up trying to carry across the charm of the book to her loved ones. In a similar way, Berr recognizes that writing, and recording her experiences is an impossible task, and yet with effort, through the employment of the substitute vocabularies at her disposal, through translation, in fact, she is able to record her most honest descriptions of life: “[. . .] écrire, et écrire comme je le veux, c’est-à-dire avec une sincérité complète [. . .] écrire toute la réalité et les choses tragiques que nous vivons en leur donnant toute leur gravité *nue* sans déformer par les mots, c’est une tâche très difficile et qui exige un effort constant”⁵ (Berr 2008a, p. 184).

Berr was writing at a time when the Nazis were denying her rights, and seeking to obliterate all traces of her, and of the Jewish people. She surrounded herself with literature and describes the books in her library which include many foreign authors such as: Keats, Shakespeare, Shelley, Morgan, Hemingway, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, and Carroll, as “un petit foyer chaud et lumineux dans le froid qui m’entoure”⁶ (Berr 2008a, p. 183). Berr’s *Journal*, like her books, gave her something tangible in the face of so much loss, and allowed her to remain in control in the face of overwhelming terror. Her use of literature and heterolingualism, might also, hence, be read as a form of resistance. Not only was Berr reading and citing from the work of foreign-writers, but she was also actively drawing on authors

³ Another example: “Nous sommes allés rue de l’Odéon, pus au Comité du livre, où j’ai été très hot and bothered.” (dans tout mes états).

⁴ I explained poorly, I conveyed the charm of the text poorly, because it’s untranslatable into French [. . .] I lost sight of everything except my effort to allow the charm of the book to be felt. (My translation).

⁵ Writing, and writing as I want to write, in other words, with complete sincerity, the reality of the situation, and the tragic things that we are living through, while simultaneously giving them their naked gravity without distorting through words, is a difficult task that requires constant effort (My translation).

⁶ A warm and bright hearth in the cold that surrounds me (My translation) and, an ‘enchanted territory’ (My translation).

like Martin Du Gard, André Gide, Heinrich Heine, and Ernest Hemmingway, whose works would have been prohibited in Nazi occupied France under the Liste Otto (Otto 1940, 1942)⁷.

Berr also retreats to the world of literature to overcome what seem like every day concerns (Bracher 2010, pp. 161–62). On 21 May 1942, when Berr is beginning to feel overwhelmed by her new feelings for Jean Morawiecki, her future fiancée, she uses books to escape: “Seulement, comme tout cela est très compliqué [. . .] Heureusement que j’ai *Beowulf*”⁸ (Berr 2008a, p. 47). When things become complicated for her, she falls into literature where she is often able to read herself, and her own situation (Egelman 2014, p. 4): “Mais je suis comme Brutus et je *fall back on instinct* . . . ,”⁹ she writes in May, 1942 (Berr 2008a, p. 46). The value she places in allowing literature not only to speak to her, but to speak for her is evident: “J’ai fini *Daphné Adeane*. Ce livre m’a causé un étrange malaise, parce que j’ai peur d’y trouver mon histoire, je crois trop aux livres.”¹⁰ (Berr 2008a, p. 136) On 1 November 1943, to cite another example, Berr allows Ishmael, the only survivor of Moby Dick’s shipwreck,¹¹ to voice her feelings (Egelman 2014). Writing at a time when many of her best friends had been arrested and taken away during the roundup at the UGIF headquarters on July 30, Berr laments the loneliness that surrounds her:

Que de vide autour de moi ! Pendant un long temps après la rafle du 30 juillet, j’ai eu la sensation angoissante d’être restée la seule après un naufrage, une phrase dansait, frappait dans ma tête. Elle était venue s’imposer à moi sans que je la cherche, elle me hantait, c’est la phrase de Job sur laquelle se termine *Moby-Dick: And I alone am escaped to tell thee* . . . ¹² (Berr 2008a, p. 224)

She once again, turns again to heterolingualism, the English vocabulary of other writers to communicate her emotions. Sabbah (2012, p. 212) also observes that: “ . . . at the point when she is condemned to loneliness and concentrates on her pain, she enters into a dialogue with the literary works that she loves and uses them to sustain an ethical exchange for a time when all ethics have collapsed.” (Sabbah 2012, p. 212) More than this, however, it is also significant that Berr follows her citation of Job’s final sentence in Moby Dick “*And I alone am escaped to tell thee*,” written in English, with her own observation written in French, that: “Personne ne saura jamais l’expérience dévastatrice par laquelle je suis passée cet été.”¹³ (Berr 2008a, p. 224). By writing in English, Berr alienates French readers of her *Journal*, casting them into foreign territory, a space of non-understanding, which mimics her own psyche; nobody could ever understand her experiences of that summer. Berr also employs similar strategies to describe her pain. While talking about the huge death counts falling upon France, she employs the voice of Shakespeare’s Othello: “[. . .] la Mort pleut sur le monde. De ceux qui sont tués à la guerre, on dit qu’ils sont des héros . . . Ceux qui étaient de l’autre côté se sont figurés qu’ils mouraient pour la même chose. Alors que chaque vie a tant de prix en elle-même. *The pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!*” (Berr 2008a, p. 210). Egelman (2014, p. 11) argues, “Les mots qu’elle lit dans ces textes célèbres portent une autorité puissante dont elle se sert pour intensifier le sens des

⁷ Seconde liste Otto. *Unerwünschte französische Literatur* («littérature française non désirable»), Paris, Syndicat des éditeurs, 1942.

⁸ It’s all just so complicated [. . .] Luckily, I have *Beowulf*. (My translation).

⁹ But I am like Brutus, and I *fall back on instinct*. (My translation).

¹⁰ I finished *Daphné Adeane*. This book makes me feel uneasy because I’m worried about reading my own story in it; I believe too much in books. (My translation).

¹¹ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*.

¹² What emptiness surrounds me! For a long time after the July 30 roundup, I had the unbearable feeling of being the only survivor of a shipwreck, a sentence was dancing around in my head. It imposed itself upon me without me having to look for it, it haunted me, it the sentence Job utters at the end of *Moby-Dick: And I alone am escaped to tell thee*... (My translation).

¹³ Nobody will ever understand the devastating experiences that I’ve experienced this summer. (My translation).

siens propres.”¹⁴ The persistent substitution of the voice of others in place of her own is most certainly Berr’s acknowledgement that her own words are not enough.

As H  l  ne Berr’s world becomes ever more oppressive, the inability of her own words to describe the horrors taking place around her becoming increasingly evident. From 1943, Berr turns to literature and heterolingualism more and more often (Egelman 2014). She begins to quote at length, taking up sometimes pages of her diary, and significantly she finds expression in poetry, which she describes as the medium best able to convey truth: “... rien n’est exag  r   lorsque Shelley dit que la po  sie est la supr  me des choses. De tout ce qui existe, elle est le plus pr  s de la v  rit  , et de l’  me”¹⁵ (Berr 2008a, p. 253) Boase-Beier (2016), who has written extensively on the poetry of the Holocaust and on its translations also acknowledges the important role that poetry sustains in allowing victims of Nazi persecution to express their emotions: “It is the ability not only to express feelings, but also to have cognitive effects on the reader that makes poetry so important and necessary a response to the Holocaust.” (Boase-Beier 2016, p. 6) It is unsurprising, then, that Berr turns to poetry when she experiences intense emotions like grief. She loses her grandmother in November 1943 and pens seven lines from a poem by Shelley, in English, into her diary:

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Can touch him not and torture not again;
 From the contagion of the world’s slow stain
 He is secure, and now can never mourn,
 A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain.
 (Shelley, *Adonais*, quoted in Berr 2008a, p. 253)

Crucially, she concludes this section of her entry by noting that there was a moment in which she had felt that she had made these verses her own: “Il y eu vraiment un moment aujourd’hui o   j’ai fait miens ces vers.”¹⁶ Berr quite literally appropriates the English-speaking voice of Shelley, to allow her to make sense of a senseless world, and to, in some way, describe it. The inadequacy of her French words find further reinforcement in her entry on the following day. On 30 November 1943, Berr continues to explore the theme of death through Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*. After citing a few verses, she observes that these verses had enabled her to finally express what she had unable to find the words for: “Saisissant, c’est ce que je cherchais    exprimer tout    l’heure. Je viens de le trouver comme une lumi  re dans la nuit”¹⁷ (Berr 2008a, p. 256). Berr’s recognition of poetry as one of the purest forms of expression, as a light to the darkness, and her commitment to authentically relating her experience,¹⁸ is surely why the work of Keats features so prominently in *Journal*; “Keats est le po  te, l’  crivain, et l’  tre humain avec lequel je communique le plus imm  diatement et le plus compl  tement” (Berr 2008a, p. 192).¹⁹ On 27 October 1943, she quotes from Keats’ *This Living Hand*:

This living hand, now warm and capable

¹⁴ The words that she reads in these well-known texts carry a powerful authority in allowing her to intensify her own words. (My translation).

¹⁵ It is no exaggeration when Shelley says that poetry is the most supreme of things. Of all that exists, it is closest to the truth and to the soul (My translation).

¹⁶ There was real moment today, when I made these verses my own (My translation).

¹⁷ Gripping, it’s what I’ve been trying to express all along. I’ve just found it again like a light in the darkness.

¹⁸ “[...]   crire, et   crire comme je le veux, c’est-  -dire avec une sinc  rit   compl  te ...   crire toute la r  alit   et les choses tragiques que nous vivons en leur donnant toute leur gravit   *nue* sans d  former par les mots, c’est une t  che tr  s difficile et qui exige un effort constant” (Berr 2008a, p. 168). Writing, and writing as I want to write, in other words, with complete sincerity, the reality of the situation, and the tragic things that we are living through, while simultaneously giving them their naked gravity without distorting through words, is a difficult task that requires constant effort (My translation).

¹⁹ Keats is the poet, the writer and the human being with whom I communicate [lit] most immediately and completely. (My translation).

Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold,
 And in the icy silence of the tomb,
 So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
 That thou wouldst wish thine own heart dry of blood
 So in my veins red life might stream again,
 And thou be conscience—calm'd—see, here it is—
 I hold it towards you. (Keats, *This Living Hand*, quoted in [Berr 2008a](#), p. 207)

In his poem, Keats compares the ephemeral nature of life, and his warm hand, to the immortality of his penned words that have the ability to rise from silence and to allow him to live again, or to live on beyond himself. For Berr, the work of these great authors became an immortal and ever-living presence: “Je sais qu’elles sont là, comme une preuve vivante, et que je pourrai les regarder”²⁰ ([Berr 2008a](#), p. 183). It seems possible that, like Keats, Hélène had sensed her impending death ([Egelman 2014](#)), and that writing her diary became a way of testifying, and creating something tangible of herself that would not perish. This link becomes even more pertinent in light of her notes a few days earlier on 27 October, 1943, when she writes: “Cela m’est un bonheur de penser que si je suis prise Andrée aura gardé ces pages, quelque chose de moi, ce qui m’est le plus précieux, car maintenant je ne tiens plus à rien d’autre qui soit matériel; ce qu’il faut sauvegarder, c’est son âme et sa mémoire”²¹ ([Berr 2008a](#), p. 213).

2. Translating Heterolingualism in Helene Berr’s Journal

Scholars working in the field of Holocaust Studies and translation have stressed that there is a need for discussions that reflect on the characteristically multilingual nature of Holocaust narratives:

In discussing the translation of voice and style we must consider the multilingual nature of the source texts. It has been remarked many times that the Holocaust events were marked by multilingualism ... But what is less often discussed is this particularly multilingual situation gives rise to writing which often combines words from different languages and thus causes particular challenges for the translator, since to unify it in a target language would not only be to lose its qualities of poetic foregrounding and difference, but would also ignore what Levinas (2006) distinguished as the importance of the Saying over the Said. ([Boase-Beier et al. 2017](#), p. 16)

Having now considered some of the possible functions, and indeed the relevance, of Berr’s use of heterolingualism, it seems particularly pertinent in light of Grutman’s observation that “[...] translators of multilingual texts often find themselves in a catch-22 situation,” ([Grutman 2006](#), p. 23), to consider some of the unique challenges raised by such features in translation practice. It is not enough, academics have suggested, to analyse texts and to draw conclusions on why translators might translate in one way, and not another ([Davies 2017](#)). Translation Studies has, of late, been urging scholars towards a methodology that brings into focus the important role that the figure and personality of the translator plays in processes of translating, and has thereby called for a more active engagement with the translators themselves. [Tryuk \(2015\)](#), for example, argues that

In order to understand why a text is translated in a certain way and not another, you need to look at the person who performed the translation. It is the translator [...] whom we must focus on in order to understand why a certain translation or interpreting took place at a given time or place. ([Tryuk 2015](#), p. 23)

²⁰ “I know that they are there, like living proof, and that I could look to them.”

²¹ It makes me happy to think that if I’m taken Andrée will have kept these pages, something of me, the most precious part of me, because right now no other material thing matters to me; what must be rescued, is its soul and its memory” (My translation).

Hence, the second part of this paper brings to the fore discussions with translators of Berr's *Journal*, in order to understand some of the complex, decision-making processes that are at work in the translation of Berr's experiences, and in the translation of the multilingual nature of memories of Nazi persecution more generally. This contribution engages with these issues through the English and German translations of *Journal*, translated by Professor David Bellos, and Elisabeth Edl, respectively.²² David Bellos is a biographer and professor of French and Comparative Literature at Princeton University and, among many titles, he has translated the well-known Holocaust writer, Georges Perec, from French into English. Elisabeth Edl's similarly impressive portfolio of translations from French into German includes texts by Patrick Modiano, among several others. The two translators, as the section to follow will show, read the heterolingualism within *Journal* very differently, which results in two very distinct approaches to translating this particular aspect of Berr's voice.

In 1992, Lefevere, writes that, "An expedient solution, used fairly often, is to leave the foreign word or phrase untranslated, and then to append a translation between brackets or even to insert a translation into the body of the texts a little later" (Lefevere 1992, p.29). This is clearly illustrated in the French (2009) version's presentation of Berr's heterolingualism. On Saturday 11th April 1942, Berr's handwritten manuscript reads:

"It sufficeth that I have told thee, mon bout de papier; tout va déjà mieux." (Berr manuscript)

However, in the 2008 French published edition, Berr's use of English is shadowed by a French translation within enclosed brackets.

"It sufficeth that I have told thee, [Il me suffit de t'en avoir parlé], mon bout de papier; tout va déjà mieux." (Berr 2008a, p. 24)

This disrupts narrative flow²³ and, moreover, in its representation of English as a foreign entity might be perceived as a misrepresentation of Berr's experience of the English language. The German translation, by contrast, does not clarify the meaning of Berr's use of English for its readership:

"It sufficeth that I have told thee, mein Blatt Papier; schon ist alles besser."²⁴ (Berr 2009, p. 22)

Contrastingly, Berr's use of heterolingualism within the English version of *Journal* is by nature of its non-translation into English, invisible:

"It sufficeth that I have told thee, dear little writing paper; I'm feeling better already." (Berr 2008b, p. 22)

To suggest that the heterolingualism of Berr's *Journal* is not translated into English, simply because it could not be, is unsatisfying. Indeed, a translator seeking to replicate or draw attention to Berr's use of English, in English, might have done so. For example, through footnotes or through a different typeface—by italicising Berr's use of English, as per the response of both the French editor, and the German translator. Any one of these strategies, although far from ideal, might have allowed these differences in translation to emerge. In his introductory translator's note to Berr's *Journal*, translator David Bellos, acknowledges the challenge that translating Berr's English, into English, posed to him, but defends his decision not to draw attention to it:

I have not sought to indicate which of Hélène Berr's words were written in English in this translation so as not to introduce distracting or misleading emphases. This produces an

²² Please note: Berr's *Journal* has been translated into more than 30 languages, a future study might consider the translation of Berr's use of heterolingualism into other languages.

²³ Though it is important to remember that a large part of Berr's *Journal* was not written for an audience, but rather for her fiancée, Jean Morawiecki.

²⁴ It sufficeth that I have told thee, my piece of paper, everything is getting better. (My translation).

unusual somewhat paradoxical effect: the translation contains fewer foreign words and expressions than the original, and is therefore a plainer text. [. . .] It is not the translator, but the simple fact of translation that has made the *Journal* in English more straightforward, and if that were conceivable, even more moving than it is in French. (Berr 2008b, p. 4)

For Bellos, highlighting the complex linguistic layers in Berr's *Journal* in its English translation is, understandably, to present the reader with unnecessary stumbling blocks. Thus, he makes a decision to level-out Berr's use of heterolingualism in favour of a largely monolingual English translation.²⁵ In an email-exchange with David Bellos, I had hoped to explore his consideration of other strategies that might have allowed the linguistic differences in Berr's *Journal* to be foregrounded more prominently in the English translation. His responses elicited a number of fascinating insights into his translation practice, and into the practice of translation more generally. First, they illustrate that he is a translator whose ethical conduct is seemingly steeped in delivering on the brief outlined to him, and, crucially, in line with cultural norms.²⁶ When footnotes were proposed, during the email-exchange, as a resolve for dealing with this linguistic disparity, David Bellos returned a clear response:

It would be quite out of order to indicate which of Berr's words were in English in the original. Only the French do that with *en français dans le texte*. Please note that even the French never say *en anglais dans le texte* when translating a German novel in which someone says "Hallo." It is of no interest. (Bellos 2016)

His responses also seem to indicate that his reading of Berr's use of English differs quite significantly from that put forward in this paper:

The frequent English expressions make the French sound slightly pretentious and also make it not easy for average French readers to understand unless they read the translations in brackets and quote marks, which disturb the flow. In English you have none of those problems, and that is why it has greater polish. (Bellos 2016)

For translator David Bellos, it is the ease with which the reader is able to access the text that takes on the greatest significance, and there is, indeed, a space for arguing, as he does, that we write in order to be read. After all, a fluent translation is one that is ultimately readable and "[. . .] therefore, consumable on the book market," (Venuti 1995, p. 15), and so the ethical act and duty for the translator, in this instance, lies in ensuring that Berr's *Journal* reaches as many readers as possible. The German translator, Elisabeth Edl, on the other hand, does perceive Berr's use of heterolingualism as significant. This is evident, not only in her decision to leave visible markers of Berr's expressions in English within the German translation, but in the responses she gives during the email exchanges:

No, I never wanted to translate the English terms into German. Because in the French original too, they are, on the one hand, a foreign entity, and on the other, a sign of Berr's love of the English language. Furthermore, for contemporary readers, English expressions in a German text are nothing unusual.²⁷ (Edl 2017)

²⁵ David Bellos does leave one important phrase in French in the English translation, and, thereby, restores an element of multilingualism to the reading experience. In the introduction to Berr's *Journal*, Bellos writes: "The word Mme Loewe used for "same batch" is the ordinary one for a baker's tray of loaves: "la même fournée" – made out of the suffix "-née attached to a stem "four", whose literal meaning is "oven". The French makes your heart miss a beat. The language itself seems to know what the speaker did not. I cannot reproduce in English the hideous lurch into prophecy made by this phrase in French, and so I have left it alone." (Berr 2008b, p. 6)

²⁶ Both translators, David Bellos, and Elisabeth Edl, also explained that they had worked very closely with Berr's niece, Mariette Job, and were also subject to, and sensitive to her wishes for *Journal*.

²⁷ "Nein, ich wollte die englischen Ausdrücke nie ins Deutsche übersetzen. Denn auch im französischen Original stehen sie ja einerseits als Fremdkörper und sind andererseits aber das Zeichen für Berr's Liebe zur englischen Sprache. Für heutige Leser sind englische Ausdrücke in einem deutschen Text auch überhaupt nichts Ungewöhnliches." (Edl 2017).

The translation strategies outlined here are consistent for all instances of Berr's use of heterolingualism, and through all of the languages discussed here. Thus, while the provision of just one example, per language, might seem inadequate, these are indicative and exemplary of the approaches taken by the editors and translators of Berr's *Journal* more generally. The different strategies employed by the translators in the translation of Berr's heterolingualism give rise to numerous observations. First, and perhaps most obviously, that the task of translation, and the ease with which a translator is successfully able to reproduce the effects of heterolingualism within a narrative is largely dependent on the languages out of, and into, which it is being translated. Translating Berr's use of heterolingualism into English is, evidently, not a task that can be deemed equivalent to that of translating those same features in German.²⁸ David Bellos acknowledges the specificity of translating Berr's English into English when he states that: "[...] the Dutch edition [...] leaves the English in English without Dutch translation on the assumption that Dutch readers know English sufficiently well." (Bellos 2016). Both translators, thus, allude to cultural norms in translating which, in the case of the English and German translations, highlight some visible differences between translating practices in two different countries. David Bellos implies that readers of English are not trained to receive multilingualism, and neither do they desire it, and by contrast, Elisabeth Edl anticipates that her prospective audience will process and be accepting of it. However, one of most decisive factors behind the translators' strategies lies in their own unique perceptions of why Berr writes in English. David Bellos' understanding of Berr's use of English as "slightly pretentious" compared to Elisabeth Edl's understanding of it as "a foreign entity" and "as a sign of Berr's love of the English language," account for two very different approaches and thus speaks for two very distinct presentations of English in Berr's *Journal*.

Best summarised by the work of Peter Davies (2017) the translators' diverging approaches to translating heterolingualism is illustrative of an overarching tension that very often emerges when discussing strategies for bringing forth Holocaust narratives in translation. The first approach outlined by Davies (2017), resonates with David Bellos' understanding of translation as

[...] taking place within a network of influences, constraints and obligations towards many different parties, that sees the translator as a creative and engaged agent, draws attention to cultural context and difference, and that does not consider translated texts to be inferior versions of an original. (Davies 2017, p. 24)

When I asked David Bellos whom he was translating for, he responded: "[...] everybody, obviously. Who else does one write books for?" (Bellos 2016). This seems to concur with the idea that he views the role of translator as being synonymous with that of the author who writes, and whose task is, thereby to make the diary accessible and relevant for any reader of Berr's *Journal*. The idea of translation as a creative act, that translated texts need not be inferior versions of an original, but, on the contrary can be an improved version of the original is also promulgated in the significance, and resultant attention, that David Bellos gives to correcting Berr's *Journal*, his efforts to add to it a 'greater polish', and also his suggestion that *Journal*, in English, might be considered 'more moving than it is in French.' During our email exchanges David Bellos points out that "[...] the translation led to numerous corrections to the later editions of the original" (Bellos 2016) and that, "[...] it is also true that there are a few corrections that arose not from my work but from readers' observations" (Bellos 2016). The changes that he detailed when prompted were as follows:

The improvements to the original that arose from the translation include: the correction of typos, especially mis-spellings of words in English and German; mis-translations (especially of the English quotations) and missing or inadequate attributions of sources; and in a number

²⁸ Indeed, it would be interesting to consider how Berr's use of English is translated into other languages, however, this lies outside the scope of this paper.

of places where it seemed probably that the manuscript had been incorrectly transcribed, a second look produced a different reading. (Bellos 2017)

Returning to an earlier example of Berr's citation from Moby Dick, "... and I alone am escaped to tell thee" (Berr 2008a, p. 224), and its translation in the English version of *Journal*, allows such changes and improvements to be located. The English version corrects Berr's English citation so that it corresponds precisely to that which appears in Melville's classic: "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (Berr 2008b, p. 194). These corrections, and David Bellos' endeavours to improve upon Berr's *Journal* are also present in other instances where Berr chooses English as the appropriate language for expression. For example, on 14 June 1942 Berr writes:

"Nous étions tout à fait cracked [toquées]." (Berr 2008a, p. 65)

which is translated literally into German as,

"Wir waren vollkommen cracked." (Berr 2009, p. 64)

And, one might, therefore, assume a literal English translation of,

"We were completely cracked." (My translation)

However, in the 2008, English translation of Berr's *Journal*, this reads quite differently,

"We were completely out of our minds." (Berr 2008b, p. 61)

David Bellos' approach to translating results in a number of small transformations to Berr's *Journal* in English, including corrections like these, the use of multiple signifiers to replace repeated words and themes that emerge in Berr's *Journal*,²⁹ the addition of words to clarify meaning³⁰ and, as this paper has illustrated the annulment of the intertwining of languages in Berr's writing resulting in a largely "homogenous" translation (Grutman 2006, p. 22). In more recent correspondence, and in response to correcting the aforementioned Moby Dick epilogue in *Journal*, Bellos comments that the citation from Job 1:15, "and I only am escaped alone to tell thee", appears in the King James Version of the Bible, and is, thus, so well-known that it "would simply not be fair to Hélène Berr to leave her mistake in the English edition." (Bellos 2018). He justifies this position further on how readily some readers might dismiss a translation on its "English mistakes", and that incorrect citations might have "led to accusations of sloppy proof reading." (Bellos 2018) However, there must also be a space for prioritising the preservation of Berr's memory, which is, after all, precisely what these English citations are. Attempts to correct them seem to displace *Journal* from the context of its original production. Indeed, Berr writes, "Je note les faits, hâtivement, pour ne pas les oublier parce qu'il ne faut pas oublier" (Berr 2008a, p. 105)³¹. Her errors are, above all, an inscription of her situation, of the fact that she was writing a diary, and that in it, she recorded comments that not only spoke for her, but to her.

By way of contrast, Peter Davies (2017) speaks of a theorising on translation that "places value on the voice of the victim above all other possible factors." (Davies 2017, p. 24) and from our email exchanges, and through close engagement with the German version of *Journal*, this, most certainly, seems to characterise Elisabeth Edl's approach to translating. On this same issue of translating the Moby Dick citation in Berr's *Journal*, Edl admits,

²⁹ e.g., The term "comme une folle" which appears on several occasions in Berr's *Journal* (pp. 102, 120, 232), receives multiple translations in the English translation of *Journal*—"like a hare" (Berr 2008b, p. 96) "in a frenzy" (Berr 2008b, p. 112), like a madwoman (Berr 2008b, p. 201), compared with one translation in the German text: "wie eine Verrückte" (Berr 2009, pp. 101, 117, 217) (lit. like a madperson).

³⁰ "[...] je suis montée; j'ai sonné trois fois" (Berr 2008a, p. 71) (lit. I went up; i rang three times) expands the sentence and adds the words 'and' and 'the bell': 'I went up and rang the bell three times' (Berr 2008b, p. 67). Compare with Edl's translation: "Ich bin hinaufgegangen; ich habe dreimal geläutet" (Berr 2009, p. 71).

³¹ I'm noting the facts, in haste, in order that they are not forgotten, because we must not forget. (My translation).

I decided to leave in Hélène Berr's incorrect version (and included an endnote detailing the correct citation) because Hélène Berr is clearly citing from memory—and the English sentence is, itself, correct, and makes sense.³² (Edl 2018)

She continues:

"[...] in translating, my approach is essentially a literary one [...] So, what I want is to render the author's style as far as possible [...] with all its gaps or shortcomings."³³

Edl's sensitive approach to translating Berr's voice is evident throughout her translation. This extends to the inclusion of an afterword as opposed to a preface, and when asked about this decision she explains, "I think a book has to start with the actual text, everything else comes after that. Every reader is free to go back and begin with the afterword."³⁴ As a further illustration of Edl's engagement with Berr's voice, one can also consider how she approaches the translation of initials in *Journal*. Hélène Berr uses initials to refer to people instead of their assigned names or titles. B.M in the manuscript becomes "Bonne Maman" in the French (2008) publication, and similarly "G" (Berr 2008a, p. 71) becomes "Gérard." The English translation, in a number of cases too, expands these initials to full names as recorded by David Bellos in his introduction to Berr's *Journal*: "In the manuscript, many initials are used in place of personal names."³⁵ Wherever possible these have been expanded into full names" (Berr 2008b, p. 5). However, Elisabeth Edl's commitment to "wiedergeben" (to restore, to render, to echo) Berr's narrative, and to preserve the immediacy of Helene Berr's voice, (Berr 2009, pp. 317–18) again, leads her to take quite a different approach to the German translation. Responding to 'why' she reverted back to initials in the German translation of *Journal*, during our email exchanges, Elisabeth Edl comments,

Quite simply: out of discretion. Hélène Berr also used initials, and these weren't only for reasons of speed. I discussed this question with Mariette Job at the time, she also gave me the full names (which was important for me to understand certain connections), but discretion should be respected. Above all for people who are still living, and their families³⁶.

Edl's sensitivity to the uniqueness and significance behind each of Berr's utterances results in a German translation, which is in many respects more closely aligned to Berr's manuscript than the French published edition, which many readers may regard as the original.

Regardless of whether we choose to view Berr's use of heterolingualism and literature as an expression of her love of the English language, as a vehicle for resistance, escapism, or otherwise, when read contextually in light of Berr's other entries, what seems undeniable is its communicative purpose, and the effect of difference that it brings forward for its French reader. Berr's use of heterolingualism and her employment of literature are demonstrative of her commitment to represent her experiences "avec une sincérité complète."³⁷ Thus, it seems, to me, incorrect to suggest that Berr's use of English

³² "[...] concernant la citation issue de *Moby Dick*: "and I only am escaped alone to tell thee"—j'avais décidé de laisser la version erronée de HB (et de mettre une note avec la citation correcte en fin de volume) parce que HB cite de mémoire, évidemment—et la phrase anglaise en elle même est correcte et bien compréhensible." (Edl 2018) Please note: Edl also acknowledges that "bien sûr, un lecteur anglophone sera peut-être plus irrité par l'inexactitude qu'un lecteur germanophone." "Of course, an anglophone reader might be more irritated by the inaccuracy than a german reader" (Edl 2018).

³³ "[...] en traduisant, ma démarche est essentiellement littéraire [...]] Donc, ce que je veux c'est de rendre le mieux possible le style de l'auteur [...]] même avec ses lacunes ou défaillances." (Edl 2018).

³⁴ "Das ist eine deutsche Tradition, würde ich meinen. [...] Ich finde, ein Buch muss mit dem eigentlichen Text beginnen, alles andere kommt danach. Es steht jedem Leser frei, zuerst nach hinten zu blättern und mit dem Nachwort zu beginnen." (Edl 2017).

³⁵ "In full agreement with Mariette Job, a number of them (some intentionally altered for the French edition) have been left as initials (in the Introduction also)." (Bellos 2018).

³⁶ Ganz einfach: aus Diskretion. Auch Hélène Berr hat nicht nur aus Gründen der Schnelligkeit erwähnte Personen mit Initialen bezeichnet. Ich habe diese Frage damals mit Mariette Job besprochen, sie hat mir auch die vollen Namen genannt (was für mich wichtig war, um bestimmte Zusammenhänge richtig zu verstehen), aber die Diskretion sollte gewahrt bleiben. Vor allem noch lebenden Personen und ihren Familien gegenüber. (Edl 2017).

³⁷ In complete sincerity (My translation).

makes her diary sound in any way ‘pretentious’. If it appears that her use of heterolingualism poses obstacles to the French reader, then perhaps it is because it embodies the very inexpressibility of the experiences and the horrors that Berr seeks to translate. This paper has argued that literature and heterolingualism opened up new ways of communicating for Berr, and thus, a translator might seek to respond to this, in light of Sharon Deane-Cox (2017) who argues that: “[...] if the form and content of words have been simultaneously charged with the task of communication by the original witness, then the secondary witness [i.e., the translator] is compelled to uphold and preserve these referential and aesthetic decisions” (Deane-Cox 2017, p. 12).

However, as victims of Nazi persecution have attested to time and time again, we must also remember that, perhaps, there will always be something more pressing than accurate representation. On the 30th November 1943, Hélène Berr writes, “La seule expérience de l’immortalité de l’âme que nous puissions avoir avec sûreté, c’est cette immortalité qui consiste en la persistance du souvenir des morts parmi les vivants”³⁸ (Berr 2008a, p. 213). Victims of the Holocaust have, in spite of the perceived impossibility of the task, often found ways to represent their experiences. The narrative, like translation itself, might always be an inadequate representation, yet in the act of writing, victims fulfil their duty to communicate, bear witness, or to commemorate. Perhaps the most ethical response, and best model that a translator can have in translating Berr’s *Journal*, then, is to listen her voice, to the words that cry out for someone to “sauvegarder [...] son âme et sa mémoire”³⁹ and to “faire sentir le charme du livre.”⁴⁰ The primary concern for Hélène Berr, like many victims of Nazi persecution, is that her voice is communicated. Thus, the unique contribution that each translator makes in allowing her voice to be heard must be duly credited. If Hélène Berr is able to acknowledge that her words are inadequate, then, perhaps we as translators might accept the same, and go forth in the knowledge that translation is possibly the most adequate and honest way of representing the Holocaust.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank both translators, David Bellos, and Elisabeth Edl, as well as Hélène Berr’s niece, Mariette Job, for responding to my many queries regarding the publication and translation of Berr’s *Journal*. Their collaboration is very much appreciated.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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³⁸ The only experience of the immortality of the soul, of which we can have any security, is the immortality that consists in the continuing memory of the dead among the living (My translation).

³⁹ To rescue it’s soul, and it’s memory. (My translation).

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