

# (Re)Translation of Sex-Related Language in the Spanish Versions of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* by Boris Vian

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## Abstract

The present study is based on the reception in France and Spain of Boris Vian's thriller "*J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*". Published in France in 1946 under the pen name of Vernon Sullivan, this novel was banned three years later for being pornographic and immoral. The first request for translation and publication in Spain was denied by censors in 1974 but was eventually approved in 1978. This study offers a comparative analysis between the first Spanish translation of 1977 and the two retranslations published in 1979 and 1989. It focuses on how the three translators broach the omnipresence of sexual language in the novel. Results show how sexual language does not leave the translators indifferent. On the one hand, due to the prevailing censorship at that time, the first translator realizes an implicit and generalized translation and tends to conscious self-censorship. On the other hand, the other two translators make sexual language even more explicit and intensify their translations, showing somehow their personal vision towards sex and sexuality.

## Keywords

sex-related language – (re)translation – reception – (self-)censorship

## 1 Introduction

The life of Boris Vian had a peculiar dimension from beginning to end. Born in 1920 in front of the door of a maternity hospital closed because of strike action, he died of a heart attack in 1959 during the first movie screening of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* [*I Spit on Your Graves*]. He was buried by his friends a few days later on a day when gravediggers were on strike.

*J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* was the novel which brought him fame. However, since it caused such a stir and was written under the pen name of Vernon Sullivan, it also overshadowed the rest of Vian's prolific and versatile literary work composed of novels, short stories, poems and playwrights.

Banned for over 20 years in France because of its ultraviolent and obscene dimension, the first Spanish version of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* came out in 1977 and was then retranslated in 1979 and 1986.

In this article, we first revise the theoretical concepts of censorship and self-censorship in translation, putting the emphasis on the translation of sex-related language during the context of the Francoist regime. We then examine the genesis and reception of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* in France. We will see why it was censored in France and study the reports of the censors that we consulted at the *Archivo General de la Administración* [General Administrative Archives] in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid, Spain) and which led to the consequent ban of the book in Spain. Finally, we will analyse the three existing Spanish translations of the book and see how translators addressed the translation of sex-related language.

Text manipulation is an inherent part of any reading or translation. In *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, Theo Hermans considered that from the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose (Hermans 1985: 11). Among the many reasons that can lead to the manipulation of a text, the analysis of the cultural context of a translation is a key element to understand the choices made by a translator. Indeed, according to Venuti (Venuti 1995: 37), these choices “answer to a domestic cultural situation and [...] canons of accuracy are culturally specific and historically variable”. In an oppressive domestic cultural situation such as the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–1975), the translator's choices were then often conditioned by a double-mechanism of censorship and self-censorship. In the case of censorship, Manuel Abellán (cited by Pegenaute 1999: 89) mentions that after the *Ministerio de Información y Turismo* [Ministry of Information and Tourism] became in charge of official censorship in 1951, themes that were targeted by censors included “anything considered immoral (including sexuality, blasphemy, suicide, etc.)”. Censors were also heavily under the influence of the Catholic Church and, according to Linder (2004: 181), they were:

[...] as vigilant for sexual content as they were vigilant for political content [and thus] veiled for the moral health of the Spanish people by intervening in all matters of sexual morality, decency, obscenity and vulgarity.

The highly conservative and religious environment in Spain as well as the existence of external and official censorship obviously influenced the choices made by the translators and would often lead to self-censorship. Indeed, as they wrote or rewrote their texts, translators often used self-censorship because “[...] they knew that the text they submitted to the authorities would be judged according to certain criteria and their aim was to reach the public” (Merino y Rabadán 2002: 127). In addition to this voluntary self-censorship, translators are also conditioned by their own ethical code and can also be subject to involuntary self-censorship, especially if they have to translate sex-related language. Indeed, according to Santaemilia (2008: 246):

[...] translating is always a struggle to reach a compromise between one's ethics and society's multiple constraints – and nowhere can we see this more clearly than in the rewriting(s) of sex-related language.

## 2 Genesis of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*

Vian started writing *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* in August of 1946 after he made a bet with his friend, the editor Jean d'Halluin, that he could write a best-seller in less than two weeks. At that time, Vian was known above all as a jazzman. He had finished writing *Vercoquin et le plancton* [Vercoquin and the Plankton] and *L'écume des jours* [Foam of the Days], but none of those two books had been published yet (Vebret 2010: 37).

The idea of writing this novel came to Vian a few days earlier. He read in the American magazine *Collier's* an article entitled “Who is a Negro?” in which the author, Herbert Asbury, explained that around two million black people in America had “crossed the color line” because of miscegenation and were officially considered as white (Julliard 2007: 125). In the same year, the international press was also echoing the lynching of black people and the racist policy in force in the South of the United States. Vian picked up all this information and took fifteen days to write this pastiche of an American crime novel. In the novel, Lee Anderson, one of these “white” black people mentioned above, takes revenge for the death of his brother who was lynched for having been with a white woman. Anderson's evil plan is to seduce two young girls from American high society and then reveal his origins just before murdering them. After a long car chase, the police kill Anderson.

The novel was published under the pseudonym “Vernon Sullivan” and Vian introduced himself as the translator for this fictitious American author. In his

biography of Boris Vian, Julliard (2007: 128) states that Vian was inspired by the name of his musician friend Paul Vernon and that the surname “Sullivan” could come either from Pat Sullivan, the creator of Felix the Cat, or from a famous jazz pianist named Joe Sullivan. She also points out that the surname “Sullivan” contains the letters of Vian. In the preface, written by Vian himself as Sullivan’s supposed translator, Vian warns of the “somewhat exaggerated realism” of some pages and invents an alleged refusal of the American publishers:

Sullivan shows himself to be really more sadistic than his renowned predecessors, no wonder that his work was rejected in America: we hazard that it would be banned on the day following the publication.

VIAN 1973: 10<sup>1</sup>

In the editor’s notes, Vian pretended this time to be the editor of the book and presented his work and the reasons for its publication. He carried out an incredible work of self-promotion, comparing himself to the greatest names of the American crime novel:

*I Shall Spit on Your Graves*, the first novel written by this young author that no American publisher dared to publish, denounces, in a few pages of incredible violence and in the same style as his notable predecessors Caldwell, Faulkner and Cain, the unjust suspicion reserved for black people in certain regions of the United States. [...].

This conception of the life of American adolescents is a violent portrait, permeated with a cruel and total eroticism that will probably cause as much scandal as Miller’s most daring pages.

A novel like it has never been written.

VIAN 1973<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Sullivan se montre plus réellement sadique que ses devanciers illustres; il n’est pas surprenant que son œuvre ait été refusée en Amérique: gageons qu’elle y serait interdite le lendemain de sa publication.
  - 2 “J’irai cracher sur vos tombes, le premier roman de ce jeune auteur que nul éditeur américain n’osa publier, dénonce dans des pages d’une violence inouïe et dont le style est égal à celui des grands prédécesseurs que sont Caldwell, Faulkner et Cain, l’injuste suspicion réservée aux Noirs dans certaines régions des États-Unis”. Cette conception de la vie des adolescents américains est une peinture âpre, empreinte d’un érotisme cruel et total, qui fera sans doute autant de scandale que les pages les plus osées de Miller. Un roman comme on n’en a jamais écrit”.

### 3 Reception and Censorship in France

The novel first appeared on the twenty-first of November of 1946 and on the same day of its publication, we could read those lines in the newspaper *Dépêche de Paris* (cited by Arnaud 2006: 9):

Apparently not a single American editor dared to publish this pathological wandering of a mixed-race. This is to the credit of the American edition and it is deplorable that a translator and a firm in France distributed this senile and dishonest invective. It is on the book that you can spit on.<sup>3</sup>

On January 10th, the renowned weekly magazine *Les Lettres françaises* implied that any French person should condemn a book like this for the emptiness of its message (cited by Vebret 2010: 41). Little by little, critics started to assume that Vian was the author of the novel and on January 31st, the magazine *Art* (cited by Vebret 2010: 41) published a harsh article in which it said:

The author of *I Shall Spit on Your Graves* may have thought that he could achieve a literary sham but he did the work of a miserable pornographer. [...] He wrote more adroitly his preface and his “biography” than his novel ... Leaving this commercial trick apart, we can observe that it leads to a total failure when young authors, even if they are honest, claim to follow very closely the ongoing methods from across the Atlantic.<sup>4</sup>

The controversy and the bad reviews contributed to make the book more famous and it quickly became the bestseller of 1947: Jean d'Halluin and Boris Vian had reached their goal. However, the *Cartel d'action sociale et morale* [Cartel of social and moral action], a French puritanical association which had already filed a complaint against the books of Henry Miller, considered the book to be pornographic and “an affront to common decency” (Arnaud 1991: 60).<sup>5</sup> They decided to sue Jean d'Halluin and requested the prohibition

3 “Il paraît que nul éditeur américain n'a osé publier cette élucubration malade d'un mépris. C'est à l'honneur de l'édition américaine, et il faut déplorer que se soient trouvées en France un traducteur et une firme pour diffuser cette invective sénile et malhonnête. C'est sur le livre qu'on peut cracher”.

4 “L'auteur de *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* a cru sans doute réussir une fumisterie littéraire : il a fait une œuvre de pornographe misérable. [...] Il a rédigé plus adroitement sa préface et sa “prière d'insérer” que son roman ... Sans nous attarder à cette petite tentative commerciale, observons que lorsque de jeunes auteurs, même honnêtes, prétendent suivre de trop près les procédés qui ont cours actuellement outre-Atlantique, ils aboutissent à un échec complet”.

5 “un outrage aux bonnes mœurs”.

and withdrawal of the book. A tragic event in March of 1947 exacerbated the passions around *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*: a salesman killed his mistress in a hotel room and left Vian's book open on a page which describes a sadistic crime. Vian was directly targeted but he still claimed he was not the author of the book. Instead, he hired a lawyer and started writing a supposed "original" English version entitled *I Shall Spit on Your Graves* to prove that he was not the author of the book. Meanwhile, the *Cartel d'action sociale et morale* filed a second complaint against Vian and, in May of 1947, the *Commission spéciale du livre*<sup>6</sup> supported the proceedings. Vian finally admitted he was the author of the book and the trial took place in April 1950. The verdict was given one month later: Vian and his editor Jean d'Halluin were found guilty of public indecency and condemned to pay a fine of 100 000 Francs. The written judgement summarized the book and marked out the presence throughout the book of scenes which included "[...] the description of lovemaking of Lee Anderson with suggestive details in the form of loving possession and sensual caresses [...]" (Vebret 2010: 61–62).<sup>7</sup> It also pointed out that:

[...] the book relate[d] the preparation and the execution of two murders committed during a crisis of sadism, with a crudeness and force which add an eminently dangerous suggestive dimension to the story [...].

VEBRET 2010: 62<sup>8</sup>

The court also ordered the seizure and the destruction of all the copies of the French and English versions of the book. Vian appealed against the sentence and in 1953, after three years of judicial delays and adjournments, the final decision of the court of appeal was to withdraw the fine and condemn Vian to 15 days of imprisonment. He did not go to jail thanks to an amnesty law, but the book was banned in France until 1973.

6 The decree-law of July 1939 established that "any printed document, writing, drawing, poster, engraving, painting, photography, movie or picture, pornographic matrix or copy, emblems, any kind of object or image contrary to common decency" could be prosecuted. If the incriminated writing was a book, there would be a special commission composed of judges, lawyers and associations which would decide if the book were to be banned or not. (Poulain, 1997, p. 71).

7 "[...] du commencement à la fin, de scènes comportant la description, avec des détails expressifs, des ébats amoureux de Lee Anderson, qu'il s'agisse de possession amoureuse ou de caresses voluptueuses [...]."

8 "Qu'enfin l'ouvrage relate la préparation et l'exécution de deux assassinats commis au cours d'une crise de sadisme, avec une crudité et une force qui donnent au récit un caractère suggestif éminemment dangereux [...]."

#### 4 Censorship of *Escupiré sobre vuestras tumbas* in Spain

The first known request for publication of the book in Spain was made by the publisher Júcar and was registered in February 1974 in the Francoist censorship organ named *Sección de Inspección de Libros del Ministerio de Información y Turismo* [Department of Book Inspection of the Ministry of Information and Tourism]. The reports of the censors that were used for this investigation can be found today in the General Archive of the Administration in Alcalá de Henares. This first request is held at the at AGA in a box where one can find the 1973 French edition of the book along with a note from the editor Júcar which said: "In the translation, the hardest passages of the book would be moderated and mitigated".<sup>9</sup> This request was studied and rejected by a first censor who condemned the book because of its pervasive sexual dimension:

The book is in fact a complete pornographic novel. The whole topic is sex and more sex with constant descriptions of raw sex scenes. See what we have marked on pages 38-39-68-69-80-103-104-128-129-130-132-133-150-151-152-165-186 and 210. And there is no room left for erasures, because as the whole plot of the novel is that, when crossing out the erotic there is no novel. For this reason, we consider it DENIABLE.

AGA 1974: box 73/3884<sup>10</sup>

After this first rejection, the request was sent to a second censor who also denied the publication. He, too, mentioned its obscenity and pointed out a few negative references to religion. However, this second report emphasized and condemned more strongly the violent and brutal dimension of the book:

It is a novel of enormous violence and brutality, a violence that is a mere revenge of black people against white people in the persons of two innocent white girls, one of them is 16 years old. The most detestable aspect is her death scene (185–186). Beside this scene pale those of mere obscenity (38–39, 47, 68–9, 103–4, 131–3, 150–3), followed by the death of the other sister (199–200) and the scene of the death of the protagonist himself,

9 "En la traducción se suavizarían y mitigarían los pasajes más duros".

10 "Lo que en realidad es el libro es una novela pornográfica total. Todo el tema es sexo y más sexo con descripciones constantes de escenas sexuales de toda crudeza. Véase lo que hemos marcado en las pags 38-39-68-69-80-103-104-128-129-130-132-133-150-151-152-165-186 y 210. Y no caben tachaduras, porque como todo el argumento de la novela es eso, al tachar lo erótico no queda novela. Por ello la consideramos DENEGABLE".

shot by the police and lynched by the people “for being black.” There are also two completely negative religious references (43–87). It is a novel that exalts sexual orgy and bloody revenge in a completely irrational way and without the pretext of a plausible justification. I consider it NON AUTHORIZABLE.

AGA 1974: box 73/3884<sup>11</sup>

Although the publication of the book had not yet been formerly approved by the censorship organ, Júcar followed the trend of many dissident publishers at the end of the dictatorship and in October 1977 published the first Spanish version entitled *Escupiré sobre vuestra tumba*. Three months later, the second request for publication made by Júcar was finally approved by the third censor who considered that thirty years after its publication the book had become outmoded and was no longer reprehensible:

How old-fashioned is now this novel that Boris Vian published in the late 1940s, pretending to be Vernon Sullivan’s translator when Vernon Sullivan was Vian himself! [...]

Today this book is outmoded, it has been reduced to the struggle of the white vs. the black or the black vs. the white and its eroticism is alleviated by the extensive wave of pornography that afflicts us. [...] Not reprehensible.

AGA 1978: box 73/3884<sup>12</sup>

11 “Es una novela de enorme violencia y brutalidad, una violencia que es mera venganza de negros contra blancos en las personas de dos inocentes muchachas blancas, una de ellas de 16 años. Lo más detestable es la escena de muerte de esta (185–186). A su lado palidecen las de mera obscenidad (38–39; 47, 68–9, 103–4, 131–3, 150–3) y la sigue la de la muerte de la otra hermana (199–200) y la de la muerte del propio protagonista, acribillado por los policías y linchado por el pueblo “por ser negro”. Hay además dos referencias de tipo religioso, completamente negativas (43–87).

Es una novela que exalta la orgía sexual y la venganza sangrienta de manera completamente irracional y sin el asidero de una justificación plausible. Me parece NO AUTORIZABLE”.

12 “¿Qué vieja se ha quedado esta novela que publicó Boris Vian a finales de los cuarenta, haciéndose pasar por el traductor de Vernon Sullivan cuando Vernon Sullivan era él mismo! [...] Hoy en día dicho libro ha perdido vigencia, ha quedado reducido a la lucha del hombre blanco-negro o negro-blanco y su erotismo paliado por la extensa oleada de pornografía que nos aflige. [...] No impugnabile”.



## 5 The (Re)translation of Sex-Related Language in the Three Spanish Versions

According to our bibliographical research, there are thirty different editions of *Escupiré sobre vuestra tumba* in Spanish and three translators so far. This study is based on the first edition of the first translation and on the first edition of each retranslation. Jucar published the first translation of the book in Spain by Juan Alcover (Translator 1 from now on) in October 1977. Two years later, in 1979, Bruguera offered a retranslation of the book by Jordi Martí (Translator 2 from now on). The last retranslation by Pablo Melera (Translator 3 from now on) was published in 1986 by Planeta.

Comparing these three Spanish translations, we found out that there were significant differences in the translation and retranslation of sex-related language. Our first finding was that the translation of sexual terms was often unnatural and sometimes even erroneous in the first translation. As we can see in the three examples below, Translator 1 tended toward literal translation and made translation mistakes. For instance, in Example 3, this translator did not understand the expression “lécher sur toutes les coutures” [lick from every angle] and translated it very peculiarly by “lamer todas las heridas” [lick all her wounds]. We can observe that these mistakes were corrected in the subsequent retranslations by Translators 2 and 3.

French original

**Ses seins jaillirent de la soie claire.** (Vian 1973: 79)

**Elle a besoin d'être mouchée.** (Vian 1973: 30)

[...] Dex qui la léchait sur toutes les coutures en faisant des bruits avec sa gorge. (Vian 1973: 106)

**Translator 1**

**Sus senos se escaparon de la seda clara.** (Translation by Juan Alcover 1977: 59)

**Necesita que le suenen los mocos.** (Translation by Juan Alcover 1977: 24)

. [...] Dex que la lamía todas las heridas haciendo ruidos con la garganta.  
(Translation by Juan Alcover 1977: 74)

**Translator 2**

De la seda clara asomaron sus senos. (Translation by Jordi Martí 1979)

Tengo que demostrarle a la niña lo que soy capaz de hacer. (Translation by Jordi Martí 1979)

[...] Dex que la lamía por todos los rincones haciendo extraños ruidos guturales.

Translator 3

De la seda clara asomaron sus pechos. (Translation by Pablo Melera 1986)

Ídem translator 2

[...] Dex que la lamía por todas partes haciendo extraños ruidos guturales.

We also found out that Translator 1 moderated vulgarity and avoided the most explicit sexual contents through generalizations. At first, Example 1 in the chart below could make us think that he understood “baiser” [to fuck or to kiss depending on context] as “besar” [to kiss] and simply translated the term wrongly. However, the obvious sexual context of the scene in which the narrator is lying on the ground with a naked woman and the generalization of the same word “baiser” that he made further ahead in Example 2 by translating it into “tomar” [to take] makes us believe that he was fully aware of the meaning of this term but chose to soften it. In the same scene of the book, Example 3 shows once again that Translator 1 tended to generalize explicit sexual terms since he opted to translate “lécher” [to lick] by “besar” [to kiss]. Finally, Example 4 where there is an omission of the phrase “je pris son sexe entre mes lèvres” [I took her genitals in my mouth] seems to confirm that Translator 1 was either disturbed by sex-related language (self-censorship) or influenced by editorial constraints due to the censorship of the Francoist regime. Indeed, as already mentioned before, along with the request for publication sent by Júcar in 1974 to the Francoist censorship organ *Sección de Inspección de Libros del Ministerio de Información y Turismo* was a note in which the publisher said that the hardest passages would be mitigated and moderated. We also found that the 4 examples that we have just studied had been marked as censurable in the reports.

French original

Je ne sais pas si j'avais envie d'autre chose que de **la baiser** à m'en rendre malade. (p. 150)

**Je ne vous baiserais pas. Je ne veux pas vous baiser** avant que nous soyons tranquilles. (p. 152)

Son duvet brillant et bouclé me caressait la joue, et, doucement, je me mis à **la lécher** à coups légers. (p. 151)

Je soulevai sa jambe et introduisis ma figure entre ses cuisses. **Je pris son sexe entre mes lèvres**. Elle se raidit soudain ... (p. 152)

Translator 1

No creo que tuviera ganas de nada más que **besarla** hasta morirme. (p. 104)

**No te tomaré. No quiero tomarte** hasta que estemos tranquilos. (p. 106)

Su pelusa rizada y brillante me acariciaba la merilla, y me puse a **besarla** lentamente, a pequeñas embestidas. (p. 105)

Le levanté la pierna y metí la cara entre sus muslos. \***omission**. Se puso rígida un instante y volvió a relajarse. (p. 106)

Translator 2

No sé si tenía ganas de otra cosa que de hacerle el amor hasta ponerme enfermo. No voy a hacer el amor contigo. No quiero hacerlo hasta que estemos tranquilos. Su vello rizado y brillante me acariciaba a mejilla, y, dulcemente, me puse a lamerla.

Le levanté una pierna e introduje mi cara entre los muslos. Tomé su sexo entre mis labios. Se puso rígida de golpe y se relajó casi al instante.

Translator 3

No tenía ganas de otra cosa que de hacerle el amor hasta enfermar.

Idem translator 2

Su vello rizado y brillante me hacía cosquillas en la mejilla, y, dulcemente, me puse a lamerla.

Tomé su sexo entre mis labios. Se puso rígida de golpe pero se relajó casi al instante.

The second main finding of this study was that Translator 2 adopted the opposite attitude towards translating sex-related language and offered a much more exaggerated, suggestive, sometimes aggressive and vulgar translation. For instance, in Example 1 in the chart below, with the addition of the adverb “bien” [wide] to the expression “con las piernas abiertas” [with her legs open] he clearly exaggerated the already suggestive sexual context. He happened to use a higher degree of specification which sexualized even more some passages of the book, projecting also a more aggressive attitude of the hero towards women. In Example 2, “j’aimais les Bobby-soxers” [I liked the Bobby-soxers] became “me apetecían las Bobby-soxers” [I fancied the Bobby-soxers]; in Example 3, “une fessée” [a smack] was translated by “una tunda” [a beating] and in Example 4 “ces gosses” [those kids] by “esas mocosas” [those brats]. Other semantic modulations of specification generated sometimes an excess of vulgarity in the text as we can see through Example 5 in which “je la pris sur la longue table” [we did it on the long table] was translated by “me la tiré encima de la larga mesa” [I fucked her on the long table] or in Example 6 where “poils au ventre” [hair down there] became “pelos en el coño” [hair in the cunt].

French original

avec les jambes **écartées**. (p. 22)

Oui, j'**aimais** ça les Bobby-soxers. (p. 22)

Ou je vous fiche **une fessée**. (p. 32)

Mais, à n'importe quelle heure du jour, **ces gosses** étaient chaudes comme des chèvres [...]. (p. 47)

[...] **je la pris** sur la longue table [...]. (p. 165)

J'aime mieux votre odeur et vous avez plus de **poils au ventre**. (p. 181)

Translator 1

con las piernas abiertas

Sí, me gustaban ésas, las Bobby-soxers.

O te propinaré un azote en el culo.

Pero el caso es que, a cualquier hora del día, aquellas chicas estaban tan calientes como cabras [...].

[...] la poseí sobre la mesa [...].

Prefiero tu olor y tienes más pelo en el vientre.

Translator 2

con las piernas **bien abiertas**. (p. 20)

Sí, **me apetecían** las Bobby-soxers. (p. 20)

O te voy a dar **una tunda**. (p. 26)

Pero **esas mocosas** estaban a cualquier hora del día calientes como cabras [...]. (p. 38)

[...] **me la tiré** encima de la larga mesa [...]. (p. 120)

Hueles mejor que Jean y tienes más **pelos en el coño** que ella. (p. 131)

Translator 3

Idem translator 2

Sí, me apetecían esas chicas.

Idem translator 2

Idem translator 2

Idem translator 2

Idem translator 2

The last main finding of this study was that the third translation of the book into Spanish seemed to be mostly based on the second one. Like Translator 2, the third translator projected also a more active and aggressive image of the hero. However, this third translator tended to be more decisive than the other

translators in his way of translating sex-related passages of the book. The first example is a wrongly used modulation in which the protagonist of the action became active instead of passive: "elle écarta légèrement les jambes" [she slightly opened her legs] was translated as "le separé ligeramente las piernas" [I slightly opened her legs]. It is perfectly conceivable that this mistake in the translation was due to a lapse of concentration of the translator who was translating page after page the story of a proactive sex-addict hero. The same conclusion can be done with Examples 2 and 3 where the action is most probably unconsciously sped up by this translator. In Example 2, the omission or suppression of the adverb "almost" in the phrase "elle resserra ses jambes et puis les écarta presque aussitôt ..." [She tightened her legs and then opened them again almost straight away] is maybe the best example of this rapidity added to the action by Translator 3. Example 3 reflects the same aspect: "je ne sais pas si j'avais envie d'autre chose que de la baiser ..." [I don't know if I wanted anything else beside fucking her ...] became categorically "no tenía ganas de otra cosa que de hacerle el amor ..." [I did not want anything else beside making love to her]. Curiously, this third example also shows how Translator 2 and 3 translated wrongly the verb "baiser" [to fuck] by "hacer el amor" [make love]. This mistake could be seen as a dilution and the use of "follar" [fuck] could represent somehow a limit of vulgarity for the translator. However, other highly vulgar translations used by these translators such as "me la tiré" [I screwed her/I fucked her], "coño" [cunt] and the suggestive and exaggerated fragments mentioned before make us think that it has more to do with a misinterpretation of register.

French original

**Elle écarta** légèrement les jambes pour me donner passage. (p. 130)

Elle resserra ses jambes et puis les écarta **presque aussitôt** [...] (p. 150)

**Je ne sais pas si j'avais envie d'autre chose que de la baiser** à m'en rendre malade [...]. (p. 150)

Translator 1

Se abrió ligeramente de piernas para facilitarme el paso.

Cerró las piernas y las separó casi inmediatamente [...]

No creo que tuviera ganas de nada más que besarla hasta morirme [...].

Translator 2

Ella separó ligeramente sus piernas para abrirme paso.

Cerró las piernas y las volvió a abrir casi al instante [...]

No sé si tenía ganas de otra cosa que de hacerle el amor hasta ponerme enfermo [...].

### Translator 3

Le separé ligeramente las piernas para abrirme paso. (p. 94)

Cerró las piernas y las volvió a abrir **enseguida** [...] (p. 107).

No tenía ganas de otra cosa que de hacerle el amor hasta enfermar [...]. (p. 107)

## 6 Conclusion

Since its publication in France in 1946, *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* has never really ceased to be controversial, not really because of its literary quality but mainly because of Vian's genial trickery about the authorship of the book and because of its omnipresent ultra-violent and sexual dimension. Officially banned in France until 1973, the first request for publication in Spain in 1974 was rejected by censors who considered it immoral and obscene. Over thirty years after its publication in France, the book finally came out in Spain in 1977, after Franco's death and in the more permissive context of the beginning of the Transition towards democracy.

The eventful and turbulent reception of the book in France and Spain might have influenced translators in their attitude towards the text and the process of translating but the nature of the text itself, with constant references to sex and violence, is per se a destabilizing element for translators.

In this study, we found that none of the three translators of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* into Spanish seemed to be indifferent to the omnipresence of sex-related language and violence in the book. Whereas the first translator offered a more implicit and generalized translation of this terminology, the other two translators were sometimes more explicit than the author himself and tended to intensify their translation. There is an obvious difficulty in telling the difference between the conscious and unconscious part of these two processes. The first translator's diluted version might have been influenced by the censorship still in force at the time of the publication (1977). Our main indicator is the note left by the publisher Júcar inside the French version of the book at the *Sección de Inspección de Libros del Ministerio de Información y Turismo* saying that in case of publication the hardest passages would be mitigated and moderated. Translator 1 could have also taken into account the reports of the censors who underlined the most "reprehensible" passages. These two elements make us think that the translation of sex-related language in the first translation responds to conscious auto-censorship due to the still ongoing censorship at the time of publication.

Several hypotheses can be made about the opposite strategy of intensification used by Translators 2 and 3 in the two subsequent retranslations. Following the theory of Toury (1995: 56–57), we think that whereas Translator 1

was looking for acceptability in the still prevailing censorial context at the time of publication (1977), Translations 2 (1979) and 3 (1986) reflected a search for adequacy after the censorship of the Francoist regime. The fact that their final texts tended to be sometimes too specific, suggestive and aggressive in comparison to the French original could reflect a will to compensate for the mitigated first translation. However, we can also consider that by making their translations of sex-related language often too explicit, both translators did a subjective interpretation of the text and fell into *eisegesis* (Nida y Taber 1969: 111). In accordance with this idea, Simon (1996: 67) mentioned that translation can involve conflictual emotions of transfer which make us think that Translators 2 and 3 might have projected their attitude towards sex and sexuality in the translation. This idea is also supported by Santaemilia (2008: 227) according to whom:

[...] eliminating sexual terms – or qualifying or attenuating or even intensifying them – in translation does usually betray the translator's personal attitude towards human sexual behaviour(s) and their verbalization.

Beyond the question of the translation of sex-related language, this study reflects on a broader level how the translator's moral obligation of faithfulness can be betrayed by his or her own moral code.

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