

A CoALiTS Case Study: Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* in French and German Translations

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A first case study in CoALiTS, the third paper examines the first interlude of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and its two French and three German translations by using *Palimpsest* for Windows, an application written by the author in order to test some of the ideas discussed in the previous papers in literary practice (in January 1996, the latest version of *Palimpsest* will be submitted for the software demonstrations at ALLC-ACH '96). Apart from a short statement on *Palimpsest*, details relating to the actual implementation are not discussed because the literary investigation constitutes the heart of the paper and the primary *raison d'être* of CoALiTS.

Due to the detailed discussion in the previous papers, the presentation of *Palimpsest* for Windows as a first example of CoALiTS software can be kept short, stating a few technical details and the major points that have been realized: provision for several editions of an original as well as its translation(s) following the unit of the word as well as that of the phrase; selected aspects of the tentative annotation scheme, interrelation, viewing, concordancing, and statistical processing following the propositions of paper one and two, leading to an interactive "microscope viewer" displaying the texts in interlinear format and providing access to the other facilities.¹

The two-fold approach to the unit of translation is briefly commented upon, arguing that it was comparatively easy to realize and that it promised to yield interesting empirical information for further investigations into the matter.

Before applying *Palimpsest* to the texts in a micro-structural analysis, macro-structural issues are discussed with special attention to thematic and structural aspects of the original novel as a whole. The movement of the sun is shown to frame the development of human individuality asserting it

self through language, making the emergence and end of human consciousness an interval in the "eternal renewal"² of nature's perpetual rhythm that pervades the book in the image of the waves. The interaction of italicized and not italicized passages is commented upon, and the convergence of the six 'characters'³ into one all-encompassing consciousness stated in accordance with the literature.⁴ The enormous scope of *The Waves* is shown to reflect Woolf's openly declared aim to trace her own process⁵ — a novel's or individual's *genesis* — to its subconscious, ancient and archetypal roots in a new form of expression. Elaborating on Woolf's critical writing, such as "The Narrow Bridge of Art"⁶, and its relation to *The Waves*, the novel appears as her most fully realized attempt to reach a style of "inclusiveness" in a new form which she envisaged to represent modern consciousness 'more appropriately'.⁷

It is argued that *The Waves* is very much aware of its highly recursive and interlocking structure and, on the whole, becomes the "picture book" that Bernard receives in the novel which is part of the phenomenological world and contains it at the same time.

These findings are related to the discussion of the opening passage of *The Waves* — the first "interlude" — and its French translations by Yourcenar (1937) and Wajsbrot (1993),⁸ and the German translations by the Herlitschkas (1957), Bosse-Sporleder (1993), and Maczewski (1995).⁹ It is argued that due to the form of *The Waves*, it is permissible to conduct so narrowly focused a study: firstly, any beginning of a book is of special interest because it shapes the expectations of the reader and, secondly, often tends to set the tone of the whole work of art. As, unlike in Joyce's *Ulysses* or Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, the latter is surely the case regarding *The Waves*, the results arrived at by analysing the "micro-corpus" are closely related to and an integral part of an analysis of the *The Waves* as a whole.

Considering, macro-structural aspects first, the year of publication, the title, the preface and the layout of the translations are examined in intra- as well as interlingual perspective. The differences in the translations are taken as indicators of different readings of the original, revealing an intricate interaction of central themes of *The Waves* with their typographical surface representation.

Studying the micro-level reflections of these general tendencies, the *Palimpsest* aided micro-structural analysis by means of the "microscope viewer" is presented as a new form of close reading: browsing through the texts with the focus on the ST resembles reading the texts in interlinear translation. In-between textual surface representation and the more abstract arrangement of phrasal units, a careful study of the *Palimpsest*

screen could offer glimpses at Benjamin's *reine Sprache* released by translation. It undermines clear-cut distinctions between a linguistic interest in the languages on the one and literary investigation into a particular form of linguistic expression on the other hand and shows how one blends into the other if — as one would expect and demand from “literary” texts — the SL's idiosyncrasies are consciously exploited to the full, fusing form and content into a new mode of expression.

In Woolf's style, the use of a paratactic syntax and of participle constructions, triggering the dropping of subjects as soon as they have been mentioned, are regarded to meet this description, and the third sentence of the first interlude is cited as an example. Analyzing Woolf's participle structures in cross-linguistic reflection, the influences of original language and text as well as target language and translator are discussed.

Relating the word- and phrase-order of the translations to the original, the graphs drawn from the experimental *Palimpsest* statistics¹⁰ determine the “distance” of a correlated word or phrase in the translation to its original “equivalent” and “map” the texts to the measure of the number of the word in the original text. The accumulative word-order graphs¹¹ are found to conform with conventional critical observation: while Yourcenar adds much material and Wajsbrot elides much, all of the German translations stay within a certain, closer, range of “distance” to the original text within which there are significant passages of parallel movement indicating highly similar translations, and possibly constraints of the current state of the target language.

The phrase-based graphs¹² show only Wajsbrot's translation apart from the others oscillating around the horizontal axis with different wave-lengths. Wajsbrot's graph alone does not follow this pattern and is interpreted to provide additional evidence for Shield's statement that Wajsbrot's translation is “not as good as” Yourcenar's.

As an indication of further directions of research, inter-translation statistics are derived from the existing statistics calculating the difference of the “distances” of each text's word-order to the original in an attempt to investigate the inter-translational discourse.¹³

The formal considerations are complemented by examinations of lexical aspects. As predicted by Reid's theory discussed in the first paper, many different renderings of a word of the original offer useful insights which not only reflect back onto the original but also on the translation and, if it is not the first translation, also on its relation to previous translations.

In the case of the first two German translations, for instance, a considerable number of differences appear to be syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic

— a finding not yet detectable by computers. Investigating the semantic implications caused by the choice of words of the translation and relating the findings to the structural analysis, both French text appear to try to communicate the constant and all-pervading voice of *The Waves*¹⁴ by adding translator's overtones while the German translations appear to restrain the individual translator's expression.

The conclusion gives a short summary and points out that such general tendencies lead to clearly different translations: though statistically close to each other and clearly source oriented with regard to word- and phrase-order, the three German translations differ in the substance filling the formal skeleton and also in its structure — though not as clearly as the French translations. Of these two, Yourcenar's is clearly destination oriented as her compliance with French grammatical constrains indicates, while Wajsbrot's is clearly source oriented in its stretching of French towards the form of English she considers *The Waves* to be written in.

A significant result of the computational assistance, the new textual evidence supporting Shield's criticism of Wajsbrot's translation¹⁵ regarding the translation strategy concerning syntactic and lexical aspects is cited as the general performance of the CoALiTS software and methods are reconsidered and products and problems summed up. Due to the promising results of this initial test, further research into this matter is recommended.

References

The Original Text

Woolf, Virginia (1992). *The Waves*. London: Penguin.

The German Translations:

— (1979), trans. Herberth and Marlys Herlitschka. *Die Wellen. Roman*. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

— (1994), trans. Maria Bosse-Sporleder. *Die Wellen. Roman*. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

— (1995), trans. Jan-Mirko Maczewski. “The First Italicized Passage of *The Waves*”. In: Maczewski (1995). *Exploring Computer Assisted Literary Translation Studies* [complete reference under 0.1]: Appendix 6.1.

The French Translations:

— (1937), trans. Marguerite Yourcenar. *Les Vagues*. Paris: Éditions Stock.

— (1993), trans. Cécile Wajsbrot. *Les Vagues*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

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3. Cf. Woolf (1969: 175): "[i]t is odd that they should praise my characters when I meant to have none."
 4. E.g. Richter (1970: 117, 120-21, 128), Levin (1983: 166-67), Miko (1988: 66-68), Schöneich (1989: 75), Bishop (1991: 99, 101), Erzgräber (1993: 103).
 5. Cited in Bishop (1991: 111).
 6. Woolf (1966b).
 7. Cf. Warner (1987: 35-38) and Schöneich (1989: 74) who read "The Narrow Bridge of Art" as a programmatic text on *The Waves*.
 8. Woolf, Virginia, (1937) and (1993).
 9. Woolf, Virginia, (1957), (1993) and (1995).
 10. See fig. 2 and 3.
 11. See fig. 2.
 12. See fig. 3.
 13. See fig. 4.
 14. Cf. Richter (1970: 133).
 15. The word- and phrase-order based statistical "looseness indices" suggest similar implications like her discussion of l'ordre canonique (Shields (1995: 6-7)) in the French translations.

Notes

1. See fig. 1 (screenshot of the current Palimpsest Viewer).
2. Woolf (1992: 228).

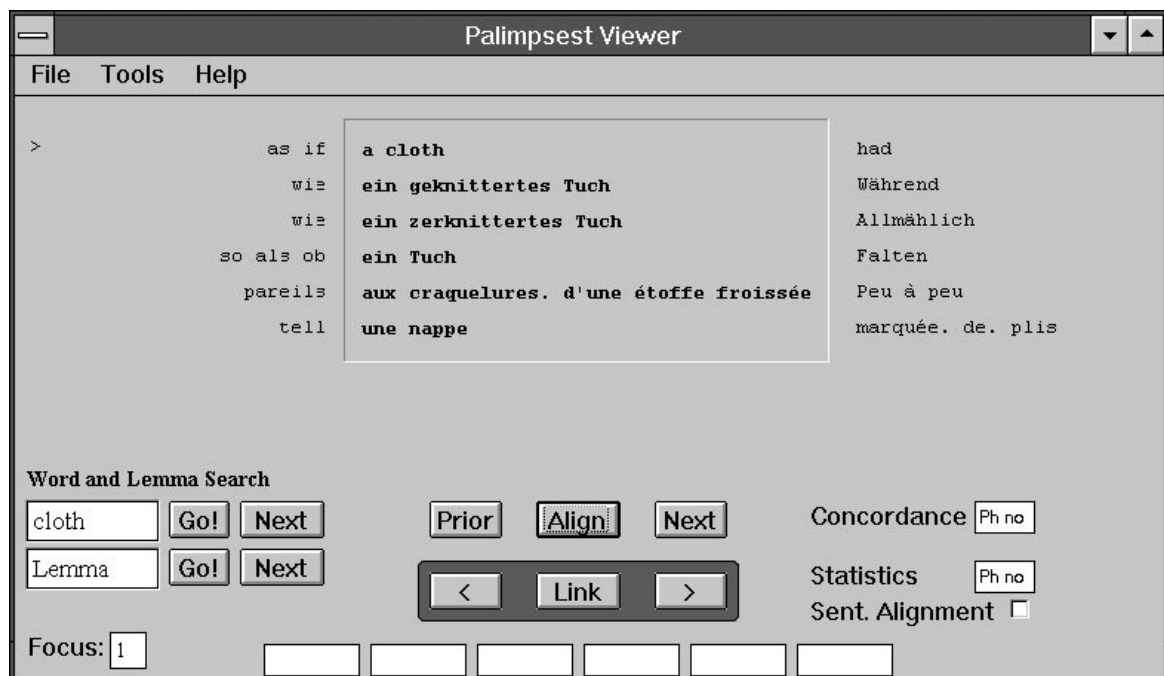


Figure 1: A screenshot of the *Palimpsest Viewer*

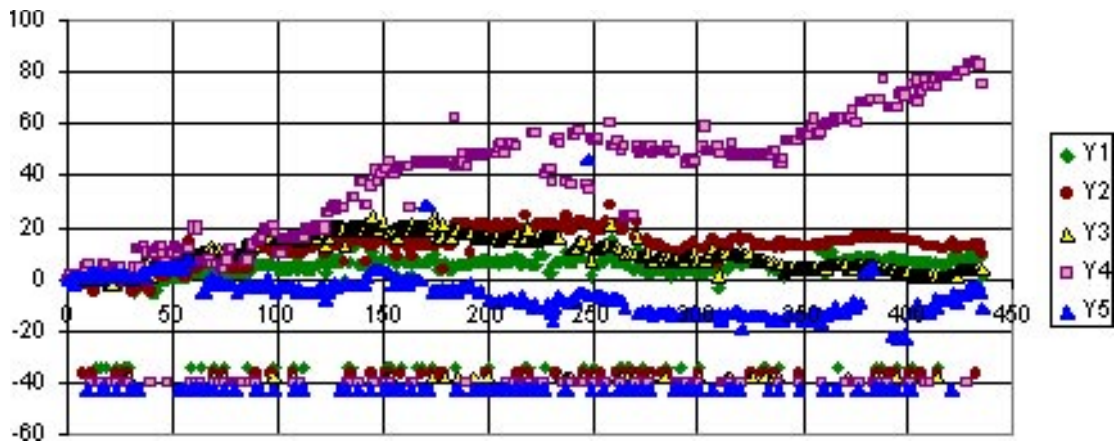


Figure 2: *Palimpsest* statistics: word order differences translation vs. original (interlingual)

Y1 = Woolf trans. H. and M. Herlitschka Y4 = Woolf trans. M. Yourcenar
 Y2 = Woolf trans. M. Bosse-Sporleder Y5 = Woolf trans. C. Wajsbrot
 Y3 = Woolf trans. J-M. Maczewski

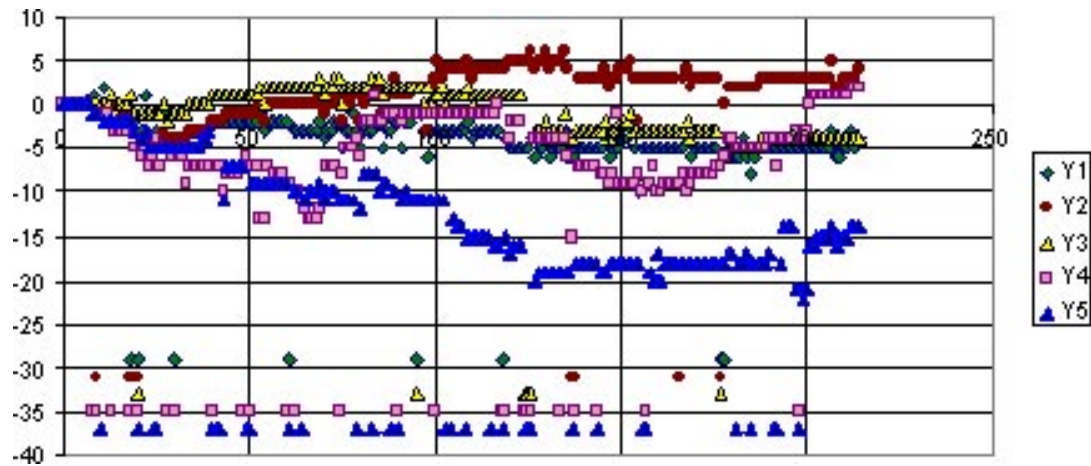


Figure 3: *Palimpsest* statistics: phrase order differences translation vs. original (interlingual)

Y1 = Woolf trans. H. and M. Herlitschka Y4 = Woolf trans. M. Yourcenar
 Y2 = Woolf trans. M. Bosse-Sporleder Y5 = Woolf trans. C. Wajsbrot
 Y3 = Woolf trans. J-M. Maczewski

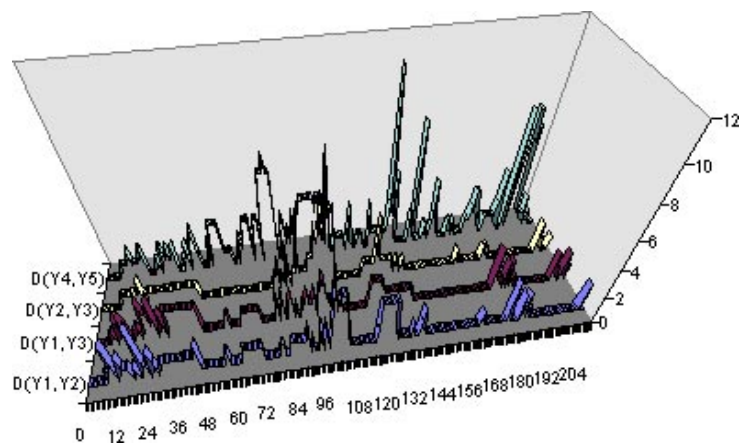


Figure 4: *Palimpsest* statistics: phrase order differences between the translations (intralingual)

Y1 = Woolf trans. H. and M. Herlitschka Y4 = Woolf trans. M. Yourcenar
 Y2 = Woolf trans. M. Bosse-Sporleder Y5 = Woolf trans. C. Wajsbrot
 Y3 = Woolf trans. J-M. Maczewski