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**Elusive narrator, pervasive inner voice: challenges in the translation
of thought representations.
A case study of Patricia Highsmith's Ripley series (1955-1991)**

Juliette BOURGET

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

juliette.bourget@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

Introduction

Although widely known as a crime writer, Patricia Highsmith has long been recognized as eluding strict categorization in her refusal “to concede the usual limitations ascribed to the genre” (KLEIN, 1985, 172). Despite her frequent choice of a criminal as main character, “murder is not really the point; it is merely a metaphor” (DUPONT, 1988), because “Highsmith is less interested in the mechanics of crime than in the psychology behind them” (MORRISON, 1979): what matters is not the killer’s actions, but his motivations, making the exploration of his mind the main focus of most of her novels. Appearing in five of her novels¹, making him the only recurrent character in the whole of Highsmith’s work, the criminal Tom Ripley is one of her most famous protagonists.

Throughout the Ripliad series (1955-1991), the main challenge translators face in the case of thought representations is the particular kind of narration used by Highsmith. With the exception of a few rare passages, the third-person extradiegetic narrator does not offer an omniscient point of view, but an internal focalization, with Tom Ripley (and secondary character Jonathan Trevanny in the third novel) as the “focal character” through whom all narrative information is “filtered” (CHATMAN, 1990). However, the main challenge lies in the “figural” narrator, described as “a largely inconspicuous presenter, silent arranger, and recorder” (JAHN, 2005, 365). In the words of Dorrit Cohn, this “consonant” narrator “remains effaced and readily fuses with the consciousness he narrates” (COHN, 1978, 26). The neutral depiction of the character’s actions is therefore constantly interrupted by intrusions of the latter’s inner voice, which seems to pervade every facet of the narration. The penumbral narrator allows the character’s voice to destabilise the course of the narrative, by leaving traces of orality and subjectivity, which present a challenge for translators.

A few studies have been concerned with the implications that the translation of thought representations may have, but these are restricted to the analysis of free indirect discourse, considered the most challenging type², or to quantitative studies examining which type is more likely to be preserved or transferred during the process of translation³. Therefore, little attention has been paid to the potential problems a figural narration, which allows less common types of thought representations to appear, may involve in translation.

Using the Ripley series as a case study, because it presents the uncommon advantage of having five French translators, each dealing with a different novel⁴, this paper intends to show a variety of strategies in trying to reproduce how the elusive narrator allows the character's inner voice to infiltrate and contaminate the narration. This study is not meant as an exhaustive list of the different translation strategies involved, but rather tries to point out how these can affect the particular blend of voices found in the original text. This also means that an investigation into the particular style of each translator will not be attempted: the use of such a corpus is rather intended as a means to find a diverse array of methods.

After describing the various problems translators face in the context of this figural narration, I will demonstrate how both stylistic choices and linguistic constraints can lead translators to erase the inherent duality of those representations through silencing either the narrator's or the character's voices, or to create new linguistic codes in order to preserve the original hybridity and ambiguity. Finally, I will reflect on the role of the translator, proving that beyond the domestication/foreignisation dichotomy, what matters is how translations can inform our reading of the original text.

1. Thought representations in the context of figural narration: what translation challenges?

As Simpson has argued, Highsmith's "intimate examination of the deviant mind places the novels firmly within the psycho thriller tradition" (SIMPSON, 2010, 194), pointing to the constant interior representation of the hero's consciousness and emotional states, as can be shown in the very first lines of *The Talented Mr Ripley*:

(1) Tom glanced behind him and saw the man coming out of the Green Cage, heading his way. Tom walked faster. **There was no doubt that the man was after him.** Tom had noticed him five minutes ago, eyeing him carefully from a

table, as if he weren't *quite* sure, but almost. He had looked sure enough for Tom to down his drink in a hurry, pay and get out.

At the corner Tom leaned forward and trotted across Fifth Avenue. **There was Raoul's. Should he take a chance and go in for another drink? Tempt fate and all that? Or should he beat it over to Park Avenue and try losing him in a few dark doorways?** He went into Raoul's. (*The Talented Mr Ripley*, 1)

The depiction of the character's actions is constantly interrupted by the interventions of his inner speech (in bold), which interrupt the narrator's voice. These intrusions however never break the fast-paced rhythm of the action: the character never appears as frozen mid-motion while these reflections appear, but is instead presented as thinking whilst walking. The free indirect discourse⁵ technique allows the narrator to still be the speaker (thus maintaining the third-person reference and the past tense of narration) whilst "reproduc[ing] verbatim the character's own mental language" (COHN, 1978, 13), as can be seen in the use of interrogatives, ellipses and informal vocabulary ("beat it over"). The irruption of the character's voice thus does not operate a change in rhythm or speaker, but in perspective: the figural narrator is able to seamlessly switch between an outside view of the character's movements and an inside view of his consciousness. It is precisely this "seamless junction" (COHN, 1978, 103) that becomes problematic in the translation into French, especially when considering the temporal systems of both languages, since, as Bruno Poncharal observes, "en français (...) l'imparfait se distingue nettement du temps de la narration qu'est le passé simple. Autrement dit, en français, la 'jointure' entre contexte narratif et DIL est bien visible directement." (PONCHARAL, 1998, 18).

Zooming in on the various interruptions of the character's thoughts, another challenge appears, since the pervasive character's voice is able to infiltrate narrative statements, resulting in polyphonic interventions. This bivocality is similar to the double-voicedness characteristic of FID: in the words of Brian McHale, FID can be recognized "as the intrusion of some voice other than (together with) the narrator's" (MCHALE, 1978, 264), through indices which comprise any expression that cannot plausibly be attributed to the narrator. However, instead of presenting "a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse" (COHN, 1978, 14) as FID would, these hybrid interventions juxtapose narratorial statements with a more subjective inner discourse, thus blending both voices in a way that present a challenge

to translators, because of the need in French to separate the different planes of utterances (especially to differentiate narration and discourse).⁶

(2) During the time that Heloise was in Chantilly, Tom decided to acquire a harpsichord for Belle Ombre – for himself, too, of course and possibly for Heloise. (*Ripley's Game*, 135)

While this sentence begins as a “narrative report of a thought act” (LEECH AND SHORT, 1981, 337), the dash signals the move toward what could be described as FID. It is precisely because the narrator is figural that the second part of the sentence cannot be interpreted as a narrative report: the presence of “of course” and “possibly”, adverbs signalling certainty and doubt, could not echo the narrator’s point of view, which remains hidden throughout the text, but the character’s, as his train of thoughts rectifies his motivations for buying a harpsichord. In the first part of the extract, the use of the proper name “Tom” which designates the subject of consciousness, together with the use of the verb “decide”, prevents considering the sentence as a whole as an example of FID, since the character could not plausibly have thought *I decided to...* The excerpt can therefore only be analysed as hybrid.

A third kind of challenge appears because of the constant use of FID, which creates a double “he”, one referring to the third-person narration, the other to the interior *I* of the character: without indices indicating the presence of the character’s idiom or subjectivity, “a sentence rendering a character’s opinion can look every bit like a sentence relating a fictional fact” (COHN, 1978, 106). Another kind of thought representation thus emerges: equivocal sentences, that can either be interpreted as the narrator’s discourse, or as the character’s thoughts.

(3) He could feel Thurlow regarding him as if he were a man from Mars, possibly also regarding him with distaste. Tom didn’t mind at all. **He had weathered worse than Thurlow.** He knew Thurlow thought he was a borderline crook, with the luck to have married a well-to-do Frenchwoman. (*The Boy Who Followed Ripley*, 247-248)

As Roy Pascal states, any expression which directs the reader’s attention to a particular character may serve as a “bridge” between narration and FID (PASCAL, 1977, 26-27): the description of Tom’s emotions allows for doubt as to the interpretation of the sentence in bold, which can be considered as either a simple narrative comment detailing the reasons for Tom’s indifference to Thurlow’s supposed contempt, or as coming from the character’s mind, as he is recalling other

disagreeable events. Any ambiguity presents a challenge for the translator, who needs to choose whether to preserve it, or to select one meaning over the other.

The presence of an elusive narrator, which allows the character's inner voice to infiltrate the third-person narration, carrying with it traces of orality and subjective judgement, thus poses different challenges for translators, who may choose to suppress, or merely smooth out the disparity between the narrator's and the character's voices, or who may disturb the balance between the two, in an effort to increase the readability of the French text.

2. Translation strategies: from deviation to reinvention

As stated previously, one of the main differences between the linguistic systems of English and French is the difficulty of the latter to seamlessly integrate various forms of thought representations, and especially to carefully blend two planes of utterance. The cases where the translator's decisions upset the balance between the narrator's and the character's voices fall into two categories. On the one hand, a sharper contrast between the two voices is introduced in translation, through the heightening of elements characteristic of one voice. On the other hand, the discordance caused by the introduction of subjective elements inside the narration is smoothed out, thus erasing the original polyphony. Three translation examples will be examined to illustrate these strategies, according to the three types of challenges previously identified:

(1) Tom glanced behind him and saw the man coming out of the Green Cage, heading his way. Tom walked faster. **There was no doubt that the man was after him.** (...)

At the corner Tom leaned forward and trotted across Fifth Avenue. **There was Raoul's. Should he take a chance and go in for another drink? Tempt fate and all that? Or should he beat it over to Park Avenue and try losing him in a few dark doorways?** He went into Raoul's. (*The Talented Mr Ripley*, 1)

(1') Tom jeta un coup d'œil derrière lui et aperçut l'homme qui sortait de la Cage Verte et qui se dirigeait vers lui. Tom hâta le pas. **Pas de doute, l'homme le suivait.** (...)

Au coin de la rue, Tom se pencha en avant et traversa précipitamment la Cinquième Avenue. **Il était tout près de chez Raoul. Fallait-il prendre le**

risque d'entrer boire encore un verre ? Ne serait-ce pas tenter le sort ? Ou bien devrait-il pousser jusqu'à Park Avenue et essayer de semer son poursuivant à la faveur d'une porte cochère sombre ? Il entra chez Raoul.
(*Le Talentueux Mr Ripley*, trad. Jean Rosenthal, 5)

The smooth transitions of the source text are transformed into abrupt shifts, not only because of the contrast in the translation between the *passé simple* and the *imparfait*, which signals the passage from narration to FID, but also because of the removal of both subject and verb from the original “There was no doubt”, which amplifies the character’s voice in the target text. On the other hand, the only subjective elements preserved in the second section of FID are the interrogatives: the elliptical “tempt fate” is given both subject and main verb, and the informal expressions “and all that” and “beat it over” are lost, in favour of more literary solutions. The substitution of the pronoun “him” by the noun phrase “son poursuivant”, as well as the formulations “semer” instead of “lose” and “à la faveur de” instead of “in” tend to blur the distinction between FID and narrative statement, thus reducing the distance between the character’s and the narrator’s voices.

(4) He thought of one, maybe two Mafia figures – burly, dark-haired thugs exploding in death, arms flailing, their bodies falling. (*Ripley’s Game*, 42)

(4’) Des images fugitives lui effleuraient l’esprit, un voyou de la Mafia ou même deux, des truands basanés et trapus, projetés en arrière par l’impact des balles, s’écroulaient en battant des bras puis s’immobilisaient, inertes, morts.
(*Ripley s’amuse*, trad. Janine Hérisson, 68)

In this excerpt, Jonathan Trevanny is the centre of consciousness, here depicted as considering a proposition which involves killing a Mafia member for a large sum of money. In the source text, the dash signals the transition from narrative report to FID. While the narrator’s voice remains neutral and direct, the accumulation of present participles in a staccato-like rhythm in the second part evokes the flow of thoughts going through the character’s mind, despite the choice of more formal words such as “burly” and “flailing”. These lexical markers betray the verbalizing performed by the mediating narrator, who is able to divulge the character’s unarticulated thoughts. By contrast, the translator clarifies the thought process with the mention of “images fugitives”, erasing the original “maybe” which paved the way for the contamination performed by the character’s voice, thus giving the French reader the impression of

much more carefully delineated mental images. The elusive narrator of the source text is given a more corporeal presence with the addition of two conjugated verbs (“s’écroulaient” and “s’immobilisaient”) and of the connecting adverb “puis”, thus failing to convey the impression of an on-going flow of thoughts. The translator still tried to preserve the original rhythm through the final two juxtaposed adjectives, but the narrative intention remains lost.

(3) He could feel Thurlow regarding him as if he were a man from Mars, possibly also regarding him with distaste. Tom didn’t mind at all. **He had weathered worse than Thurlow.** (*The Boy Who Followed Ripley*, 247-248)

(3’) Il sentit que Thurlow le considérait comme une sorte de martien, et qu’il le regardait peut-être avec dégoût. Cela ne le gêna pas le moins du monde. **Il avait vu bien pire que ce petit détective.** (*Sur les pas de Ripley*, trad. Alain Delahaye, 429)

Unlike English, French prefers to avoid repetitions, which could explain the transformation of “Thurlow” into the noun phrase “ce petit détective”. However, the neutral quality of the proper name, which allowed for the ambiguity, becomes lost because of the pejorative use of the demonstrative “ce” associated with the adjective “petit” referring to Thurlow’s poor investigative skills. As the figural narrator would not put forward such evaluative judgement, the sentence resonates with only Tom’s opinion, therefore erasing any doubt as to the identity of the speaker.

Although many features of the French language seem to lead to the disappearance of the subtle vocal games at play in the Ripley series, the translated novels also present a variety of strategies that try to compensate this loss by implementing new markers that recreate the original polyphony. Two examples will be given to illustrate the punctuational, lexical and syntactical devices at play when attempting to reproduce the layering of voices.

(5) Then Jeff said, “They’re trying to find Derwatt . . .” (Muttered English curses.) “My God, if I can’t hear you, I doubt if anybody in between can hear a bloody . . .”

“*D’accord!*” Tom responded. “Tell me all your troubles.”

“Murchison’s wife may . . .”

“What?” **Good God, the telephone was a maddening device. People should revert to pen and paper and the packet-boat.** “Can’t hear a damned word!”
(*Ripley Under Ground*, 178)

(5’) – Ils essaient de trouver Derwatt... (Jurons anglais indéfinissables.) Mon Dieu, si j’ai, moi, tellement de mal à vous entendre, je ne vois pas comment une table d’écoute...

- D’accord ! fit Tom. Racontez-moi tous vos ennuis.

- La femme de Murchison va peut-être...

- Quoi ? **(Bon sang, c’était à rendre fou, ce téléphone ! On ferait mieux de revenir à la plume, au papier et au paquebot !)** Je ne comprends pas un mot.
(*Ripley et les ombres*, trad. Elisabeth Gille, 216)

The tradition in French novels to replace the quotation marks by dashes in dialogues causes in this excerpt the potential problem of confusing the character’s actual discourse with his inner thoughts (in bold). One solution would have been to create a new paragraph, but the translator chose instead to adopt a technique used by Highsmith herself, throughout the novel, and at the beginning of the quoted extract: the addition of parentheses to isolate the character’s inner voice. The parentheses in the source text are in fact employed in such a way as to prevent the reader from knowing with certainty whether their content are merely narratorial statements, or semi-conscious thoughts that receive the most simple verbalization, as in the following excerpt, where Tom, impersonating Derwatt, a painter whose death is hidden, is being interviewed by journalists:

(6) The reporters plunged in again: “Are you pleased with your sales, Derwatt?”

(Who wouldn’t be?)

“Does Mexico inspire you? I notice there are no canvases in the show with a Mexican setting.”

(A slight hurdle, but Tom got over it. He had always painted from imagination.)

(*Ripley Under Ground*, 32)

It is unclear whether the question in parentheses is Tom’s actual answer, or his inner voice, in the same way that the “muttered English curses” could be either a narratorial description, or what has been termed “represented perception”, meaning “a literary style whereby an author, instead of describing the external world, expresses a character’s perceptions of it, directly as they occur in the character’s consciousness”

(BRINTON, 1980, 370). In the translation, there is no doubt that the newly added parentheses signal the intervention of the character's thoughts, but the addition of two exclamation points, as well as the transformation of the definite article "the" into the demonstrative "ce" brings about a more oral quality to this inner language, thus creating a new blend of voices. The intrusion of the character's inner discourse in the middle of a dialogue is rendered more subtle, which provides a seamless transition for a new vocal game.

(7) If he could lure Murchison to his house **somehow**, before Murchison spoke to the expert he was talking about, perhaps something – **Tom didn't know what** – could be done about the situation. (*Ripley Under Ground*, 41)

(7') S'il réussissait, **il ne voyait pas encore comment**, à attirer Murchison chez lui, sans lui laisser le temps d'entrer en contact avec cet expert dont il avait parlé, il aboutirait peut-être à quelque chose... **mais à quoi ?** (*Ripley et les ombres*, trad. Elisabeth Gille, 51)

In this case, the syntactic structure of the elements in bold is inverted in the translation process, whilst the order of their meaning is retained. The obligatory replacement of "Tom" with the simple pronoun "il" in the sentence in bold preserves the narrator's voice, since the character could not plausibly be thinking *I don't know yet how*. The interrupting narrative discourse between dashes, which gives the reader the impression of an active mind still in the process of figuring out what can be done, is compensated in the target text with the use of three dots, marking Tom's hesitation. Only the final question moves further towards the orality that characterizes Tom's inner speech in this particular translated novel, reducing the doubling effect created in the original, by increasing the distance between the narrator's and the character's voices.

This final remark leads us to wonder about the role of the translator. After a short reminder of the well-known debate between domestication and foreignisation, we will show that the examination of translations performed until now can also lead to new discoveries concerning the original text.

3. Towards a reinterpretation?

In his now famous work, *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti explains the lack of recognition of the translator's work by the latter's tendency to

smooth out the original text, so that the reader's attention is not drawn to the internal mechanics of writing:

The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effect to insure easy readability by **adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning.** (VENUTI, 1995, 1)

The description of this process of *domestication* does correspond to what has been observed in previous examples, where French translators tried to avoid ambiguity (example 3) and striking ruptures and dissonances (examples 1 and 4). This translation strategy is however clearly rejected by Venuti who compares it to a mask hiding the insidious distortions and manipulations performed by the translator:

An illusionism produced by fluent translating, the translator's invisibility at once enacts and masks an insidious domestication of foreign texts, rewriting them in the transparent discourse that prevails in English (...) (VENUTI, 1995, 16-17)

The analyses previously carried out showed indeed how the original narrative strategy was lost in the erasure of the intertwining of voices. But several translators have proved that resorting to creative strategies could conversely restore the original effect, whilst still avoiding the use of foreign markers. Two examples will be examined to illustrate both extremes, thus nuancing Venuti's rejection of domestication:

(8) Tom's mind was on Cynthia Gradnor, of all people to be thinking about in North Africa. (*Ripley Under Water*, 68)

(8') Tom se mit à penser à Cynthia Gradnor, ce qui était pour le moins saugrenu, en pleine Afrique du Nord. (*Ripley entre deux eaux*, trad. Pierre Ménard, 119-120)

In English, the invisible transition between narratorial statement and FID is performed by the intrusion of the informal expression "of all people" which creates a syntactic rupture, that would be impossible in French, and is understandably absent in the translation. However, the translator does not compensate this disappearance, but instead reinforces the narrator's presence by using the adjective "saugrenu" (in order to express the surprise implied by "of all people"), which belongs more reasonably to the narrator's idiom, and by adding the relative pronoun "ce qui" which eliminates the separation of voices present in the source text. More importantly, what this translation

does is dismantle the figural narration, as the narrator now appears to formulate an evaluative judgement concerning Tom's actions.

(9) Mr De Sevilla hadn't paid up yet – he needed a good scare by telephone to put the fear of God into him, Tom thought – but Mrs Superaugh had been so easy, he was tempted to try just *one* more. (*The Talented Mr Ripley*, 11)

(9') Mr. de Sevilla n'avait pas encore payé – il avait besoin d'une bonne semonce par téléphone qui lui inspirerait une terreur salutaire – mais Mrs. Superaugh avait marché si facilement qu'il était tenté d'essayer encore un coup, un seul. (*Le Talentueux Mr Ripley*, trad. Jean Rosenthal, 22)

At first sight, it seems that the translator again erases the source text's orality, especially in the segment between dashes, by deleting the parenthetical insert "Tom thought" and choosing words such as "semonce" and "inspirerait" that conform to the narrator's idiom. However, the original bivocality still remains thanks to the use of informal expressions like "une bonne", "marcher" (meaning here *being credulous*) and even through the repetition "encore un coup, un seul" which compensates for the English italics. What occurs here is therefore an attempt to avoid Anglicisms ("a good scare" which would be impossible to translate word for word into French; the italics that are hardly ever used in French to express a phonetic emphasis as English does), whilst compensating this domestication in order to preserve the original blend of voices.

This last analysis confirms that an outright condemnation of the domestication process in translation needs not be inevitable, despite recognizing the soundness of Venuti's arguments in favour of foreignisation, especially as a means to acknowledge the translator's presence. In order to move beyond the seemingly inescapable dichotomy, let us now consider Antoine Berman's account describing the merits of analysing translation:

La traduction fait pivoter l'œuvre, révèle d'elle un autre *versant*. Quel est cet autre versant ? Voilà ce qui reste à mieux percevoir. En ce sens, l'analytique de la traduction devrait nous apprendre quelque chose sur l'œuvre, sur le rapport de celle-ci à sa langue et au langage en général. Quelque chose que ni la simple lecture, ni la critique ne peuvent déceler. (BERMAN, 1984, 20)

According to this famous critic, the comparison between source and target texts serves not as a mere means to point out their differences (and establish the translation

strategy at work), but also to feed our knowledge of the original text, by bringing to light aspects of it that would have remained hidden without the addition of a source of comparison. Keeping this theory in mind, one final example will be examined in order to clarify the gains of translation analysis:

(10) Tom made a lunge for the control lever, but the boat swerved at the same time in a crazy arc. For an instant he saw water underneath him and his own hand outstretched towards it, because he had been trying to grab the gunwale and the gunwale was no longer there.

He was in the water.

He gasped, contracting his body in an upward leap, grabbing at the boat. He missed. (*The Talented Mr Ripley*, 93)

(10') Tom se précipita sur la manette des gaz, mais au même moment le canot vira brutalement. Un instant, il aperçut l'eau sous lui, et sa main se tendit vers la mer, car il avait voulu empoigner le plat-bord, et le plat-bord n'était plus là.

Tom était tombé à l'eau.

Il faillit suffoquer, banda tous ses muscles pour sauter hors de l'eau afin d'agripper le bateau. Il manqua son coup. (*Le Talentueux Mr Ripley*, trad. Jean Rosenthal, 164)

Isolated in a single paragraph, the sentence in bold in the original text can either be attributed to the narrator, in the middle of a series of actions, or to the character, who realises he is no longer on the boat. In the translation however, the substitution of the proper name “Tom” for the personal pronoun erases any ambiguity. A further analysis reveals that the mere preservation of the personal pronoun would not have sufficed to maintain the equivocation: the character could not have plausibly thought *Je suis tombé à l'eau*. What happened in French is actually the clarification of the transition from the process <be on the boat> to <be in the water>. The original ambiguity therefore relies on the mention of the simple act of *being in the water*, which is able to powerfully verbalize a sudden and primitive realization. In French however, any stative verb could not work here (*Tom/il était dans l'eau; Tom/il se trouvait dans l'eau*). What these manipulations show is the impossibility in French to suddenly transition from description to cognition/perception, which Poncharal explains in the following words: “En français, la frontière entre ce qui appartient au domaine de l'énonciateur origine absolu et de l'énonciateur rapporté doit être fermement

maintenue.” (PONCHARAL, 2003, 188). This confirms how inconceivable an invisible switch from narrator to character’s voice is in French.

It is therefore through the description of another language that the possibilities and subtleties of the source text can be apprehended, demonstrating how Highsmith exploits fully the possibilities of the English language to create an almost schizophrenic superposition of voices, by constantly allowing her character’s inner discourse to eclipse the diaphanous narrator.

Conclusion

The present study has shown how the translator’s decisions concerning thought representations could affect the narrative structure of the source text, through the stifling of the vocal games at play in the Ripley series. In dealing with the various challenges caused by the use of a figural narration that allows the character’s voice to contaminate different facets of the narration, some translations manage to reinvent the author’s language and style despite the apparent domestication, thus participating in the richness of the original work, by providing a new range of interpretations that would have remained hidden otherwise.

The results of this study also allow us to question the normative model dictating the translation of crime fiction in the post-war period, which usually involved the suppression of various textemes, especially concerning thought representations⁷. Even though Patricia Highsmith was not included in the well-known *Série Noire* series, but in a collection uniting translations of famous foreign authors, including for instance John Galsworthy, Herman Hesse and Arthur Koestler⁸, it seems that some of her translators were still influenced in their choices by her belonging to the crime fiction genre. Differences in linguistic systems do not explain why some polyphonic passages were written in a more formal style (suppressing the character’s voice), or conversely with a more oral quality (silencing the narrator’s voice). Rather, it seems that translators in the first case tried, more or less consciously, to avoid the spoken language qualities of the original text with the assumption that the target audience would find these features unacceptable in writing⁹. In the second case, the translators might have wanted to embrace the colloquialisms that were becoming the norm in crime fiction, especially in the American hard-boiled novels which were flooding the French literary market at the time.

¹ These novels are: *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1955), *Ripley Under Ground* (1970), *Ripley's Game* (1974), *The Boy Who Followed Ripley* (1980) and *Ripley Under Water* (1991)

² See for instance Rouhiainen (2000), Poncharal (2003) or Gallagher (2001)

³ See for example Guillemin-Flescher (1981) or Taivalkoski-Shilov (2006)

⁴ These are respectively *Le Talentueux Mr Ripley* (trans. Jean Rosenthal), *Ripley et les ombres* (trans. Elisabeth Gille), *Ripley s'amuse* (trans. Janine Hérisson), *Sur les pas de Ripley* (trans. Alain Delahaye) and *Ripley entre deux eaux* (trans. Pierre Ménard)

⁵ From now on, designated as FID

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on this separation in French, see Poncharal (2003)

⁷ See Robyns (1990) for a detailed analysis of French translations of detective novels

⁸ According to Rivière (2003, 63)

⁹ An idea suggested by Robyns (1990, 36), for whom “the moderate use of colloquial speech [in translations of crime novels] constitutes another option, which reflects the overall attitude of the French literary system towards the colloquial.”