

Corpus Linguistics in Stylistics and Translation: A Comparative Analysis of Gender in *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett in English and French

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ABSTRACT

As tools such as corpus linguistics arise within the field of theoretical humanities to bridge the gap between disciplines, the utilization of software-based resources presents itself as a vital element in a contemporary analysis of a work of literature. This paper intends to shed light on the stylistic peculiarities of Beckett's works and their adaptation to other cultural contexts in translation through the use of corpus linguistics. A close observation of the stage directions in *Happy Days* reveals that the author performs linguistic choices that establish different mental associations in each language, especially with regards to the construction of gender roles in the play. This thence creates a work of translation that could be more adequately understood as a revision of his own play rather than as a complete adaptation in itself.

KEYWORDS: corpus linguistics, Samuel Beckett, stylistics, translation studies

1. Introduction

The current inclination towards a more multidisciplinary approach to every subject of academic study in formal research is allowing several fields to push boundaries in order to achieve a synoptic view of any phenomenon under investigation. Corpus linguistics has arisen within literary and linguistic studies as a key methodology to join perspectives from different subdisciplines, acquiring a more well-rounded view of the elements studied in these fields. This set of tools is nowadays the main vehicle for the creation of meaning within language studies (Tognini-Bonelli 2001) and its uses have expanded the scope of previous analyses in these areas of the humanities. The paper illustrates the potential of corpus linguistics to bridge gaps between stylistics, translation, and gender studies by performing an analysis of the stage directions in the play *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett.

Studies of stylistics have traditionally focused on qualitative analyses of recurrent language in the artistic expression of literary authors. The application of computational linguistics

presents itself as a perfect way to add tangibility to these observations. Mahlberg points out that “corpora can reveal typical and repeated uses of language that are so common that they do not strike us as important. Thus, corpus stylistics can make an important contribution to the investigation of the interplay between conventional, idiosyncratic and creative patterns of language use” (Mahlberg 2007: 219). The study of a particular kind of language use or expression becomes much more easily performed when these computer-based tools allow us to retrieve specific elements in just a click. By using corpus linguistics, stylistics can benefit from empirical data to support the analysis of the language at stake and measure how impactful or relevant it might be within the work of a certain author. In this way, as proposed by the works by Baker (2004) or Saldanha (2011) among many others, corpus linguistics presents itself as a great tool with which to combine stylistics and translation studies, allowing for data-driven analyses of texts to be performed comprehensively, and revealing stylistic patterns in all versions of a text.

Gender studies constitutes a field of research that has also been given a great amount of attention within humanities in the last decades. Today’s approach to this discipline mostly sets out to “put alternative forms of gender on the sociolinguistic map: it is part of the politics of identity, visibility, and recognition” (Cameron 2005: 489). The steep rise in the number of studies of this nature published nowadays responds to a social necessity to trigger changes in the conceptions of gender and sexuality. McConnell-Ginet argues that “language can help reshape dominant ideologies while [...] channelling those same ideologies even in the mouths of those who no longer consciously endorse them” (McConnell-Ginet 2014: 316), thence highlighting the relevance of language use within gender questioning and reconstruction. By focusing on these issues, in this case in terms of linguistic behaviour and representation of gendered roles, the academic community hopes for a new collective understanding of gender as a variety of identities within a socially constructed spectrum. In this way, and similarly to what was discussed with regards to stylistics and translation studies, this discipline has greatly benefitted from corpus linguistic tools (Baker, P. 2014; Formato & Tanucci 2020). However, as mentioned above, the interconnection between stylistics, gender and translation studies through corpus linguistics and its potential for increased understanding of literary texts remains generally understudied.

The analysis of the portrayal of both femininity and masculinity in fiction expands the scope of the conversation on the political and social impact of gender representation. Bucholtz argues that due to the great amount of research performed on this area nowadays, there is no clear methodology or unified treatment of discourse analysis that would be applicable for all analytic purposes of gender-related linguistic phenomena (2003: 44). By joining stylistics to gender studies when analysing a piece of literature, the focus of research is narrowed down to a close observation of the language used to represent and ultimately perpetuate the social perception of gender roles. In her highly cited paper *Language and Woman's Place*, Lakoff argues that “Languages use us as much as we use language. As much as our choice of forms of expression is guided by the thoughts we want to express, to the same extent the way we feel about the things in the real world governs the way we express ourselves about these things” (Lakoff 1973: 45). She points out that the way we speak and are spoken of both reflects the way we feel about gender as well as perpetuates the structures that derive from a binary and implicitly hierarchical notion of it. Gender is constructed socially, with fiction being one of the areas in which this construct is more clearly identifiable and worthy of analysis because of its wide and subversive impact on the audience consuming it. Increasing the knowledge of how gender has been constructed linguistically through fiction raises awareness of how we individually perceive it and contribute to questioning and reshaping it in today's society.

Happy Days by Samuel Beckett is a highly relevant text from the point of view of gender studies. In this play, published in English in 1961 and later translated into French by the author himself in 1962 under the title *Oh, les Beaux Jours* (Casanova 2006: 98), Beckett presents what could be understood as a critique of heteronormative relationships by portraying a seemingly irreverent conversation between a man and a woman. Willie and Winnie, the only two characters in the play, are depicted as mere stereotypes of the gender roles they represent. These stereotypes are grounded on (as this paper will elaborate on in sections 3.1 and 3.2.) the notion of traditional feminine roles in western society as submissive and sexually appealing as discussed by Lakoff (1973) and masculine roles in the same context as characterised by the exertion of dominance, in line with the idea of “hegemonic masculinity” expressed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). Buried to her waist through the first act, and to her neck in the second, Winnie becomes a symbol for the constricting nature of the archetypal femininity she embodies, her identity is reduced to her appearance

and her ways of having her existence acknowledged by her male counterpart. Willie, however, speaks only in very short sentences, often using an angry tone to respond, and he is not even physically present until the end of the second act. Beckett establishes this dichotomy between the characters in order to mock the “happy days” that are supposedly achieved by trying to meet social expectations that are meant to shape one’s life according to constructed ideals of masculinity, femininity, or love. As Winnie keeps lying to herself, repeating that she is happy, or recalling what she thinks were “happy days,” we realise that it is precisely her seeking to accomplish what is socially expected of her as a woman which truly becomes the mound of earth gobbling her up more and more.

It is this stereotypical representation of gender roles and the internal criticism scaffolded through the play’s narrative which calls for further analysis of the linguistic terms on which the characters’ identities are constructed. In her work *Gender and Language Ideologies* (2003), Cameron explains how, though subjected to historical and cultural variation, and affected by elements such as ethnicity and class, gender differences seem to have been at the core of western societies. She claims that “these representations of gender are part of a society’s apparatus for maintaining gender distinctions in general - they help to naturalize the notion of the sexes as ‘opposite,’ with differing aptitudes and social responsibilities [...]. In many cases they also help to naturalize gender hierarchies” (2003: 468). Representations of gender roles are undoubtedly a key element in the social conception of gender in relation to individual identity. In this case, however, Beckett uses these gender roles that Cameron defines as ways of perpetuating gender distinctions to point out precisely how unnatural, constricting, and alienating they truly are. Looking at the text from a stylistic point of view it is possible to track down the linguistic structures used to epitomise the gender roles at the core of the play’s critique.

The combination of stylistics and corpus linguistics through a perspective of gender studies provides a great insight on the language used to construct gender identities in fiction. However, there is a dual nature to this piece of work that cannot be overlooked when analysing the text in depth. Like many of Beckett’s works, this play was self-translated from English into French, which adds an extra dimension to the portrayal of both characters in it. Scholars such as Friedman, Rossman and Sherzer (1987) and Mooney (2011) have explored his self-translations through different perspectives, though maybe failing to outline the ways

in which the issue of gender has been tackled in them. Following Cameron's argument, "there is intra—as well as inter—cultural variation in the representation of language and gender. From outside a culture this variation may not be salient or even visible, but inside, the representation of differences between women, or between men, does ideological work" (Cameron 2014: 451). By making the choice of altering the language used to define the characters in the play in the French version, Beckett transforms the initial portrayal of gender roles in it, shaping them according to a different cultural frame, or rather, to his own perception of gender within this cultural frame in question.

The combination of corpus stylistics and translations studies, as mentioned above, allows us to notice that the "ways to approach language, and the tools we use put in place specific constraints that narrow down the possibilities productively, (...) also transform the qualities of the textual material in view as well as our intuitions about it" (Buts & Jones, 2021). The application of corpus linguistics to the study of the translation of this text works as a magnifying glass to observe the cultural differences embedded in the linguistic structures used. Looking through the lens of corpus linguistics we can observe and quantify how Beckett uses stage directions in this play to portray the gender stereotypes at the core of its major criticism, and how he does so differently in both versions of the text to accommodate his work to these two cultures.

This paper will use corpus linguistics to analyse the language used by Samuel Beckett when defining the gender roles appearing in *Happy Days*. In order to narrow down the focus of the paper, only the language used in the stage directions of the play will be taken into account, with the purpose of shedding light on the way the characters in the play are presented through the ways in which they speak, act, or where the major focus is located as they interact. Though stage directions might seem at first irrelevant for a theatre play when dealing with it exclusively in its written form, it is both this type of language and the transcendence it has for the representation of the play which calls for attention for the academic community. The audience, while engaged in watching the play does not explicitly read the words used to model the characters' actions, but they do actually *see* these actions being performed, contributing to a subtle but effective portrayal of their identity. Through stage directions, authors do not *tell* the audience what their characters are, they *show* them. This way, the language used to describe what characters do (or do not do) on stage is worthy of analysis

when dealing with the play in both written form and when represented on stage. This paper will provide empirical evidence to support the idea that the author performs changes in the stage directions of the French version of the text that transform the characters in it, and therefore creates a different text that needs to be taken into account in order to fully understand the work itself. This research accordingly illustrates the capabilities of computational linguistics to combine stylistics, translation and gender studies and expand the scope for further investigations to be made, exploiting the multidisciplinary potential of this methodology.

2. Methodology

In order to perform a thorough analysis of the language used in the stage directions of *Happy Days*, these elements were isolated and then explored using Lawrence Anthony's *AntConc* software (2014). Both versions of the play were manually transcribed and edited in order to allow for a quicker access to the language in question. The research process involving the analysis at stake consisted in retrieving all the language referring to the way the author intended the characters to speak, behave or look in the stage directions of the play, categorizing it, and drawing conclusions from the empirical evidence gathered.

The results were divided into several categories to facilitate a more systematic analysis of the data. Ruano San Segundo (2018:143), in his investigation of the stage directions in *Waiting for Godot*, distinguishes between two types of stage directions: “those which appear in an initial position, between the character’s name and the utterance, and which offer guidance about the manner in which the utterance should be spoken” and “those which run parallel to characters’ words, and provide information or guidance about the immediate scene, movement(s) or gesture(s)”. These criteria are not completely applicable to the case of *Happy Days* due to the fact that in many cases the author’s usages of both types of stage directions differ from those seen in this model. Nevertheless, this paper uses the same type of differentiation in order to access this language more easily and comprehensively. The stage directions obtained were subsequently looked at individually and subdivided into three different types: 1) physical appearance, 2) characters’ actions, and 3) ways of speaking. Thence, all results were divided into these three categories regardless of their position in the text, though splitting the initial search into *initial* and *intertextual* stage directions made the

collection of data much more systematic and, by reducing the number of items retrieved in each search, facilitated the qualitative analysis needed for the final classification.

As mentioned above, the text was edited to allow the software to retrieve both kinds of stage directions. Following San Segundo's model, initial stage directions were transcribed between square brackets. Thus, the search "Name: [*]" would retrieve the stage directions located in an initial position. Considering the fact that there are only two characters in the play, the searches "WINNIE: [*]" and "WILLIE: [*]" retrieved all initial stage directions in it. In the case of the stage directions located within utterances, they were transcribed between round brackets to allow for a quick discrimination of the two kinds when using *AntConc*. However, by searching "(*)" in the text, one would not be certain of whether the stage direction at stake referred to Willie or Winnie. To solve this problem both versions of the text were manually split in two, one containing only Willie's utterances, and another one containing just Winnie's. This way, the search "(*)" in each of the corpus would reveal the stage directions addressed to either of the characters.

This is true except for a few examples where a stage direction addressed to a character is included in between the utterance of the opposite character, as in the case of Willie's final line in act II: "WILLIE: [Just audible.] Win. (Pause. *WINNIE's eyes front. Happy expression appears, grows.]*". These cases, however, are very clearly distinguishable when looking at the examples retrieved and can be easily spotted and sorted by making a quick search of the name or gendered pronoun of the opposite character of the fragment of the corpus that is being observed. This way, for example, when looking at Willie's corpus, the stage directions referred to Winnie can be easily found and excluded just by making the concordance searches "WINNIE" and "she" using *AntConc*, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

The collection of data was carried out by performing the concordance searches "[*]" and "(*)" in each corpus. Then, the searches "WILLIE" and "he" in the corpus made up of Winnie's utterances and the searches "WINNIE" and "she" in the one made up of Willie's. After these searches all the information regarding each character was observed and classified into the three aforementioned categories: (1) physical appearance, (2) characters' actions, and (3) ways of speaking. The same process was repeated with the French version of the play, and the results were then sorted, analysed, and compared.

Figure 1: Concordance search of “WINNIE” in Willie’s Corpus using AntConc (*Happy Days*)

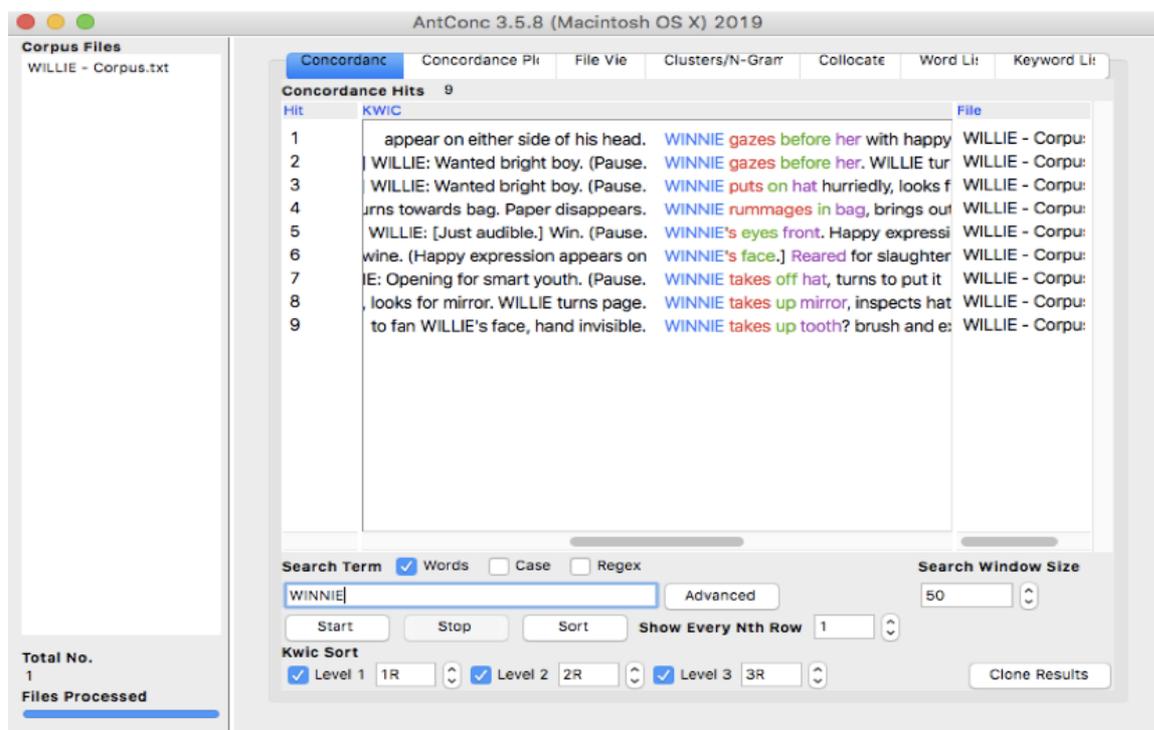
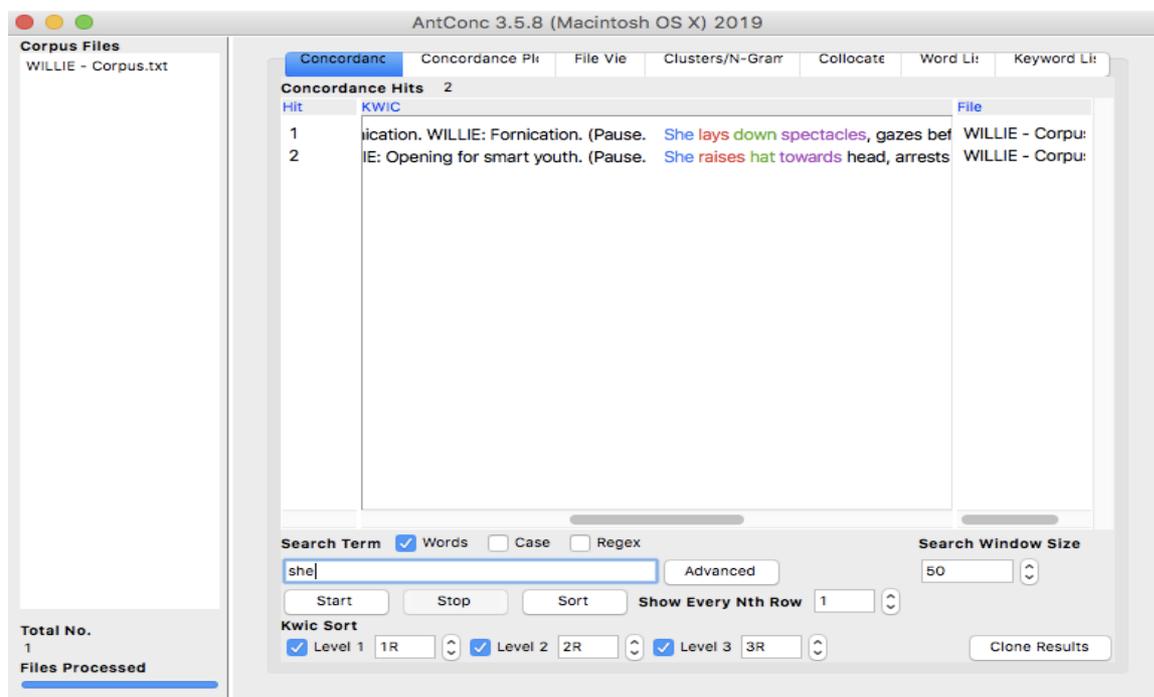


Figure 2: Concordance search “she” in Willie’s Corpus using AntConc (*Happy Days*)



3. Results and Analysis

The preparation of the texts enabled the software to retrieve the language that is at the focus of this paper’s research easily and systematically. The process was reduced to performing concordance searches in each corpus and retrieving the precise words with which Beckett crafted the gender stereotypes each character represents. In this section the results will be presented comprehensively according to their relevance in portraying each gender role in the play and later compared to the results extracted from the French version of the text. It will be structured in the following way: Section 3.1. will analyze Winnie’s stage directions in the English version of the text; Section 3.2. will focus on Willie’s stage directions, also in the English version of the text; Section 3.3. will delve into the stylistic choices made in the translation of the text and will be divided into two subsections: Subsection 3.3.1., which will focus on Winnie’s stage directions in the French version of the play, and 3.3.2., which will focus on Willie’s.

3.1. “Winnie” as the female slave

The stage directions retrieved by *AntConc* in the case of the female character added up to a total of 1069 hits. Discarding the stage directions that are not relevant to the observation of gender roles and classifying the hits retrieved into the categories mentioned above, the total is reduced to 902, as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Stage directions referring to Winnie

Physical Appearance	Number of Hits	Actions	Number of Hits	Speech Verbs	Number of hits	Total
smile	85	stops	20	pause	617	
lips	17	examines	19	less loud	2	
pouts	2	lays down	19	normal voice	1	
arresting gesture	2	looks for	18	same voice	1	
		takes up	15	mondaine	1	
		rummages	14			
		brings out	13			
		opens	13			
		takes off	11			
		inspects	8			
		puts on	8			
		wipes	7			
		polishes	5			
Total	104		150		621	875

These results shed light on the ways in which Winnie is linguistically presented as the epitome of a woman in Western society. Lakoff claims that women in this context are generally perceived as performing the role of a sex-object or a servant, and that the language that is used to describe them as well as the language they utilise themselves serves to portray them as being deprived of power or social involvement (Lakoff 1973: 46). The parts of her body that Beckett draws attention to in order to construct her appearance on stage, the way she acts while delivering her lines and the ways in which she is supposed to speak, all contribute to presenting her as a completely powerless individual, therefore making her fit perfectly into the categories discussed by Lakoff. This caricaturesque and bitter portrayal of femininity serves as a way for the writer to point out the alienation that derives from expecting individuals to adjust to gender roles and becomes the first step in the construction of the greater critique within the play.

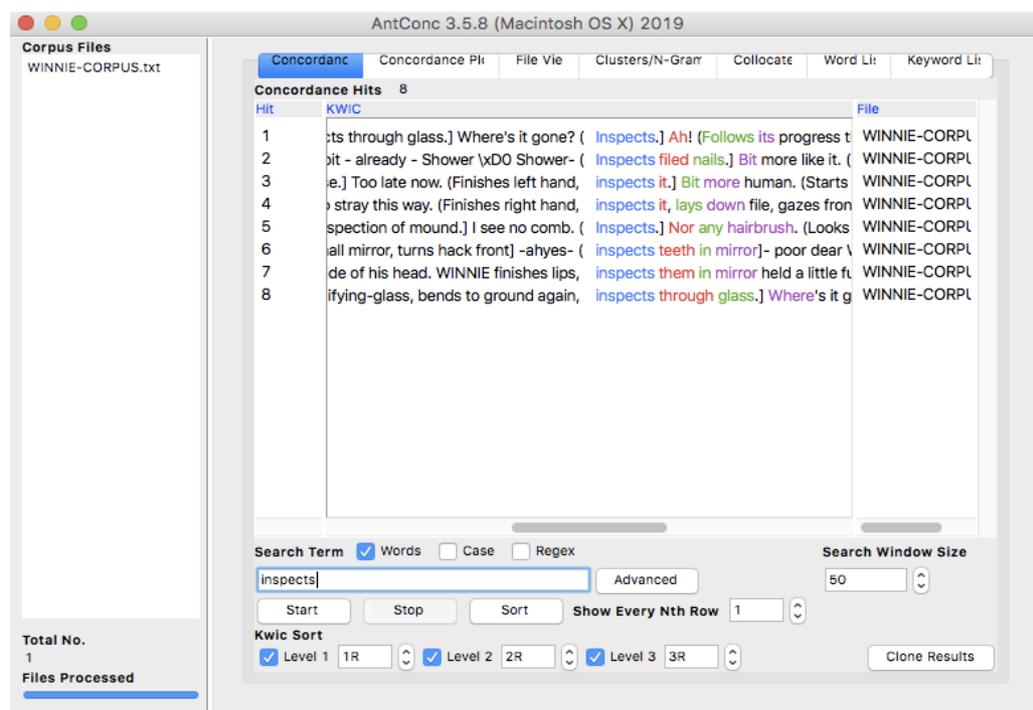
The parts of the body that Beckett wants the audience to focus on when presenting the character of Winnie, as illustrated by the given data, are mostly her mouth and lips. The play opens up by describing her as a “well preserved” lady in its first act: “(...) Imbedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE. About fifty, well preserved, blond for preference, plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklet (...)”-. However, these references to her looks serve as a frame for a strong desexualisation of the character, which is elaborated through the gradual covering of her body (she is buried to her waist in Act I and to her neck in Act II) as well as through the increasing focus on her mouth and lips to accentuate the lack of attractiveness of the rest of her physique. Stewart discusses her gradual burying as a metaphor for her increasing sterility (Stewart 2011: 133), and though this could also be a major element in her loss of sexual appeal to the male character, more emphasis is placed on her general appearance than on fertility. By presenting Winnie’s eagerness to find validation through pleasing the male character and the audience after being deprived of sexual appeal, Beckett thematises the alienation that derives from reducing an individual’s identity to elements such as mere physical appearance.

Winnie is portrayed as an individual whose beauty has deteriorated through time, and it is her beauty that she perceives (and the audience is led to perceive) as a major pillar in the construction of her own identity, as one of her main sources of personal validity and gratification. As Pfister (2000: 45) claims, Winnie is portrayed as an individual possessing a

“pathological urge to give verbal expression to the banal”, as a person who needs to produce amusement and pleasure in any way she finds. By making her so talkative and focusing on her mouth and on the way she smiles, the author highlights the necessity Winnie feels to be appealing to the male character in the play to compensate for the fact that she is not as attractive as she used to be. To comfort herself after losing her quality as a “sex object,” she becomes a “slave,” she desperately seeks what is socially expected of her as a woman in search of “happy days,” a state of wellbeing and acceptance ultimately granted by complying to her own ideal of archetypal femininity.

Winnie’s obsession with being sexually appealing to Willie is accentuated by her actions during the play. Verbs such as “inspects,” which retrieves 8 hits in total, as shown in Figure 3, are referred to her inspecting her nails, hair, or teeth in a mirror. Not only does she “smile” constantly and “pout” when she tries to please and compensate for the fact that she is no longer as attractive as she used to, she is constantly taking special care of her own body to prevent her looks from deteriorating. She also “puts on” and “takes off” items she withdraws from her bag, hoping to improve her looks and attract Willie’s attention. Winnie’s obsession with her own appearance becomes a pivotal element in the construction of the character and evokes discomfort within the audience to extoll the criticism scaffolded by the author.

Figure 3: Concordance search “inspects” in Winnie’s corpus using AntConc



The data also reflects the nervousness and lack of agency of the female character throughout the text. Winnie does not only worry about her looks, she also “rummages” in her bag, “takes out,” “wipes,” “polishes,” and “looks for” items incessantly throughout the first act of the play. All these actions reflect her nervousness, a constant state of unsteadiness she suppresses by killing time through fidgeting and performing small tasks while waiting for any sort of direct interaction with her male counterpart, which seems to be what truly brings her joy. Winnie herself explicitly states several times that her happiness depends on whether or not Willie “talks” to her, as in this extract from act I: “WINNIE: [turning back front, joyful]. *Oh you are going to talk to me today, this is going to be a happy day! (...)*”. The action verbs that are retrieved in this case show how the ways in which Winnie acts are combined with the way she expresses herself in order to outline a character whose entire well-being is dependent of the validation of a male figure.

Winnie’s powerlessness is reinforced through the ways in which she delivers her lines. The most recurrent word found in her stage directions is “pause,” which retrieves 617 hits in total, and reflects the character’s hesitation and lack of self-assurance while speaking. Her speech is also “less loud” and uttered as a “murmur,” which further supports this idea. The female character in the play is constantly speaking, leading the play by discussing seemingly irrelevant issues in a perpetual search for male attention that she is no longer capable of gaining through her appearance. However, she is never fully confident, and her pauses work as a mute apology for a possible wrongdoing that might prevent her from getting the attention she craves. By constructing her speech in this way, Beckett relocates all agency onto the male character, leading the audience to assume that in spite of the fact that his verbal contributions to the play are much smaller in number, it is his figure which stirs the mood and direction of Winnie’s utterances.

The results retrieved in the case of the character of Winnie reflect the rigid stereotype of femininity she embodies. Beckett uses a great array of elements within the stage directions modelling Winnie’s actions and speech in the play that allow the reader (or the audience) to identify her almost as a caricature of herself, a caricature of femininity constructed through the epitomizing of a stereotypical gender role. This portrayal serves as the first side of the dichotomy with which he constructs a deeper social critique through the text.

3.2. “Willie” as the silent master

In the case of the male character of the play, *AntConc* retrieves a total of 29 results combining the hits of words modelling his actions and ways of speaking extracted from the searches “WILLIE” and “he” in both corpora. The process was carried out following the steps taken in the collection of the data involving the female character. In this case, there are no indications about the looks of this character, so this category was excluded from Table 2. This is in itself very telling of a key element in the portrayal of this character: Beckett leads us to understanding that in the case of Willie, as in the case of most stereotypical masculine figures, his appearance is not important, only his actions are.

The results shown in Table 2 illustrate the ways in which Beckett used this character’s actions and speech to portray him as a polar opposite to the female character in the play. Whereas in the case of Winnie the language in the stage directions reflected the importance of her own appearance in the construction of her identity, there is no explicit reference to the way Willie should look. The male character is not even visible to the audience until the second act, and it is only through his actions and ways of speaking that they are led to understand him as the polar opposite to his female counterpart.

Table 2. Stage directions referring to Willie

Actions	Number of hits	Ways of Speaking	Number of hits
hand appears	4	pause	9
hand reappears	2	violently	2
looks up	2	irritated	2
arm disappears	1	more irritated	2
drops hat and gloves	1	just audible	1
halts	1		
sinks his head	1		
slithers back to foot	1		
Total	9		7

It is Willie’s masculinity in opposition to Winnie’s stereotypical femininity that is the core of the construction of his identity. Connell describes the idea of hegemonic masculinity as a socially constructed pattern of conduct that perpetuates male dominance over women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). It is precisely this pattern of conduct which seems to frame Willie’s identity in the play. He delivers a significantly smaller number of lines than the

female character, as shown in Table 2, but it is the ways in which he utters his lines and interacts with Winnie which make the audience understand the dominance he holds over her. Though some authors, such as Jeffers, understand the figure of Willie as that of an emasculated male figure and delve into issues dealing with a power-conflicted Irish identity to justify this perception (2009: 142), this paper provides data to support the notion that, at least through the language employed in the stage directions of the text, Beckett reduces this character to a conceptualisation of what has historically been socially understood in Western societies as a standard masculine figure.

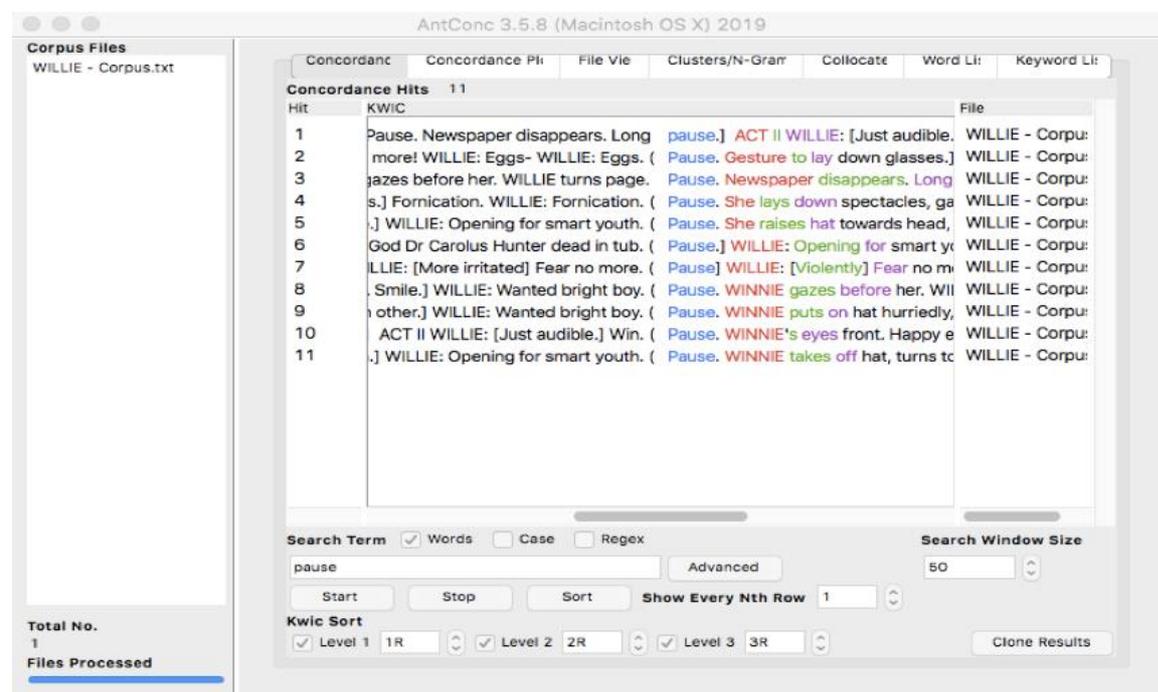
Whereas the focus on Winnie's stage directions is located on her lips and mouth, in the case of Willie it is on his hands and arms. *AntConc* retrieves only 8 instances of language referring to actions in which a part of his body is mentioned explicitly. One of these hits mentions his head ("sinks his head"), but the rest of the language gathered has to do with his hands and arms: Willie is the epitome of power, only the parts of his body that perform actions directly are relevant. In spite of the fact that he is buried completely in the first act, he (unlike Winnie) holds all the agency of the play; and it is this power which translates into the freedom to set himself free in the second act. Willie is the stereotype of a man, caged by social constraints that are as strict as those which frame Winnie's identity, but since the role he represents is the one that is granted power within the hierarchy established by gender normativity, he is capable of leaving, he has the power to be free while his female counterpart remains forever trapped.

Willie's power is also reflected in the way the character is supposed to deliver his lines. In contrast to Winnie's "less loud" utterances and "murmurs," Willie speaks "violently" and "irritated." Whereas she is constantly looking for approval and striving to please him, he is aware of his power over her, and responds harshly, exerting dominance. This is also visible in the number of pauses that appear in the speech of each character, as shown in Figure 4. As mentioned above, *AntConc* retrieves 617 pauses in the speech of Winnie, but only 9 for Willie (as illustrated in Figure 4, where 11 results are shown, with 9 of them being addressed to Willie and 3 to Winnie). His pauses are not only fewer but also different from hers, for they do not indicate hesitancy or lack of assurance, but are used to mark the end of his utterance, and are generally followed by one of Winnie's movements or nervous actions, as if what has been said has had an impact on her that she needs to soften by resorting to sheer banality. This

way, Beckett subtly locates even more power on Willie’s speech, both his way of speaking and his silence are acts of dominance over the female character.

Beckett’s portrayal of the character of Willie through the stage directions in *Happy Days* contribute to the crafting of the second half of the apparatus of the critique at stake. By defining the male character’s behaviour and ways of speaking in opposition to those of his female counterpart, the author establishes two conflicting gender identities that work together in alienating the individual. The play depicts the need of the characters to adjust to social conventions of one’s identity and personal relationships as a way of perpetuating structures that constrict them. The constant search for “happy days” as a romanticised and socially constructed ideal is what leads them to keep sinking into the mound of earth that deprives them of any agency with regard to their own existence. The play presents the given archetypal gender roles within heteronormative relationships as conceptual prisons meant to strip individuals of the freedom needed to construct their own identity, the ideals of the socially accepted behaviour and generally desirable lifestyle as the cogs of a greater alienating machine.

Figure 4. Concordance search “Pause” in Willie's corpus



3.3. Stylistic choices in portraying gender roles in translation: Happy Days and Oh, Les Beaux Jours!

In the case of *Happy Days*, which was translated by its own author, an analysis of both versions of the text seems highly necessary when it comes to reaching a synoptic understanding of any object of observation within it. The use of corpus linguistics allows empirical evidence to be gathered to clarify the specific points in which choices in translation have been made. This section of the paper will focus on the choices taken by Samuel Beckett in terms of the translation of the original piece, and more specifically on the way gender roles are reshaped in the stage directions of the play in its second version. The analysis of the points in which both texts differ sheds light not only on the way in which the author's own perception of his work might have changed through time, but also on the way he adapts his characters to be better presented to a different audience.

In order to perform a coherent contrastive study of the way gender roles were adapted in the stage directions of *Oh, les Beaux Jours!* the methodology used mirrored the one discussed previously in this paper. The French version of the play was manually transcribed and edited in the same fashion as the corpus of the original version of the text to allow for a distinction of initial stage directions and intertextual stage directions. To simplify the retrieval of data, the corpus was split in two, both parts compiling the utterances of one character each. To gather the information, the concordance searches “[*”, and “(*” were made in each corpus. Also, the concordance searches “WINNIE” and “elle” were made in the corpus assigned to Willie, and vice versa, to compile and discriminate all data retrieved. This way, all the data that was relevant to the object of study of this paper was gathered and classified.

The results obtained were then sorted according to the same classification established in the previous sections. The stage directions referring to each character were divided into the same three categories discussed above: physical appearance, characters' actions, and ways of speaking. Some stage directions contained information regarding light adjustments at the theatre or issues pertaining scenography in general, which did not contribute to the construction of either character. After discarding the results that were not relevant to the construction of gender roles and carrying out the categorisation under investigation, the data

was contrasted with what was gathered previously from the original text. In this section the results obtained for each character are displayed in Tables 4 and 5, however, due to lack of space, only the elements in which a notable translation choice has been made with regards to the construction of gender roles are discussed.

Table 4. Stage directions referring to Winnie (*Oh, Les Beaux Jours!*)

Physical Appearance	Number of Hits	Actions	Number of Hits	Ways of Speaking	Number of Hits
lèvres (lips)	11	sourire (smiles)	36	un temps (some time)	516
a une expression heureuse (has a happy expression)	1	fin du sourire (end of smile)	29	la voix se brisse (her voice breaks)	6
		s'arrête (stops)	8	voix normale (normal voice)	2
		de limer (to file)	3	murmure (murmurs)	1
		de ranger (to bother)	3	mondaine (mundane)	1
		baisse la tête (lowers her head)	3	moins fort (less strong/loud)	1
		d'essuyer (to wipe)	2	encore moins fort (even less strong/loud)	1
		fixant le zenith (staring at the zenith)	1		
		samasse (gathers)	1		
		lui assène un coup (hits him)	1		
		nouveou coup (new hit)	1		
		dépose (drops/puts down)	1		
		brosse (brushes)	1		
Total	12		90		528

Table 5. Stage directions referring to Willie (*Oh, les Beaux Jours!*)

Actions	Number of Hits	Ways of Speaking	Number of Hits
lisant (reading)	3	encore plus agacé (even more irritated)	3
lève les yeux vers elle (looks up at her)	3	agacé (irritated)	2
dors (sleeps)	1	violemment (violently)	2
tourne la page (turns the page)	1	bas (low [voice])	1
lâche chapeau et gants (loses hat and gloves)	1	maussade (sullen, sulky)	1
une main s'agrippant au mamelon (one hand gripping the mound of earth)	1		
Total	10		9

3.3.1. Changes in the portrayal of Winnie's femininity

The French version of the play reflects several major differences in the way Beckett crafted the archetypal femininity embodied by Winnie's character. The initial focus on her lips that was so clearly visible in the English version is here modified, her way of speaking is changed mostly by reducing hesitancy, and certain actions are added to increase her agency within the play. The author seems to have taken a different approach to the French Winnie, attributing to her a femininity that differs from the representation created in the original text.

In the case of the parts of Winnie's body that the audience is led to pay attention to, we find that the focus is again placed on her mouth and lips, but the explicit references to them are significantly smaller in number. In the original text Winnie's lips are mentioned 17 times in the stage directions, she pouts twice and smiles 85 times. In the French version, however, "lèvres" ("lips") appears 11 times, she never pouts, and only smiles 36 times (not even half as many times as in the English version). This combination of changes in the second version of the play leads to the creation of a slightly more assertive Winnie. Though she still displays signs of wanting to be appreciated and trying to please Willie, she is no longer as submissive as in *Happy Days*.

Winnie's way of expressing herself is also changed in the French version. In the original text Winnie is said to "pause" 617 times, and her voice breaks 3. In the French translation, however, the word "pause" is replaced by the expression "un temps" (literally "a time", meaning a moment of pause in the lines), which, though indicating the same action, reduces the character's agency and the implications of the given pause within the utterance, and appears only 516 times. Though this conceptual change in the terms used is only relevant when dealing with the play in written format, the number of times that this happens throughout the play is very significant also for its readership as well as for an audience watching this piece on stage. In the French text, Winnie seems to hesitate less, these pauses are now phrased in such a way that they imply less lack of assurance and more of a dramatic pause within the utterance to add strength to her speech. Nevertheless, her voice breaks 3 times in the original text and 6 in *Oh, les Beaux Jours!* which means an interesting shift from the direction taken by Beckett in reshaping the portrayal of the character. By adding

assertiveness to her speech, the author transforms the French version of the character into a much stronger ideal of a female, however, by duplicating the number of times in which she is so emotionally affected that her “voice breaks,” she is bound to show fragility. Similarly, it could also be argued that it is precisely the unrestrained expression of emotions that can be culturally understood as strong within the target culture. Winnie’s ways of speaking in the French version of the text are meant to construct the idea of a strong but sensitive woman that differs from the stereotype of femininity within anglophone cultures that is used for the representation of her identity in *Happy Days*.

Her actions are the point in which the greatest change is made in terms of constructing the gender role she represents. Even though many of the action verbs referring to this character remain similar in the French version of the text in terms of meaning, the number of times in which she performs these actions is much lower. Verbs such as “d’essuyer” (“to wipe”) appear only twice in the French version, whereas “wipes” appears 7 in the original text, and many of the actions that had to do with inspecting and rummaging her bag do not even appear, or do so only a few times, as presented in Table 3. The major change, however, is the addition of the actions “lui assène un coup” (“hits him”) and “nouveau coup” (“new hit”) in the stage directions, which indicate that Winnie strikes her male counterpart with her parasol. This indicates a great shift in the portrayal of femininity in the French version of the play, for though part of the criticism previously discussed still stands, that pertaining to the alienating nature of idealised gender roles is here reinterpreted.

The alteration of the female character of *Oh, Les Beaux Jours!* has major implications in the analysis of the play. Whereas the original Winnie embodied the role of the “female slave” discussed by Cameron, the French Winnie, though maintaining several of her generally understood as “feminine traits,” is presented in a much more assertive way, deviating from the standards of femininity used to construct the inner criticism within the text. This reformulation of the character is far from detrimental to the original critique; it contributes to the humanisation of Winnie. By allowing the female character to deviate from the standard constraints of femininity in anglophone Western society, Beckett is portraying an individual whose actual identity does not fully conform to the societal expectations attached to it in either culture, while still defining her struggle to become the woman that she has been taught

enjoys a happier life. The French Winnie is a three-dimensional character, her behaviour fluctuates and reflects different points in the spectrum of gender, which highlights the alienation she suffers when complying to submit to the male character's dominance.

3.3.2. Changes in the portrayal of Willie's masculinity

When it comes to analysing the portrayal of the male character within the French version of the play, *AntConc* does not retrieve as much significant data as in the case of his female counterpart. The most significant change that takes place in this regard is the now subversive sexual connotation that is attached to his motion verbs when he interacts with the mound of dirt. In the French text, this mound of dirt is referred to as "mamelon," which is a polysemic word in this language meaning both "hill" and "nipple." This adds a sexual layer to the portrayal of masculinity that was crafted in the original text. Despite this, the French Willie remains the same, no major translation choices are made with regards to the portrayal of the gender role he embodies. Also, it could be argued that this particular change does not in fact alter the portrayal of this character when the play is being performed, since, whereas the audience can clearly see Winnie "rummaging" in her bag or "inspecting herself in the mirror", the specific word used to refer to a prop in the play is never uttered, so it would only be relevant when actually reading the work.

Beckett's choice of performing significant changes in the portrayal of the female character within the play and not doing so in the case of the male character raises questions that lie beyond the scope of this paper. The author's critique seems to be more focalised on the objectification and alienation suffered by Winnie, and somehow the masculine element in the play works as a silent mechanism of oppression with which to drive her behaviour. This fact maybe led to a lower amount of textual altering in the case of Willie, though Winnie was perceived as the focus of the text and humanised in the French version to make the audience sympathise with her in a higher degree, he is left as a mere stereotype, just as in the original version, a conceptualisation of an oppressive figure embodied by a character. However, since only the stage directions are observed in this study, many linguistic elements having to do with how the characters are portrayed through what they say are left behind, and further research could be performed on the choices made in this regard.

4. Conclusions

In *Happy Days* Samuel Beckett creates a stereotypical representation of the gender roles embodied by the main characters of the play to construct a critique of the alienation deriving from the social conventions surrounding one's behaviour and personal relationships. Making use of corpus linguistics to delve into the stage directions of this text, this paper has shed light on the language used to construct this dichotomy in character portrayal while scaffolding the given critique. Understanding the linguistic peculiarities of gendered representations in texts such as this one raises awareness on the way fiction helps perpetuate these stereotypical conventions of masculinity and femininity and adds an extra layer to the study of this author's way of crafting characters.

The observation of this phenomenon calls for further study of the ways in which Beckett's characters are portrayed and altered in each version of the texts he later translated himself. An analysis of the complete utterances of each character in *Happy Days* would reveal more stylistic peculiarities in the author's portrayal of gender roles as well as the ways in which they are changed in its French version. Also, even more depth with regards to the study of the personal style of the author in the crafting of characters and choices taken in translation would be gained by compiling a bigger corpus and scrutinising recurrent patterns in several of his works.

It is also worth noting that there are questions that still remain for the fields of translation and literary studies. The analysis of this text through the perspective of gender studies reveals that authors such as Samuel Beckett were to some extent aware of discrepancies in the notions of gender in different cultures and, as in the case of *Happy Days*, were able to adjust their texts accordingly. However, the idea of self-translating authors or translators performing (or not) changes on the text to adjust to different perceptions of gender when needed opens new lines of research. Delving into these kinds of choices in adapting texts in translation would benefit the academic area of translation studies greatly by expanding its scope to constantly changing realities.

Similarly, the notion of gender not only changes across cultures, but also through time, with the arts, and plays such as *Happy Days*, being one of the elements that have helped renegotiating the terms in which they are understood. The study of stage directions in textual form has proven to be successful in retrieving information regarding the portrayal of gender in times prior to the possibility of easily recording theatre performances. However, the choices that production companies, directors and actors or actresses might have made in each production of the play will forever remain unknown, in spite of their possible impact in reshaping gender roles. Due to the lack of data on these choices, there is nothing to be done but to resort to the original play only in the analysis of these matters, but further studies pertaining to stage directions and the construction of gender roles in translation should consider performances as textual data in themselves to gain a more synoptic view on this issue.

This paper has shown the potential of corpus linguistics as a tool with which to bridge gaps between stylistics, translation and gender studies. By performing concordance searches within sets of corpora containing the plays *Happy Days* and *Oh, Les Beaux Jours!* by Samuel Beckett, it has illustrated the stylistic choices taken by the author in portraying masculinity and femininity in both texts. It therefore shows the possibility of empirically contrasting stylistic choices pertaining the representation of gender roles in literature and translation, not only in self-translating authors, but any piece of writing of relevance because of its given sociocultural impact. The possibilities that corpus linguistics brings about for gender, stylistics and translation studies are endless. More research following this methodology could illustrate how gender roles are crafted and therefore perpetuated or challenged in other literary trends, and how they have been brought into other cultures through certain stylistic and translation changes. By allowing computerised tools to take part in the research processes within different fields of humanities, more meeting points for subdisciplines are found, adding further layers of meaning and complexity to the conclusions drawn from the texts at stake.

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