

Grace Wilkins
Professor Alina Cherry
FREN 5600 - Translation Studies
20 December 2021

Correspondance (1944-1959) / Correspondence (1944-1959)

Albert Camus and Maria Casarès

La proposition pour la traduction de *Correspondance (1944-1959)*

Pour mon projet de traduction final, j'ai décidé d'examiner une collection étendue de lettres romantiques échangées entre l'écrivain et le philosophe Albert Camus et l'actrice estimée Maria Casarès à partir de 1944-1959. Dans mon exploration plus approfondie des nombreuses œuvres produites par Albert Camus de son vivant – Camus étant une de mes idoles littéraires, dont le lyrisme et perspicacité existentielle en tant qu'écrivain ne cesseront jamais de résonner en moi – j'ai découvert que pendant qu'il était au sommet de sa carrière littéraire, il semble qu'il s'abandonnait tout autant, sinon plus profondément, à cette correspondance remarquable avec Maria Casarès qui est trop souvent négligée.

Publié dans son intégralité dans sa seule langue d'origine, le français, pour cette correspondance (qui est comprise de plus de 850 courriers, s'étendant sur plus de quinze années et 1200 pages), il semble que la traduction de la collection complète a prouvé trop intimidant, ou peut-être pas ne vaut-il pas l'effort pour le traducteur anglais. J'espère que ma traduction de l'avant-propos et les six premières lettres écrites par Albert Camus dans cet échange, donné ici, apportent un éclairage aux raisons pour lesquelles c'est loin d'être le cas. Ici, nous voyons

l'écrivain sous un autre jour entièrement: cela de la vulnérabilité et l'abandon sans précédent d'un garçon dans les affres d'un amour puissamment palpable.

Bien qu'il y ait quelque chose à dire à propos de la lecture d'un texte dans sa langue source, je crois que la seule existence de *Correspondance* en français limite son accessibilité pour les non-francophones qui pourraient être intéressés par le côté plus personnel de l'écriture de Camus. Et pourquoi, je me demande, un texte si intime, un texte qui comble le fossé (au propre comme au figuré) entre deux personnes éclatantes, ne devrait-il pas également pouvoir combler un fossé linguistique? De considérer la légère absurdité d'une telle situation est de commencer à considérer le processus de pensée d'Albert Camus, l'hôte principal de la vision du monde absurde, lors de la rédaction de ces innombrables notes à Casarès. Mais sans une bonne traduction pour les anglophones, on peut ne jamais attendre que pour Camus, qui savait bien que la vie signifiait une confrontation entre le besoin humain et le silence déraisonnable du monde, Maria a lui donné une voix ou autrement, il n'a rien entendu. Elle a fourni, pour lui, une petite sorte de méthodologie pour sa folie, s'il y en a jamais eu un. Ça, c'est pourquoi traduire *Correspondance* vaut la peine. Cette vue incomparable sur la vie et l'amour d'Albert Camus nous rappelle que même si la vie est intrinsèquement dénuée de sens, les connexions entre nous lui donnent de la couleur, de la musique et une sorte de raison pour être ici.

Mais bien sûr, cette traduction n'était pas sans difficultés. D'imiter le style d'un auteur acclamé dans une autre langue n'est pas une tâche facile, et de rendre justice à l'écrivain et à son travail et style est toujours une priorité absolue. Mais tout aussi important est l'interprétation créative de mots en français en anglais, et de savoir quand vous pouvez prendre un certain

contrôle créatif avec le texte. Cette traduction nécessitait les deux. J'ai également pris la décision de l'exécutif d'omettre des pièces de l'avant-propos et quelques notes de bas de page par souci de clarté, de continuité et le nombre de pages pour cette traduction spécifique. Je vais lister quinze (de nombreux) exemples de difficultés et de challenges que j'ai rencontré avec la traduction de la commencement de *Correspondance* ici, avec quelques techniques que j'ai utilisée pour les résoudre:

A. Difficultés dans l'Avant-propos

1. *jour de débarquement allié* → J'ai eu des difficultés avec cet expression parce que aux Etats-Unis, nous connaissons le 6 juin, 1944 comme "D-Day," mais je ne pensais pas que le ton plus informel de "D-Day" convenait ici, alors j'ai utilisé une traduction littérale: "the day of the Allied landings."
2. Le présent de l'indicatif était utilisé par intermittence dans l'avant-propos. J'ai décidé de changer ça d'être plutôt au passé pour souci de clarté, dans une sorte de transposition.
3. le verbe *réussir* dans un sens romantique → Quelques traductions littérales de ce verbe cèdent les mots "to pass" or "to succeed," mais ni l'un ni l'autre n'exprimait de manière adéquate le contexte du développement de l'amour. J'ai choisi le mot "created" dans une sorte de modulation pour améliorer la compréhension de cette phrase.
4. *l'actrice avait l'océan pour élément* → Dans une utilisation de modulation, j'ai transformé cette phrase à une ligne un peu plus confortable pour les anglophones: à la place de "the actress had the ocean for element," j'ai écrit "the actress was one with the ocean."

5. les *Actuelles* → Je ne pouvais pas trouver une traduction littérale en ligne pour cette œuvre de Camus, comme je pourrais pour les autres titres de ses œuvres ici. J'ai finalement décidé de traduire "les *Actuelles*," comme "*Algerian Chronicles*," le titre le plus étroitement lié à l'ancien. Je pense que c'était une sorte d'adaptation.

B. Difficultés avec les lettres de *Correspondance*

6. les bars de Paris s'appellent *Cyrano et Frégate* → Parmi quelques difficultés rencontrées dans cette lettre étaient les noms propres de ces bars à Paris. J'ai recherché l'activité alentour Boulevard Saint-Germain pendant les années quarantes, et j'ai trouvé que ces places étaient bars populaires à ce moment-là. J'ai gardé leurs noms français.

7. *Rue de Bac*, etc. → Une difficulté similaire arrivé avec les noms de rues à Paris. Il y a la question de traduire ou de ne pas traduire ces titres, mais la réponse est de garder le nom original dans une autre forme de l'emprunt, comme avec numéro 6.

8. *Ma petite Maria* → Une phrase qui est répétée en continu tout au long de cette correspondance, j'ai beaucoup réfléchi d'utiliser une traduction littérale pour la remplacer ("my little Maria"), mais j'ai trouvé qu'utilisait "darling" à la place de "little" était une traduction supérieure et plus précise. L'équivalence était utilisée ici.

9. "*Mais bien entendu on ne peut pas se le dire comme ça, il faudrait que tu sois contre moi.*" → Cette phrase nécessitait un peu de décision créative. Pour bien exprimer cette idée—que le concept du besoin ne peut pas être simplement dit, mais doit être montré, j'ai transformé la dernière partie de cette phrase d'être plus cohérent pour les anglophones utilisant une transposition.

10. *je t'embrasse...* → Cette expression peut se traduire de diverses façons, et c'était difficile de savoir pour certain quoi exactement Camus disait avec ça. Alors, j'ai utilisé une variété de traductions différentes, selon le contexte, de "I embrace/hug you" à "I kiss you." C'est un exemple d'équivalence.

11/12. *ma pensée* → Les mots "ma pensée" apparaissent assez souvent dans ces lettres de Camus. Pourtant, (et c'est pourquoi cet exemple comprend les deux numéros 11 et 12) les mots prennent des sens différents avec des contextes différents. J'ai traduit ces mots comme "my thoughts" (qui n'est pas une traduction tout à fait littérale) et aussi comme "my mind." J'ai lutté avec les sens figuratifs et les sens littéraux pour ces mots, mais la traduction dépendait du contexte.

13. *pneu* → C'était très difficile pour comprendre le vrai sens du mot "pneu" utilisé ici. Un pneu est typiquement traduit comme "a tire," mais le contexte implique un autre mot pour une note ou un courrier, alors j'ai choisi la traduction "message" ici. Cela nécessitait beaucoup de réflexion, et j'ai utilisé une équivalence (je crois) pour ce qui semble être une sorte d'argot.

14/15. le mot *brave(s)* → Encore, le mot "brave" prennent des sens différents avec des contextes différents, et je l'ai utilisé de deux façons différentes (faisant ainsi de ce nombre 14 et 15) en lettre numéro six. "Brave" pourrait ne pas être traduit littéralement comme "brave" en anglais, alors j'ai utilisé les deux mots "good" and "honest" pour décrire les citoyens de la campagne où Camus réside à ce moment-là. Encore, j'ai joué avec les sens figuratifs et littéraux pour cette traduction.

La traduction de l'avant-propos et les six premières lettres par Albert Camus

FOREWORD

“A time will come when in spite of all the pain we will be light, joyful and true.”

Albert Camus to Maria Casarès,
February 26, 1950

Maria Casarès and Albert Camus met in Paris on June 6, 1944, the day of the Allied landings. She was twenty-one, he was thirty. Maria, born in A Coruña in Spain, had arrived in Paris at fourteen, in 1936, like other Spanish Republicans. Her father, Santiago Casares Quiroga, several times minister and head of government for the Second Spanish Republic, was forced into exile after the fall of Catalonia and Franco's seizure of power. A long time after, Maria Casarès would say that she was “born in November 1942 at the Théâtre des Mathurins.”

Albert Camus, then separated from his wife Francine Faure by the German occupation, was engaged in the French Resistance. Of Spanish descent by his mother, tuberculous like Santiago Casares Quiroga, also in exile as a native of Algeria. In October 1944, when Francine Faure could finally rejoin her husband, Maria Casarès and Albert Camus separated. But on June 6, 1948, they crossed paths on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, finding each other once more and never again parting ways.

This correspondence, uninterrupted for twelve years, shows well the evidently irresistible character of their love:

“We met, we recognized each other, we abandoned ourselves to one another, we created a burning love of pure crystal. Do you realize how happy we are and what we have been given?”

(Maria Casarès, *June 4, 1950.*)

In January 1960, death separated them, but they had lived twelve years “transparent to one another,” united, passionate, often at a distance, living fully, as one, every day, every hour in a truth that few people would have the strength to endure.

The letters from Maria Casarès allow us to discover the life of a major actress: her courage and her missteps, her excessive schedule, radio recordings, rehearsals, performances with their risks, film shoots. They also reveal the lives of actors at the Comédie-Française and the Théâtre national populaire (TNP). Maria Casarès performed alongside Michel Bouquet, Gérard Philipe, Marcel Herrand, Serge Reggiani, Jean Vilar, and she loved them.

A native of Galicia, the actress was one with the ocean: like it, she surged, broke, picked herself up and set off again with astonishing vitality. She lived happiness and unhappiness with the same intensity, surrendering herself deeply, entirely to it all.

** Omitted the translation of the following paragraph here, as I didn't find it to be essential for this project. **

The letters from Albert Camus are much more concise, but convey the same love for life, his passion for theater, his constant regard for the actors and their fragility. They also allude to subjects which were dear to him: the job of a writer, his doubts, the difficulties of writing in the face of tuberculosis. He spoke to Maria about what he was writing, the preface to *Betwixt and Between*, *The Rebel*, the *Algerian Chronicles*, *Exile and the Kingdom*, *The Fall*, *The First Man*, he never felt “up to it.” She tirelessly reassured him, she believed in him, in his work, not blindly, but because, as a woman, she knew that creation was the most powerful. And she knew how to say it, with sincerity and genuine conviction.

** Omitted the remainder of the foreword, up until the final two lines, for the sake of page count. **

Thank you to both of them. Their letters make the earth wider, space brighter, and the air lighter simply because they existed.

- CATHERINE CAMUS

CORRESPONDENCE
1944

1 – ALBERT CAMUS TO MARIA CASARÈS

[June 1944]

Dear Maria¹,

I have a business meeting at 6:30 pm at The New French Review with a Monte-Carlo publisher. From the NFR, we will most likely go to *Cyrano*, which is at the corner of Rue de Bac and Boulevard Saint-Germain. I will wait for you there until 7:30 pm. At 7:30, I will be at the *Frégate*, at the corner of Rue de Bac and the quays, where Marcel and Jean will be waiting for me. Finally, at 8 pm, the general meeting place will be at the corner of Rue de Beaune and the quays, at Voltaire. But I think you know that.

Excuse me for not being able to wait any longer. I kiss you.

AC

2 – ALBERT CAMUS TO MARIA CASARÈS

4:00 pm [June 1944]

My darling Maria,

I was hoping to meet you now by phoning your place. But I don't even have that time. So, between two meetings, I'm sending you this note. It doesn't mean anything, of course. But I suppose that you will find it when you get home tonight and then you will think of me. I'm tired, I need you. But of course, one cannot just say something like that—you need to be pressed up against me.

¹ Albert Camus and Maria Casarès met at the home of Michel and Zette Leiris during the performance-reading of Pablo Picasso's play *Desire Caught by the Tail* on March 19, 1944. The writer offered for the young actress, a former student of the National Academy of Dramatic Arts under contract at the Théâtre des Mathurins, to interpret the role of Martha in his *The Misunderstanding*. Rehearsals began and Albert Camus fell under the spell of the actress. On the night of June 6, 1944, at the end of an evening at director Charles Dullin's home, and the same day of the Allied landings in Normandy, they became lovers. Since October 1942, the young Algerian author had lived alone in the city: his wife Francine (née Faure), a teacher in Oran, Algeria, could not join him following the German occupation of the Southern region of France.

Good night, my dear. Sleep a lot, think of me very hard. I kiss you until tomorrow.

AC

3 – ALBERT CAMUS TO MARIA CASARÈS

Thursday, 10:00 pm [June 1944]

I just read your dedication, my dear, and now there is something in me that trembles. In vain I tell myself that sometimes we write about these things in a movement, without being entirely there – at the same time I say to myself that there are words you wouldn't write if you weren't feeling them.

I am so happy, Maria. Is that possible? What trembles in me, it's a sort of wild joy. But at the same time, I have this bitterness about your departure and the sadness in your eyes when you leave me. It is true that what I have with you always has had a mixed taste of happiness and of anxiety. But if you love me as you write, we must find something else. It is our time to love each other, and we have to want it hard enough and for long enough to surpass it all.

I don't like that clear view that you pretended to have tonight. When you have a soul, you tend to call lucidity what frustrates you and truth, everything that serves you. But this lucidity is as blind as anything else. There is only clairvoyance, which wants to achieve happiness. And I know that no matter how fleeting it is, how intimidating or how fragile, there is happiness ready for both of us if we extend our hand. But we must extend our hand.

I wait for tomorrow, you, your dear face. This evening, I was too tired to talk to you about this overflowing heart that you give me. There is something that is only ours, where I always reach you effortlessly. These are the hours when I am silent, and where, then, you doubt me. But it doesn't matter, my heart is full of you. Goodbye, dear. Thank you for those few words

which have given me so much joy—thank you for this loving soul whom I love. I embrace you with all of my might.

AC

4 – ALBERT CAMUS TO MARIA CASARÈS

1:00 am [June 1944]

My darling Maria,

I just got home, I am not tired at all, and I want to have you near me so badly that I have come to my table to talk to you in the best way that I can. I didn't dare tell Marcel [Herrand] that I did not want to go drink his champagne. And then you were with so many people! But after half an hour, I had had enough, all I needed was you. I have loved you so much, Maria, all evening, seeing you, hearing that voice which for me has now become irreplaceable. On the way up to Marcel's, I found a text of the play. I can't read it anymore without hearing you; it's my way of being happy with you.

I try to imagine what you are doing, and wonder in astonishment why you're not here. I tell myself that what should be in the law, in the only law that I know, that of passion and of life, is for you to come home with me tomorrow and for us to finish together an evening that we will have started together. But I also know that this is in vain and that there is everything else.

But at least, don't forget about me when you leave me. Don't forget what I told you for so long at my place, that one day, before everything speeds up. That day I spoke to you from the depths of my heart. And I wish, I so wish, that we were to each other as I told you then we had to be. Don't leave me; I can't imagine anything worse than losing you. What would I do now without that face that moves me so deeply, that voice and that body against me?

Besides, that's not what I wanted to tell you today. Only of your presence here, the longing I feel for you and my thoughts this evening. Good night, my dear. May tomorrow and the other days come quickly when you will belong more to me than that damn play. Embracing you with all of my might.

AC

5 – ALBERT CAMUS TO MARIA CASARÈS

4:00 pm [June 1944]

My darling Maria,

I don't know if you'll think of calling me. And at that hour, I don't know where to reach you. I do not have anything specific to tell you, anyway, besides of this wave that has carried me since yesterday and this need for the trust and the love that I've found in you. How long ago I wrote to you!

If you find this message when you get home tonight, call me. Don't forget about me between now and Saturday. Think of me throughout these days. Remind yourself that I stay with you, every single minute. Goodbye, my love, my dear love; I kiss you like yesterday.

Albert

6 – ALBERT CAMUS TO MARIA CASARÈS

Saturday, 2:00 pm [July 1, 1944]

My darling Maria,

The trip was good and uneventful.² We left at 7:20 am, drove until 9:00 am, then walked seven kilometers to pass a marshalling yard which had been bombed the day before; at 11:00am,

² Feeling threatened as a result of his clandestine activities in the direction of the newspaper *Combat*, Albert Camus must leave Paris to take shelter. By bicycle and train, he reached the house of his friend, philosopher Brice Parain, head of the editorial secretariat for Gaston Gallimard, in Verdelot (Seine-et-Marne), in the company of two nephews of Gaston Gallimard's: Pierre (son of Jacques) and Michel (son of Raymond), and the wife of the first, Janine (née Jeanne Thomasset) – who will marry in a second marriage, in October 1946, the aforementioned Michel.

we got back on a train until noon. We waited two hours in Meaux so that we could catch another train. Forty-five minutes later, another change, and by 5:00 pm, we had arrived. I was tired as a black dog, but glad to be done. I was offered a house, one wing of which was bombed in 1940, but which was otherwise liveable. It's covered in dust, though, and I have forty-eight hours to make it suitable with the help of a good local woman.

Moving on to the description. The region is a valley whose two slopes are covered in average crops and trees. It's chilly here; there are the sounds of water, the smells of grass, cows, some pleasant children, birdsong. In moving up a bit, you gain more open spaces where you can breathe better. The village: a few homes and some honest people. As for the house, it is buried in the center of a fairly large garden, full of trees and the last roses of the year (they are not red). It is in the shadow of the old church, and the upper part of the garden is a sunny meadow just under the church buttresses. You can sunbathe there. I'm in the process of setting up a bedroom and an office on the first floor. When that's done, I will describe it to you.

I think that at least Michel [Gallimard] will be able to stay with me. Pierre and Janine [Gallimard] will probably be sleeping elsewhere. I am looking forward to their arrival to decide all this, and above all because I hope they will give me news from you.

I am writing all of this to you as clearly as I can because I think what you want first and foremost is specific information. But my thinking is very different: since Thursday evening it's with you that I've been living. It seemed to me that I had left you badly and that this separation, in the midst of so many uncertainties, under a sky so full of dangers, was difficult for me to bear. My hope is that you will come. If you can do it by car, do it, it will be easier. Otherwise, you'll have to make that extensive journey that I did. There is also the bike, and there I can go to meet you. Don't forget your promise, my dear, that is what I am living on right now. I believe I can

find peace in this area. With some trees, the wind, a river, I will be able to build back that inner silence that I have lost for so long. But that is not possible if I have to endure your absence and chase after your image and its memory. I have no intention of playing desperate or letting myself go. From Monday, I'll get to work and I will work, that's for sure. But I want you to help me and to come—especially to come! You and I have so far met and loved each other in fever, impatience or peril. I don't regret anything, and the days I just lived seem long enough to justify a life. But there is another way of loving each other, a more secret and more harmonious fullness, which is no less beautiful and of which I also know we are capable. Here is where we will find the time. Don't forget that, my darling Maria, and make sure that we still have this chance for our love.

In a few hours you will be performing. Today and tomorrow my mind will be on you. I will wait for the moment when you sit down, saying how wonderful this is, and I will also wait for the third act, with that cry that I loved so much. Oh! My darling, what a hard thing to be away from what you love. I am deprived of your face and there is nothing in the world that I cherish more.

Write to me a lot and often, don't leave me alone. I will wait for you as long as it takes, I feel an endless patience in everything that concerns you. But at the same time I have an impatience in my blood that hurts me, a desire to burn everything and devour everything – this is my love for you. Goodbye, dear Victoire. Stay close to me in thought and come, come quickly, please. I kiss you with all my passion.

You can write, as agreed, to Mrs. Parain's, in Verdelot, Seine-et-Marne.

Michel³

³ Albert Camus then signs his letters to Maria Casares with the name Michel.