



Émile Zola Society, 8 March 2025

Computer-Assisted Translation of *La Joie de vivre*: Is AI the new CAT's whiskers?

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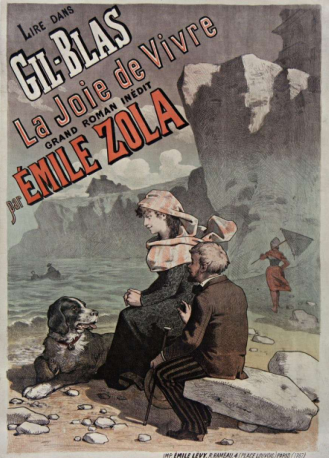
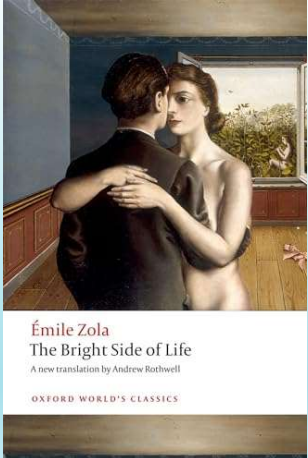
1

Computer-Assisted Translation – and literature?

Three technologies

- **Translation memory (TM)**:-
 - Re-cycles previous (human) translations
 - Repetitions, terminology management
- **(Neural) Machine translation (NMT)**:-
 - Translates automatically
 - Greatly improved semantics since 2014
- **Generative AI**:-
 - Writes, translates, paraphrases, 'reasons', discusses...

2

Émile Zola
The Bright Side of Life
A new translation by Andrew Rothwell
OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

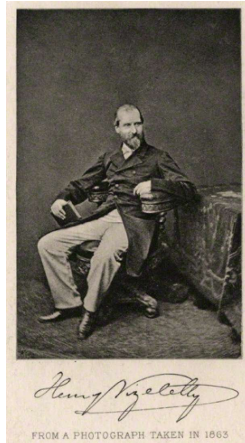
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Critical evaluations and English translations of *La Joie de vivre*

- **French review:** 'l'un des meilleurs romans d'amour écrits sous la Troisième République' (survey in *Le Figaro*, cited in Franzén, 1958: 9)
- **English review:** 'Mainly a colourless lifeless novel, the story introduces ten-year-old Pauline as an impossibly angelic child who grows into an impossibly angelic adult [...] This smell of burning martyr – which reminds me of Dickens in his worst sentimental moments – continues throughout the novel.' (Anon. blog, 14 June 2009)
- Translation alignment gives a close-up view of this disparity
- Ernest Alfred Vizetelly (1887/1889) – *How Jolly Life Is* (later, *The Joy of Life*, Chatto & Windus, 1901)
- Jean Stewart (1955) *Zest for Life* – long out of print

4

Zola's Victorian Translator and Publisher



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1863



Ernest Alfred Vizetelly

5

NEW EDITION
THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY.
XIII.
HOW JOLLY LIFE IS!
A REALISTIC NOVEL.
By EMILE ZOLA.
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ERNEST ALFRED VIZETELLY.
Illustrated with EIGHT ENGRAVINGS.
LONDON:
VIZETELLY & CO., 48, HENDON STREET,
CORNHILL, 189.

Criticism has fallen fiercely upon most of the works of fiction which have proceeded from M. Émile Zola's busy pen — at times the criticism of envy, at others the criticism of prejudice, and again the criticism of the blind. Indeed, in the long series of volumes dealing with the Rougon-Macquart family there is but one which has commanded the approval of friends and foes alike; and that is the present story 'La Joie de vivre'.

When this book first appeared in Paris its merits fairly took away the breath of the envious, and its superiority over every-day fiction was so manifest that the blindest began to see. As for the prejudiced, all that the most captious among them could lay hold of for rebuke was a few passages contained in the tenth chapter.

E. A. Vizetelly, Preface to *How Jolly Life Is!* (1889), v.

6

Alignment Editor 1.5 - aligned JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly

LF	HF	HF	LF
1	La Joie de vivre Émile Zola 1884	CH3	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly
2	Chapitre 3	CHAPTER III	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly
3	Deux jours plus tard, une grande barre découvrait les rochers profonds.	Two days later a very low tide laid the rocks quite bare.	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly
4	Dans le coup de passion qui emportait Casaire au début de chaque entreprise nouvelle, il ne voulait pas attendre le ventage, il partait jambes nues, une veste de toile simplement jetée sur son costume de bain / en Pauline était de l'angote, un costume de bain elle aussi; chaussée de gros souliers, qu'elle réservait pour la pêche aux crevettes.	Barbare, brimming over with the wild enthusiasm which always filled him at the outset of any of his new schemes, was impatient to be off to the seaweed. So away he hurried, with bare legs and just a canvas jacket over his bathing-cosume. Pauline went with him to share in his investigations. She, too, wore a bathing costume and the heavy shoes which she used when bound on shrimping expeditions.	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly
5	Quand ils furent à un kilomètre des Falaises, au milieu du champ des algues ruisselant encore du flot qui se retirait, l'enthousiasme du jeune homme éclata, comme s'il découvrait cette immense immense d'anches marines, qu'ils avaient cent fois traversée ensemble.	When they had got about half a mile from the cliffs, and had reached the centre of the spreading tract of seaweed, still streaming with the water of the ebbing tide, the young man's enthusiasm burst forth as if he were only now discovering that hundreds of millions of marine plants over which he and Pauline had fished a hundred times before.	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly
6	— Regarde ! regarde ! criait-il. En voilà de la marchandise ! ... Et on n'en fait rien, et il y en a ainsi jusqu'à plus de cent mètres de profondeur !	"Look! look!" he cried: "what money we shall make out of it all! and nobody has ever thought of making any use of it before!"	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly
7	— Mais il n'y en avait pas assez.	— "But he hasn't got quite enough."	JV Chapter 3 fr-JV CH3 Vizetelly

7

Re-translating *La Joie de vivre* in memoQ

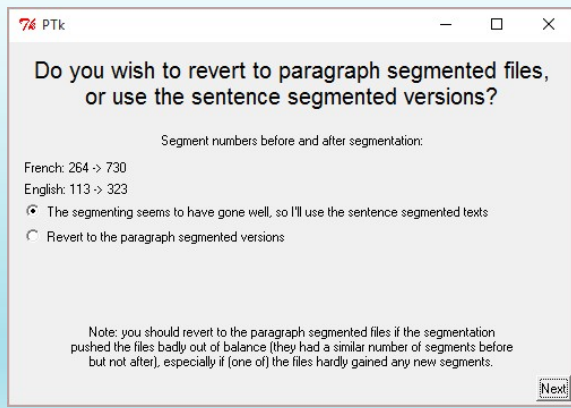
interferently, that year Desbœuf was declared bankrupt. Though the Desbœuf was not expected, it came as a terrible blow to the Chartrons. They were left with three thousand francs a year from their investments in stocks, and everything they were able to recover from the collapse of the timber business. Some twelve thousand francs were also invested in order to bring their total income to three hundred a month. And so the second fortune Mademoiselle Chartrons was obliged to take fifty francs more of Pauline money — her share from investment was nothing with all that, and she could not send her money abroad. These were hundred francs to be a weekly machine, an eiffel tower for potatoes, and fifty francs more and again for fish. She had come to the point of providing for the needs of Lazard and the work in washed little sums, which she did out day by day. Towards the end of each month she was often to be seen strolling through the streets and the coming back again with her head in her hands, from which she evidently knew both her own and her sister's, to make good the amount of a bill of 100 francs or more, she advanced to her sister in order to maintain her position. Pauline, dans l'absence de son mari, n'avait pas de quoi vivre, elle avait besoin de l'argent de son mari, elle avait besoin de l'argent de son mari, elle avait besoin de l'argent de son mari.

8

Line	French	English	Segmentation
353	Une crise folle de colère contre Véronique, qui ne l'aimait pas, disait-elle, l'avait mise au lit pour deux jours.	A mad outburst of anger against Veronique, who didn't like her, she declared, made her so ill that she had to stop in bed for a couple of days.	JV Chapter 2 fr-JV Ch2 Vizetelly
354	Puis, c'étaient en elle des changements qui la troublaient, un lent développement de tout son corps, des veines naissantes, comme engorgées et douloureuses, des ombres noires, d'une légèreté de duvet, au plus caché et au plus délicat de sa peau.	Then came changes in herself which disquieted and distressed her.	JV Chapter 2 fr-JV Ch2 Vizetelly
355	Quand elle s'étudiait, d'un regard furtif, le soir, à son coucher, elle éprouvait un malaise, une confusion qui lui faisait vite souffler la bougie.		JV Chapter 2 fr-JV Ch2 Vizetelly
356	Sa voix prenait une sonorité qu'elle trouvait laide, elle se déplaisait ainsi, elle passait les jours dans une sorte d'attente nerveuse, espérant elle ne savait quoi, n'osant parler de ces choses à personne.		JV Chapter 2 fr-JV Ch2 Vizetelly
357	Enfin, vers la Noël, l'état de Pauline inquiéta madame Chanteau.	About Christmas-time Pauline's health was such as to alarm Madame Chanteau.	JV Chapter 2 fr-JV Ch2 Vizetelly
358	Elle se plaignait de vives douleurs aux reins, une courbature		JV Chapter 2 fr-JV Ch2 Vizetelly

9

Alignment of Chapter 10



PTk

Do you wish to revert to paragraph segmented files, or use the sentence segmented versions?

Segment numbers before and after segmentation:

French: 264 -> 730
English: 113 -> 323

The segmenting seems to have gone well, so I'll use the sentence segmented texts

Revert to the paragraph segmented versions

Note: you should revert to the paragraph segmented files if the segmentation pushed the files badly out of balance (they had a similar number of segments before but not after), especially if (one of) the files hardly gained any new segments.

Next

10

Chapter 10: Louise's labour

- 20 pages of extreme emotion and medical detail, ending: 'Des excréments jaillirent, l'enfant tomba dans un dernier effort, sous une pluie de sang et d'eaux sales.'
- Vizetelly's TT summary:

It was one of those dread hours when life and death wrestle together, when human science and skill battle to overcome and correct the errors of Nature.

More than once did the Doctor pause, fearing a fatal issue.

The patient's agony was terrible, but at last science triumphed, and a child was born.

It was a boy.

11

Chapter 3

Lazare's attraction to Pauline

Mais il n'y avait, dans ces contacts de chaque heure, que **la caresse** permise échangée sous des yeux de grands-parents, une bonne amitié **chauffée à peine d'une pointe de joie sensuelle, entre cousin et cousine qui doivent s'épouser un jour.** (p. 887)

But at those moments there was nothing beyond **decorous permissible tenderness**, such as might have been manifested openly before the members of their family.

12

<p>À partir de ce jour, il évita <u>jusqu'à la tiédeur de son haleine, jusqu'au frôlement de sa robe</u>. La pensée d'une faute bête, <u>d'une chute derrière une porte</u>, révoltait son honnêteté. <u>Malgré la résistance instinctive de la jeune fille</u>, il la voyait à lui, <u>étourdie par le sang à la première étreinte, l'aimant au point de se donner entière, s'il l'exigeait</u>; et il voulait <u>avoir de la sagesse pour deux</u>, il comprenait qu'il serait le grand coupable, dans <u>une aventure dont son expérience pouvait seule prévoir le danger</u>. Mais son amour augmentait de cette lutte soutenue contre lui-même. (p. 888)</p>	<p>From that day he <i>guarded himself</i> from <i>contact</i> with her. His <i>sense of honour</i> rebelled against the thought of any <i>disgraceful lapse</i>; he was quite conscious that <i>in heart and soul she was entirely his own</i>; but he felt that <i>respect and protection were her due</i>, and that in <i>dangerous dallying</i> his would be the guilt alone. However, this very struggle on his part only served to increase his love.</p>
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13

Insights from the alignment

- Vizetelly sometimes splits or joins Zola's sentences-interesting options for the re-translator
- Contemporary solutions to problems of Zola's style (numerous substantivized abstractions, over-use of pluperfect tense)
- Conventional expectations of late-C19 English novel style:
 - Tendency to verbose amplification
 - Frequent explicitation of spatial relations (e.g. as characters move around the house)
 - Refusal of *style indirect libre*
- Word-level view of **Victorian morality** and ideology through Vizetelly's self-censorship

14

Vizetelly's unmentionables

- Feminine underclothes, undressing, nudity, body parts
- Puberty, menstruation
- Female desire (lust, jealousy)
- Physical intimacy (or even contact), bedrooms
- Feline reproductive behaviour
- Pregnancy and childbirth ('enceinte', 'accoucheuse', 'state of health' – 'midwife' never used)
- Illicit sexual relations (marital infidelity, prostitution, child mothers)
- Physiology (Lazare's medical textbooks):
 - 'machine humaine' (2:384), 'mécanique de la vie' (3:101), 'fragilité du mécanisme' (7:300); Louise's delivery in Ch. 10

15

Consequences of EAV's self-censorship

- Pauline's character and motivations are grossly simplified
- Most of the 'love triangle' drama is flattened
- Pauline's agency (narrative, moral) is weakened
- Zola's portrayal of Pauline as a woman is betrayed:
 - Bodily experience
 - Emotions and desire
 - Self-education
- Theme of physiology and its link to Naturalism obliterated
- Victorian morality experienced in minute detail
- A **stereo(phonicscopic)** reading of the ST

16



17

Chapter 8: Pauline's sexual jealousy

D'un geste violent, elle fit glisser son jupon, enleva sa chemise ; et, nue maintenant, elle se contemplait encore. Ce n'était donc pas pour elle **cette moisson de l'amour** ? Jamais sans doute les noces ne viendraient. Son regard descendait de sa **gorge, d'une dureté de bouton éclatant de sève**, à ses hanches larges, à son ventre où dormait une maternité puissante. Elle était **mûre** pourtant, elle voyait la vie **gonfler** ses membres, **fleurir** aux **plus secrets de sa chair** en **toison noire**, elle respirait son odeur de femme, comme un **bouquet épanoui** dans l'attente de la **fécondation**. [...] Ah ! misère ! la pluie rouge de la puberté tombait là, aujourd'hui, pareille aux larmes vaines que sa virginité pleurait en elle. Désormais, chaque mois ramènerait ce **jailissement de grappe mûre, écrasée aux vendanges**, et jamais elle ne serait femme, et elle vieillirait dans la stérilité !

(Zola, 1964: 1033-4)

18

Vizetelly's
reduction

Alas! the harvest of love was not for her!

To another were given the embraces of that husband for whose coming she herself had looked forward for so many years!

Never would she be a wife or mother; the years would come and go, and she would age in utter loneliness.

19

20

Translation Suggestions 3 TRACK CHANGES TM Search Glossary

La coulée rouge d'une goutte de sang, le long de sa cuisse, l'étonnait. The red flow of a drop of blood down his thigh astonished him. **MT**

DeepL PRO

La coulée rouge d'une goutte de sang, le long de sa cuisse, l'étonnait. The red flow of a drop of blood down along his thigh astonsurprised him. **MT**

Google Translate (Automatic Translation)

La coulée rouge d'une goutte de sang, le long de sa cuisse, l'étonnait. The red flow of a drop of blood down along his thigh astonished him. **MT**

Amazon Translate

21

AR La coulée rouge d'une goutte de sang, le long de sa cuisse, l'étonnait.

Translate

The red trickle of a drop of blood down her thigh surprised her. << COPY

She was surprised by the crimson trail of a drop of blood along her thigh. << COPY

- Both translations maintain the vivid imagery of the original sentence, capturing the unexpected and surprising nature of the blood's appearance.
- The first translation leans more on a straightforward

Definition Explain Translate Rephrase Alternatives Spelling Proofread Back Translation Terminology Simplify Write

22

ChatGPT Log in

What can I help with?

You are a literary translator from French to British English working on the novel *La Joie de vivre* (1884) by Emile Zola. Please translate the following passage in a literary style, taking care to use historically accurate terminology as appropriate: "D'un geste violent, elle fit glisser son jupon, enleva sa chemise ; et, nue maintenant, elle se contemplait encore. Ce n'était donc pas..."

+ Attach Search Reason

Code Summarize text Make a plan Brainstorm Analyze data More

23

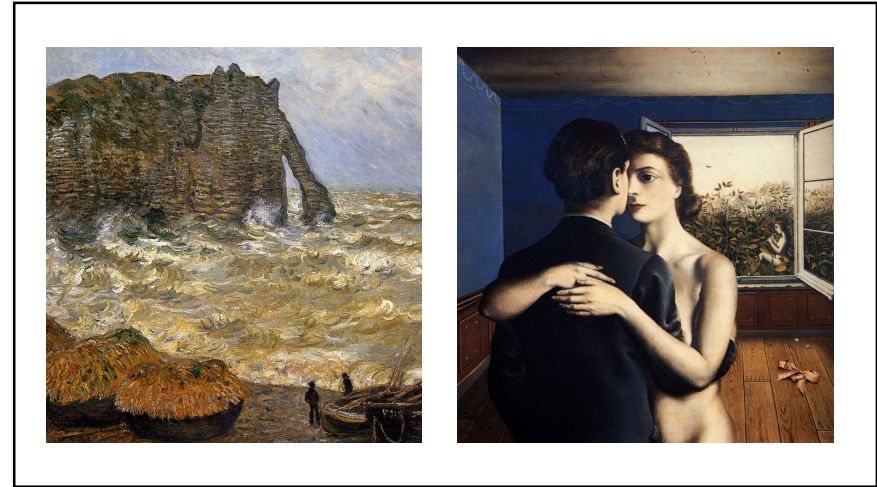
With a violent gesture, she slid off her petticoat and removed her shift; and, now naked, she still gazed upon herself. Was this not, then, the harvest of love meant for her? Surely the nuptials would never come. Her gaze descended from her throat—its firmness like a bud bursting with sap—down to her ample hips, to her belly in which a potent maternity lay dormant. And yet she was ripe; she saw life swelling her limbs, blooming in the secret folds of her flesh, swathed in a dark fleece; she exuded the very scent of womanhood, like a bouquet in full bloom awaiting fertilisation. [...] Ah, misery! The red rain of puberty fell there today, like the vain tears that her virginity wept within her. Henceforth, each month would bring forth that burst of a ripened cluster, crushed as in the grape harvest, and she would never truly be a woman—she would age in sterility!

ChatGPT's full version

24



25



26

Conclusions

- Legacy TM can inform ('weight') translation decisions
- Multiple proposals reduce translation spade-work, allowing concentration on higher-level decisions
- TM and MT offer ready-made 'voicings' of the TT...
- ... which allow comparison and testing of sense, information flow, imagery, rhythm, etc.
- GenAI can provide more 'creative' options...
- ... and is more context-aware (but improvement is needed)
- Fully automatic literary translation remains below human quality...
- ... but tools can now act as useful 'cognitive collaborators' in the translation team

27

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28

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29

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Thank you!

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30