

OT: French translations

The Urth list — 7 messages, 3 voices, 05 Aug 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5477>

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gwern0 at gmail.com — 05 Aug 2009, 06:12

Hi everyone. This is a rather off-topic request, but bear with me. I'm desultorily learning myself some French this summer, and I've decided that since I'm only really interested in reading French (and not so much in speaking or writing it), that the best thing to do would be to simply translate some large French work into English and learn as I go*.

But when I tried with one text, I discovered my motivation was zero - as it was already translated. So I need something which hasn't been translated before; unfortunately, all the texts I know worth translating are the ones which **have** been translated!

Since Urth.netters seem to know everyone and everything worth knowing in literature, here's my challenge: what reasonably short, reasonably basic yet untranslated French text is there which I could translate? Bonus points if it's in the public domain, and triple bonus points if it's also Gene-Wolfe-related.

* I'm also developing a little program along the lines of

http://jtauber.com/blog/2008/02/10/a_new_kind_of_graded_reader/ but I can currently only test it on English texts; being able to work through a French text and see how it performs would let me tweak it.

gwern

brunians at brunians.org — 05 Aug 2009, 06:26 · in reply to gwern0 at gmail.com

Why not translate some GW short stories into French?

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Hi everyone. This is a rather off-topic request, but bear with me. I'm desultorily learning myself some French this summer, and I've decided that since I'm only really interested in reading French (and not so much in speaking or writing it), that the best thing to do would be to simply translate some large French work into English and learn as I go*.

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gwern_____

Jerry Friedman — 05 Aug 2009, 13:49 · in reply to gwern0 at gmail.com

--- On Wed, 8/5/09, gwern0 at gmail.com <gwern0 at gmail.com> wrote:

Hi everyone. This is a rather off-topic request, but bear with me. I'm desultorily learning myself some French this summer, and I've decided that since I'm only really interested in reading French (and not so much in speaking or writing it), that the best thing to do would be to simply translate some large French work into English and learn as I go*.

Si tu m'avais posé la question, je t'aurais dit que c'est complètement fou. Mais tu te connais — toi-m?me, et moi je ne te connais pas.

(Lucky for you my French isn't good enough to answer your question, so the rest of this post will be in English.)

But when I tried with one text, I discovered my motivation was zero - as it was already translated. So I need something which hasn't been translated before; unfortunately, all the texts I know worth translating are the ones which *have* been translated!

Since Urth.netters seem to know everyone and everything worth knowing in literature, here's my challenge: what reasonably short, reasonably basic yet untranslated French text is there which I could translate? Bonus points if it's in the public domain, and triple bonus points if it's also Gene-Wolfe-related.

I don't know any, but have you tried searching for "Gene Wolfe" on French-language pages (using Google Advanced Search, for example)? Or searching <http://www.amazon.fr/> ?

I suppose a French text on this subject is unlikely to be at a basic level, though.

For non-Wolfe pages, see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_needing_translation_from_French_Wikipedia

If you decide to do that, you'll also want to read

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:TRANSLATION>

Wikipedia is nice for this (and likewise for practicing writing in a foreign language, for those who want to do that) because you often get corrected.

I know people who have gotten good results from a different strategy for learning a foreign language--read a book in that language that they know well in their own. If you choose TBotNS, you can learn the French for quite common words such as "bordereau".

Jerry Friedman

Gwern Branwen — 05 Aug 2009, 16:08 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Wed, Aug 5, 2009 at 2:26 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:
Why not translate some GW short stories into French?

Well, I find French->English much easier; also, translations of anything by Wolfe would be derivative works and so copyvios. I'm sure Wolfe would not sue me if I happened to post a French translation online, but if I'm doing all this purely for my own edification, I can at least hew to my principles and produce Free stuff.

gwern

Gwern Branwen — 05 Aug 2009, 16:22 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On Wed, Aug 5, 2009 at 9:49 AM, Jerry Friedman<jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:
--- On Wed, 8/5/09, gwern0 at gmail.com <gwern0 at gmail.com> wrote:

Hi everyone. This is a rather off-topic request, but bear with me. I'm desultorily learning myself some French this summer, and I've decided that since I'm only really interested in reading French (and not so much in speaking or writing it), that the best thing to do would be to simply translate some large French work into English and learn as I go*.

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Ouch. It seemed like a good idea to me - if I want to read French, then the logical direction is French->English, not vice-versa....

I don't know any, but have you tried searching for "Gene Wolfe" on French-language pages (using Google Advanced Search, for example)? Or searching <http://www.amazon.fr/> ?

Amazon has a very impressive selection of Wolfe works - I was expecting to see Book of the New Sun at most, but I see Fifth Head of Cerberus, New Sun, Long Sun, Wizard-Knight, The Island of Doctor Death (strangely, it's just 'L'île du docteur Mort et autres histoires'. Maybe the publisher didn't get the joke.), the Book of Days, Peace... But same objection as with Brunians.

I suppose a French text on this subject is unlikely to be at a basic level, though.

For non-Wolfe pages, see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_needing_translation_from_French_Wikipedia

If you decide to do that, you'll also want to read

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Wikipedia is nice for this (and likewise for practicing writing in a foreign language, for those who want to do that) because you often get corrected.

...I feel very foolish now. Here I am, 5-6 years of Wikipedia editing, and my one thought was 'well, I don't want English->French, so anything Wikipedia (en->fr) is out' - never once thinking that there might be need of the other direction.

(Short articles aren't very good for testing my program, but that was the most minor of my desiderata, so no point carping about it.)

I know people who have gotten good results from a different strategy for learning a foreign language--read a book in that language that they know well in their own. ?If you choose TBotNS, you can learn the French for quite common words such as "bordereau".

Jerry Friedman

gwern

Jerry Friedman — 05 Aug 2009, 17:06 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

--- On Wed, 8/5/09, Gwern Branwen <gwern0 at gmail.com> wrote:

On Wed, Aug 5, 2009 at 9:49 AM, Jerry Friedman<jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:

--- On Wed, 8/5/09, gwern0 at gmail.com <gwern0 at gmail.com> wrote:

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Ouch. It seemed like a good idea to me - if I want to read French, then the logical direction is French->English, not vice-versa....

What I was thinking of as crazy was taking on a large work and giving yourself the extra task of putting it into good English, instead of just reading something that interests you. However, I may have underestimated your knowledge of French.

I don't know any, but have you tried searching for "Gene Wolfe" on French-language pages (using Google Advanced Search, for example)? ?Or searching <http://www.amazon.fr/> ?

Amazon has a very impressive selection of Wolfe works - I was expecting to see Book of the New Sun at most, but I see Fifth Head of Cerberus, New Sun, Long Sun, Wizard-Knight, The Island of Doctor Death (strangely, it's just 'L'?le du docteur Mort et autres histoires'. Maybe the publisher didn't get the joke.), the Book of Days, Peace... But same objection as with Brunians.

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I seem to have left out my point. I was hoping you could find an essay on Wolfe or a review of one of his writings. And I didn't realize you wanted a free text.

Jerry Friedman

Gwern Branwen — 10 Aug 2009, 02:28 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On Wed, Aug 5, 2009 at 1:06 PM, Jerry Friedman<jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:

I seem to have left out my point. ?I was hoping you could find an essay on Wolfe or a review of one of his writings. And I didn't realize you wanted a free text.

Well, in my first email I had public domain as a desideratum, and in my second I clarified/expanded that to 'Free' works. (Can't say I didn't try!)

gwern