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60 Years Asterix' *Tour de Gaule* and "Tour d'Europe" – Some Eurolinguistic Remarks on "idée fixe" and Other Ideas

Abstract

This study examines twelve versions of the Asterix volume *Tour de Gaule*, analyzing (1) how symbolic French language elements are conveyed, (2) how typical European linguistic elements are conveyed, and (3) whether certain versions are based not only on the French original but also on other versions. The analysis shows: (1) Only symbolic words that are internationally known as such are retained; others are adapted. (2) European linguistic elements can generally be found in more than two thirds of the versions. This applies to names (such as *Astérix*, *Idéfix*) and name components (-ix, -um) as well as to Latin phrases (*Ave, o, milia*, forms of address, quotations), the caricature of foreign (here: African) accents, and ambiguities (here: the word for "stars"). (3) As a rule, versions are based on the original or are original creations; orientation towards other versions is rare. Overall, the Asterix volumes contribute in many ways to the consolidation of European cultural heritage.

Sommaire

Cette étude examine douze versions du volume d'Astérix *Tour de Gaule*, en examinant (1) la manière dont le français symbolique est transmis, (2) la manière dont les éléments linguistiques européens typiques sont transmis, et (3) si certaines versions s'inspirent non seulement de l'original français, mais aussi d'autres versions. L'analyse montre : (1) Seuls les mots symboliques bien connus en tant que tels sont conservés ; les autres sont adaptés. (2) Des éléments linguistiques européens se retrouvent généralement dans plus des deux tiers des versions. Cela s'applique aux noms (tels que *Astérix*, *Idéfix*) et aux composants nominaux (-ix, -um), ainsi qu'aux locutions latines (*Ave, o, milia*, formules de politesse, citations), à la caricature d'accents étrangers (ici : africains) et aux ambiguïtés (ici : le mot pour « étoiles »). (3) En règle générale, les versions s'inspirent de l'original ou sont des créations originales ; l'orientation vers d'autres versions est rare. Globalement, les volumes d'Astérix contribuent de nombreuses manières à la consolidation du patrimoine culturel européen.

Zusammenfassung

Die Studie untersucht an zwölf Versionen des Asterix-Bandes *Tour de Gaule*, (1) wie symbolträchtiges französisches Sprachgut übertragen wird, (2) wie typisches europäisches Sprachgut übertragen wird, (3) ob sich bestimmte Versionen nicht nur am französischen Original, sondern auch an anderen Versionen orientieren. Die Analyse zeigt: (1) Nur symbolträchtige Wörter, die als solche Bekanntheitsgrad haben, werden beibehalten; anderes wird angepasst. (2) Europäisches Sprachgut ist in der Regel in mehr als zwei Dritteln der Versionen zu finden. Das gilt für Namen (wie *Astérix*, *Idéfix*) und Namensbestandteile (-ix, -um) ebenso wie für lateinische Phrasen (*Ave, o, milia*, Anredeformen, Zitate), die Karikatur fremdländischen (hier: afrikanischen) Akzents, Mehrdeutigkeiten (hier: das Wort für "Sterne"). (3) Im Regelfall orientieren sich Versionen am Original oder zeigen Eigenkreationen; Orientierung an anderen Versionen ist selten. Insgesamt gesehen tragen die Asterix-Bände vielfach zur Verfestigung europäischen Kulturguts bei.

1. Introduction

The character Asterix, created by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, first appeared in 1959 in a serialized story (1 to 2 pages) in the youth magazine *Pilote*. This led to the first album, published in 1961. Almost all of the languages examined here also have this volume as the first in their language. In 1965, sixty years ago, the fifth volume, *Le Tour de Gaule d'Astérix*, was published, and the year also marks the beginning of the translational "Tour d'Europe", as 1965 also saw the first volume translated into a European foreign language, Spanish. The Asterix volumes are now among the top 10 most translated works originating from Europe (Albrecht/Kunert/Grzega 2025: 405; URL1, see also URL2). There is a wide range of publications from individual philologies on Asterix,

sometimes focusing on a smaller selection of languages. However, it is surprising that, given the significance of the series in European popular culture, Eurolinguistic research is almost nowhere to be found.

Eurolinguistic or truly European is the contribution by Sheila Embleton (1991) on the translation of proper names. She focuses primarily on English, German, and Finnish, but in each sub-aspect she also repeatedly offers examples from other languages: Spanish, Italian, Greek, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Luxemburgish. In this way, both central and peripheral representatives of Europe in the cultural sense are included; in addition, they represent various typological language groups—namely Germanic, Romance, and Finno-Ugric (translations into Slavic languages apparently did not yet exist when her article was written). Tosina Fernández (2021) analyzes the visual representation of proverbs in Asterix books and their translations in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, English and German, with some references to Polish. In the edited volume by Bertrand Richet (2011), titled *Le Tour du monde d’Astérix*, various individual contributions do examine languages from all corners of Europe and beyond, but they each deal with different aspects, so it is difficult to derive Eurolinguistic knowledge on overarching questions. Overarching theoretical questions are briefly described in the essay by Siobhán McElduff (2016).

In the following, we will examine some translational aspects based on the original in French and the versions in eleven other European languages of different types (geographically, socioculturally, structurally): Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Swedish, English, Dutch, German (abbreviations according to ISO 639-1: fr., pt., es., ca., it., hu., cs., pl., sv., en., nl., de.). There are, of course, other European languages with Asterix translations. However, these are the ones where I could get the translations and where I feel confident enough in the language for this type of research. In particular, the following questions will concern us:

1. How is symbolic French linguistic material rendered?
- 2a. How is typically Latin and Gaulish linguistic material rendered?
- 2b. How is other typically European linguistic material rendered?
- 2c. How is it handled when French and European cultural material meet in a single word?
3. Do certain translations seem to take not only the French original as a model, but also other earlier translations, e.g., Spanish as a model for Catalan?

As already mentioned, the first album *Astérix le Gaulois* was published in 1961. Almost all of the languages examined here also have this volume as the first in their language (URL2). An exception is Catalan, into which the originally fourth volume (*Astérix gladiateur*) was translated first. In 1965, sixty years ago, the fifth volume, *Le Tour de Gaule d’Astérix*, was published, and at the same time the year 1965 marks the beginning of the translational “Tour d’Europe”, as 1965 also saw the first volume translated into a European foreign language, Spanish. Following that, in the 1960s, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Latin, German, Catalan, English, Danish, and Norwegian were translated.

In this fifth volume (*Tour de Gaule*) a little white dog also makes his first appearance — already on the cover, in the story itself on page 13, in front of the butcher’s shop in Paris. However, he does not carry a name until the sixth volume (*Astérix et Cléopâtre*), also published in 1965. Actually, these two stories originally appeared in 1963 as a serial in the magazine *Pilote*. After the first story, suggestions for the dog’s name were submitted through a contest; a publishing committee ultimately chose *Idéfix* (URL3). The fifth volume in the French original is not necessarily the fifth volume in other language editions (URL2). Thus, in the German publication sequence, the dog appears by name as early as the second volume in 1968 (*Asterix und Kleopatra*), which in the original is only the sixth volume. This leads to the odd chronological situation that in the German edition the dog is

missing from the third volume (*Asterix als Gladiator*), reappears in volume 4 (*Kampf der Häuptlinge*) in 1969 as Obelix's familiar companion, is absent again in volume 5 (*Die goldene Sichel*), before he suddenly joins the pair Asterix and Obelix as a strange dog in the sixth volume *Tour de France* in 1970. If one compares the translated versions of *Tour de Gaule* to those of *Astérix et Cléopâtre*, the former was translated after the latter with an even bigger distance in other languages: three years' distance regarding Swedish, eight years regarding Russian, and even ten years regarding Italian. In Italian, this means that Idefix was already known as Obelix's companion through several other episodes.

2. Proper Nouns

As mentioned, Embleton (1991) dealt with the translation of names in the Asterix volumes. From her essay, one can derive the following European observations:

- In all language versions, fictional male Gaulish names end in *-ix*, Roman ones in *-us*, Gothic ones in *-ic*, and Egyptian ones in *-is*. Fictional Roman place names end in *-um* in all language versions.
- Male Nordic names that in the original end in *-af* also have this ending in almost all translations (only in Swedish are there no restrictions); Nordic names that in the original end in *-sen* also end the same way in most other languages (only in Finnish in *-sän*). In almost all languages, Gaulish female names end in *-ine* (only in English in *-a*).
- Names ending in *-ix* and *-ic* can in many Indo-European languages be formed with only slight changes from lexemes ending in *-ic(al)* or similar; male Roman names in *-us* from those ending in *-os* or similar. The names are not always pun-based; sometimes adhering to the phonotactic rule is sufficient.
- When introducing two or more names at once, translations are sometimes more clever or humorous than the original by creating a semantic group (e.g., *Préfix* and *Barométrie* become *Prefix* and *Suffix* in the English version).
- Most translations rely on the shared pool of learned words of Latin-Greek origin; even Finnish draws on this, aided by the fact that diminutives can end in *-is* (which again resembles *-ix*).
- Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian sometimes follow the same path as German. Etymological observations suggest that German served as a model for those three.

We will now compare these observations with the additional languages Catalan, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, and Russian—with respect to our Asterix volume. For this, new naming types are highlighted in the illustrations used; if the type occurs more often later, it is additionally bolded; if a type is partly new, the underline is shown with a dotted line. In general, male Gaulish names also end in *-ix* in the eastern languages (or in the graphical variant *-iks* in Polish). Russian deviates for Roman names: they mostly end in *-ij*. Fictional Roman place names end in *-um*.

Asterix and Obelix retain their names in all European translations. There are, however, slight (phono-)graphic adjustments: the names may appear without an accent (de. nl. pt. it. hu. pl. cs. sv. en.), with a grave accent instead of an acute (ca. <Astèrix>, not <Astérix>), or with <iks> instead of <ix> (pl.). In Russian, a different script applies anyway, since the Cyrillic script is used. The name *Astérix* derives from fr. *astérisque* 'asterisk', the term for the star symbol <*>, which exists in other European languages as well. Thus in all European languages Asterix can be interpreted as the little "star." Similarly, the bearer of the name *Obélix* can be interpreted in the same way as large and indestructible like an obelisk.

Idéfix is also an iconic name, since he is a dog who, in both his first, still unnamed appearance and in his second appearance, pursues a fixed idea: in *Tour de Gaule* his central activity consists of chasing after the sack of culinary specialties carried by Obelix; in *Astérix et Cléopâtre* he frees Asterix, Obelix, and the druid from the labyrinth of a pyramid, all the while thinking of bones as a reward. The name normally remains unchanged in other languages, with only minor graphic adaptations (pt., es., ca., it., hu., cs., pl., sv., nl.); a slight phonetic adjustment (so that the word for ‘idea’ is clearly present morphologically) appears as pt. *Ideiafix*, es. ca. hu. *Ideafix*. In English, however, he is called *Dogmatix*; the name combines the meaning ‘following a fixed idea’ via *dogmatic* and ‘dog’ via en. *dog*.

The names of other major characters—Panoramix, Assurancetourix, Abraracourcix—are wordplays but, with respect to their bearers, are not iconic names. Embleton observes that for further names the Swedish version often runs parallel to the German and argues (1991: 36) that the comparison of de. *Abstosis* and sv. *Abstosis* for fr. *Tumehéris* (in *Astérix et Cléopâtre*) indicates Swedish copied German rather than vice versa, since *Abstosis* has a German etymology but not a Swedish one. One can also point to publication dates: the first German volume appeared two years before the first Swedish one.

Let us now consider a few more names, taking Hungarian and the Slavic languages into account. We see in Fig. 1 that not only Swedish sometimes copied the German model. Czech followed the German version three times (*Automatix*, *Trubadix*, and *Majestatix*, the latter extended by one syllable to de. *Majestix*). Polish drew on either Portuguese or English for *Kakofoniks*, otherwise forming its own names. Hungarian—apart from *Panoramix*—also prefers to coin its own. The composition in *Abraracourcix* (< fr. *à bras raccourcis* ‘with all force, literally: with shortened arms’) is adopted by most Romance languages; Portuguese is the exception, working with *matar* ‘to kill.’ German, which also serves as a model for Swedish and Czech, uses *Majestix*, from *Majestät* ‘majesty’, thus creating an iconic name. For *Cétautomatix*, three volume versions do not use a name, but address him by a name only in later volume (in the first volume, the name is only used on a sign of the smith’s house (not in address forms). The Romance languages translate the *Cét-* part from *c’est* ‘that is’ (es., pt., ca.) or omit it (it.). The international element *automat* remains in four (later five) languages. It is striking that in some cases the translations actually feature more speaking names than the original.

fr	1961	<u>Panoramix</u>	<u>Abraracourcix</u>	<u>Assurancetourix</u>	<u>Cétautomatix</u>	<u>Petibonum</u>
es	1965	Panorámix	Abraracúrcix	Asurancetúrix	Esautomátix	Petibonum [loanword]
nl	1966	Panoramix	Abraracourcix	Assurancetourix	— [in this volume without a name; later: <u>Hoefnix (!!)</u>]	Petitbonum
pt	1967	Panoramix	<u>Matasétix</u>	<u>Cacofonix (!!)</u>	Éautomatix	<u>Factotum</u>
de	1968	<u>Miraculix</u>	<u>Majestix (!!)</u>	<u>Troubadix (!!)</u>	<u>Automatix</u>	<u>Kleinbonum</u> [loan translation]
it	1968	Panoramix	<u>Abraracourcix</u>	Assurancetourix	Automatix	Petibonum
en	1969	<u>Getafix (!!)</u>	<u>Vitalstatistics</u>	Cacofonix	<u>Fulliautomatix</u>	<u>Compendium</u>
ca	1969	Panoràmix	Abraracúrcix	Asseguraçatòrix	Esautomàtix	Petibònum
sv	1970	Miraculix	Majestix	Troubadix	— [in this volume without a name; later: <u>Smidefix (!!)</u>]	Lillbonum
hu	1975	Panoramix	<u>Hasarengazfix (!!)</u>	<u>Hangjanix (!!)</u>	<u>Hajrádfradix</u>	<u>Almarium</u>
pl	1990	Panoramiks	<u>Asparanoiks</u>	Kakofoniks	<u>Parabeliks</u>	<u>Relanium</u>
cs	1992	Panoramix	Majestatix	Trubadix	Automatix	Malobonum
ru	1994	Панорамикс [Panoramiks]	<u>Авторитарикс (!!)</u> [Avtoritariks]	<u>Консерваторикс (!!)</u> [Konservatoriks]	— [in this volume without a name; later: Автоматикс Avtomatiks]	<u>Ненарокум</u> [Nenarokum]

Fig. 1: Names I (underlined = new type; **bold** = model for others; **!!** = new iconic name)

Let's now look at two cases in which a pair of names is introduced: on the one hand *Plexus* and *Radius*, derived from two anatomical technical terms (or rather one anatomical technical term and a commonly known mathematical term), and on the other hand *Petilarus* and *Milexcus*, that is two names that can only be understood from within French culture and language (derived from the dictionary *Petit Larousse* and *Mille excuses!* 'I'm very sorry; lit. thousand excuses!'). Additionally, we will examine the name *Fleurdelotus*, in which two elements are only French (*fleur* + *de*) and the third element is European (*lotus*). We will also analyze the name of the tow-truck driver *Tickedbus*, which comprises two European elements (*ticke(t)* + *bus*) and a French part (*d(e)*). How do the individual languages handle these?

		anatomic terms, or: anatomic + mathematical term (p. 40)	“Petit Larousse” (dictionary) + “1000 excuses” (S. 17)	“fleur de lotus”, with “lotus” being a European word-type (p. 5)	“ticket (de) bus” (p. 14)
fr	1965	Plexus + Radius	Petilarus + Milexcus	Lucius Fleurdelotus	Tikedbus
nl	1968	Plexus + Radius	— + —	Lucius <u>Otobus</u>	Tikedbus
ca	1969	Plexus + Radius	<u>Sempetrus + Benpallus</u>	Lucius Flordelotus	<u>Tiketbus</u>
es	1969	Plexus + Radius	<u>Pelatus</u> + — [2nd name not mentioned]	Lucius Flordelotus	Tikedbus
de	1970	<u>Sinus + Cosinus</u> (!!)	Petilarus + Excus	Lucius <u>Nichtsalsverdrus</u>	<u>Omnibus</u> (!!)
sv	1973	Plexus + Radius	— + — [no names mentioned]	Lucius <u>Petificus</u>	— [no name mentioned]
pt	1973	Plexus + Radius	Dicionarius + Desculpaláiusus	Lucius Flordelotus	<u>Empanadus</u>
hu	1977	Plexus + Radius	<u>Gaudemus +</u> <u>Juvenesdumsumus</u> (!!)	Lucius <u>Falusinotarius</u>	Omnibus
it	1978	Plessus + Radius	Petilarus + Milexcus	Lucius Fiordilotus	—
en	1979	<u>Villanus + Unscrupulus</u> (!!)	<u>Fishfingus + Spongefingus</u> (!!)	<u>Overanxius</u> (!!)	<u>Nervus Illnus</u>
pl	1992	<u>Sarkus + Farkus</u> (!!)	<u>Ochlapsus + Męczydus</u>	Lucjusz <u>Lupusz</u>	<u>Wehikulus</u> (!!)
cs	1993	Plexus + Radius	Gramotus + Pardonus	Lucius <u>Asparágus</u>	—
ru	2003	<u>Трусс + Бывалий</u> [Truss + Vyvalij ‘Fear + Experienced’]	Глоссарий + Прошупрощений [Glossarij + Prošuproščeniij]	Луций <u>Куст Сирений</u> [Lucij <u>Kust Sirenij</u> ‘Lilac Bush’]	<u>Карданны и Валл</u> [Kardann i Wall ‘Cardan and Shaft’] (!!)

Fig. 2: Names II (underlined = new type; bold = model for others; !! = new iconic name)

In Fig. 2 it is evident that for Swedish or Czech the names were not modeled on German. In the case of hu. *Omnibus*, however, an orientation toward German may be present. *Fleurdelotus* is translated literally into the Romance languages; the other languages replace it entirely, even though at least *lotus* would have been European.

On p. 31 there are allusions to the film *Marius* from 1931, based on Marcel Pagnol’s eponymous play, both in terms of names used and in terms of the drawing of the characters resembling the film actors (Sinagra 2011: 188-190). The film is likely to be little known today outside France. On Wikipedia, apart from the French version, entries exist only in the Italian, Hungarian, Russian, English, and Dutch editions. How are these allusions handled? We see this in Fig. 3.

	motive	Bar de la Marine	César Ollivier	Honoré Panisse
fr	1965	<u>Taverne des Nautes</u>	<u>César Labeldecadix</u>	<u>Maître Panix</u>
nl	1968	Herberg " <u>De Haven</u> "	Caesar <u>Alkolix (!)</u>	<u>Schipper</u> Panix
ca	1969	Taverna dels nautes	Cèsar Labelladecàdix	<u>Can</u> Panix
es	1969	Taberna del navegante	César	<u>Casa</u> Panix
de	1970	Schiffertaverne	Cäsar <u>Kneipix (!)</u>	Meister Panix
sv	1973	Taverna musslan	César <u>Bramedrix</u>	Panix ^a <u>Co</u>
pt	1973	Taberna dos nautas	César <u>Operetix</u>	Mestre Panix
hu	1977	Hajósok tavernája	César <u>Laicofelix</u>	Panix Mester
it	1978	Taverna dei nauti	Cesare Labelladecadix	Panix
en	1979	<u>Drinklikafix</u>	César <u>Drinklikafix (!)</u>	<u>Tunafix</u>
pl	1992	Tawerna żeglarzy	Cezar Knajpiks	Żaglomistrz Nautliks
cs	1993	Taverna u přístanu	Caesar <u>Tenorix</u>	Mistr Panix
ru	2003	Таверна навтов [Taverna navtov]	Цесарь <u>Аволбузвездагорикс</u> [Cesar' <u>Avolbuzvezdagoriks</u>]	<u>Плавсредствикс</u> [Plavsredstviks]

Fig. 3: Names III (underlined = new type; bold = model for others; !! = new iconic name)

The name of the bar remains largely a loan translation (with the exception of the English version, where the proprietor's name is given). The proprietor's first name is adapted to the national spellings of Julius Caesar. The French surname in the Asterix volume is in any case far removed from the movie's character family name *Ollivier*, but rather a reminiscence of the song "La Belle de Cadix" performed by Luis Mariano. The Polish variant seems to have the German one as its model. The allusion of *Maître* 'Master' to *Honoré* 'Honoré [name]; honored' has disappeared in most versions (exceptions are Portuguese, German, Czech, and Hungarian). In English, Russian, and Polish the name is also completely changed.

As an interim result regarding the proper names, the following can be noted: the Romance languages mostly stick to the French original; they never draw on other languages. Most eastern languages move away from the French original (in rare cases they copy another translation); only in Czech do the French original and its variants roughly balance (with Czech looking to German as a model three times). With the exception of Dutch, the Germanic languages also mostly deviate from the original (occasionally resorting to other translations), with Swedish even omitting the introduction of a name three times. Dutch likewise omits the creation of a name twice and occasionally coins its own names; in about half of the cases it adheres to the French.

3. Translation of Cultural Markers

The title of the volume, *Le Tour de Gaule d'Astérix*, already is a pun. It plays on the Europe-wide bike race Tour de France. In Germany the race is known only under the expression *Tour de France*; however, since the French *Gaule* 'Gaul' would not have been generally understood as equivalent of the German *Gallien*, they opted for *Tour de France* (theoretically, of course, *Tour de Gallia* could have been conceivable). In Portuguese and Dutch the local equivalents are used and "France" is swapped for "Gaul": pt. *A volta à Gália de Asterix*, nl. *De Ronde van Gallië*. In Spanish, Catalan, and Swedish they borrow the name of the Spanish race and replace "Spain" with "Gaul": es. *La vuelta a la Galia de Astérix*, ca. *La volta a la Gàllia d'Astèrix*, sv. *Gallien runt*. The Italian version instead uses Italy's national race (*Giro d'Italia*), replacing "Italy" with "Gaul": it. *Asterix e il giro di Gallia*. In English a completely new title was invented: en. *Asterix and the Banquet*. The remaining

languages work with a word from the semantic domain “trip”: hu. *körutazás* ‘tour’, cs. *cesta* ‘journey’, pl. *wyprawa* ‘expedition’, ru. *probeg* ‘rally’.

Another European—or even international—cultural marker is the abbreviation *BP* for *British Petrol*. In our volume, a roadside billboard reimagines *BP* as *BF*, standing for *Bon Foin* ‘good hay.’ Fig. 4 shows how the translations handle this. Almost all offer a clever solution in which the *B* from *BP* is retained and the second element denotes horse feed rather than car fuel. Only in the Czech and Polish versions are the allusions to *BP* lost (it seems the translators did not realize the pun in the French original): It is true that the *B* in the Czech version remains, but the *BF* is evidently not presented as the abbreviation for the succeeding line *Báječná Pastva*, so that *BF* is totally unmotivated and opaque in Czech (whereas with this phrase *BP* would have led to the perfect pun); in Polish, the change of both letters (though they are now the abbreviations) destroys the link to *BP*.

	Motive	<i>BP: British Petrol</i>
fr	1965	<u>BF</u>: Bon Foin
nl	1968	BV: Best Voer
ca	1969	BG: Bon Gra
es	1969	BF: Buen Forraje
de	1970	BF: Bestes Futter
sv	1973	BF: Bra Foder
pt	1973	BF: Bom Feno
hu	1977	BF: Betevő Falat [‘snack’]
it	1978	BF: Buon Fieno
en	1979	BH: Best Hay
pl	1992	<u>DS</u> : Dobre Siano [‘Good hay’, thus no letter of <i>BP</i> is kept]
cs	1993	BF [sic! The abbreviation stays and is not changed into <i>BP</i> !]: Báječná Pastva ‘Wonderful Pasture’
ru	2003	ВФ: Возьмиш фуражуум ‘Take food’ / BF: Vos’miš Furažuум

Fig. 4: Play with “BP” (underlined = new type; **bold** = model for others; **!!** = new iconic name)

Across Europe, the following uses of stars and words for stars are also common: firstly as astronomical bodies, secondly as gastronomic awards, and thirdly as expressions of dizziness from a blow to the head (also visualized that way in comics). The final panel plays on these three uses; one sees: (1) a star-filled sky, (2) the Gauls at their feast, enjoying specialties from the different parts of their land, (3) three stars above the head of the Roman who has just received a slap (he indicates the number three with his fingers). The text reads: “Le premier festin à plusieurs étoiles. Les Gaulois mangent les délicieuses victuailles de leur beau pays ... et le Romain compte les étoiles ...” ‘The first feast with multiple/divers stars. The Gauls eat the delicious provisions of their beautiful country ... and the Roman counts the stars ...’ The advantage is that *plusieurs* here can carry both a quantitative and a qualitative meaning. Not all languages have a suitable equivalent for this. Nevertheless, almost all translations try to establish a parallel ambiguity (marked with double slashes in Fig. 5). Only the Swedish and the English versions fail to capture the full polysemy. The German version even remains completely unclear in the first part. There, the text means ‘The first feast with more than three stars’: which three stars that might have played a role so far are meant? There was neither a three-star menu in every previous volume nor was there always someone who had been struck on the head. In the Dutch translation, no ambiguity arises from the text; only the astronomical meaning is activated by the comment describing the Roman as “counting the

numberless stars,” which does not quite match the drawing where the Roman only shows the number three with his fingers.

fr	1965	“Le premier festin à plusieurs étoiles. Les Gaulois mangent les délicieuses victuailles de leur beau pays ... et le Romain compte les étoiles ...” ‘The first banquet at several stars. The Gauls eat the delicious victuals of their beautiful country and the Roman counts the stars ...’ [quantity + quality: 1. gastronomic, 2. astronomic, 3. pathologic]
nl	1968	only 2 [“Onder de flonkerende sterrenhemel [...] De Galliërs genieten van de lekkernijen van hun mooie land en de Romein telt de talloze sterren” ‘Under the sparkling star sky [...] The Gauls enjoy the treats from their beautiful country and the Roman counts the numberless stars’]
ca	1969	//
es	1969	//
de	1970	at best 2 and 3 [“Das erste Festessen mit mehr als drei Sternen!” ‘The first meal with more than three stars (Unclear!) + “... und der Römer zählt die Sterne” ‘and the Roman counts the stars’]
sv	1973	only 2 and 3 [with the last sentence “och Romarna räknar stjärnorna” ‘and the Romans count the stars’]
pt	1973	//
hu	1977	// [the first mention is clearly gastronomic: “sokcsillagos bankett” ‘many-star-banquet’]
it	1978	//
en	1979	only 1 and 3 [“as Inspector General Overanxious could confirm, it is a genuine three-star meal”]
pl	1992	// [the first mention is clearly gastronomic: “uczcie wielogwiazd” ‘many-star banquet’]
cs	1993	// [the first mention is clearly quantitative: “se spoustou hvězdíček” ‘with a lot of stars’]
ru	2003	// [the first mention is clearly gastronomic: “многозвездный банкет [mnogozvezdnyj banket]” ‘many-star banquet’]

Fig. 5: Word-play “stars” (// = parallel polysemy as in the original)

Culinary terms also serve as cultural markers. The first four in Fig. 6 are typical of France, with the first being the least familiar. The final specialty hinges on the double meaning of fr. *châtaigne* as ‘chestnut’ and ‘slap in the face.’ An ideal translation would recreate a similar polysemy in the target language. As Fig. 6 shows, this is not always achieved: for instance, not in Hungarian, English, Polish, or Dutch (even though in Dutch, as in German, the same formation—*oorvij* ‘lit. ear-fig’—would have been possible).

fr	1965	bêtises	salade <u>nicae</u> oise	<u>pastix</u>	bouillabaisse	<u>châtaigne</u>
nl	1968	kletsboek	salade van Nicae	—	bouillabaisse	<u>oplawaai</u> ‘harter Schlag’
ca	1969	bestieses	amanida de Nicae	pastix	bullabessa	castanya
es	1969	tonterías	ensalada de Nicae	<u>pastis</u>	bullabesa	castaña
de	1970	Backpfeifen	Salat Nicaeoise	Pastix	Bouillabaisse	Feige ... Ohrfeige
sv	1973	karameller	salade <u>niçoise</u>	<u>anislikör</u>	bouillabaisse	nötsufflé ‘nut soufflet’ [with <i>nöt</i> also meaning ‘stupid person’]
pt	1973	bêtises	salada de Nicae	pastix	<u>caldeirada</u>	castanha
hu	1977	butaság	nicaei saláta	pastix	<u>halleves</u>	<u>tockos</u> ‘coll.: sullen person’
it	1978	sciocchezze	insalata nizzarda	pastis	bouillabaisse	castagna
en	1979	humbugs	salad from Nicae	pastix	<u>fish stew</u>	<u>the uppercut</u>
pl	1992	głupotki	sałatka nicejska	<u>anyżówka</u>	<u>zupa rybna</u>	<u>cios w nos</u>
cs	1993	oslovinky	salát z Nicae	pastix	buillabaissa	držkova ‘tripe soup’ [the word is phonetically close to <i>držka</i> ‘coll.: mouth’.]
ru	2003	глупосты gluposty	салат из Никеа salat iz Nikea	пастикс pastiks	буйабес bujabes	получи ... на орехи poluči ... na orehi

Fig. 6: French symbolic words (underlined = new type; **bold** = model for others)

4. Accents, Dialects, Latin

On pp. 10-11 one encounters the communication strategy attributed to the inhabitants of Rouen—namely answering with neither yes nor no (called “réponse de Normand” ‘Norman answer’). The first two examples are in this scene (two images) on page 10:

- Asterix: Rotomagus, c’est par là?
‘Rotomagus [= Rouen], is it this way?’
- Peasant: P’têt ben qu’oui.
‘Maybe well yes.’
- Obelix: Et c’est loin?
‘And is it far?’
- Peasant: P’têt ben qu’non.
‘Maybe well no.’

Most readers of other languages will not be familiar with this dialectal feature. Translators do not try to create a humoristic play with a feature of one of the dialects in the target language, but they all simply copy this Norman answer strategy (in the standard forms of the target language, not in a dialectal pronunciation as in the original) so that a certain humorous effect is kept and readers may or may not assume that this is a true feature of the Rouen dialect.

From p. 28 on, southern French peculiarities repeatedly surface. The substitution of a nasal vowel (e.g. [ɛ̃]) by the corresponding oral vowel plus a following nasal velar consonant (e.g. ([ɛŋ]), appearing twice in the utterance *Tous fadas ces Lutéciengs* (pp. 28, 43) ‘All crazy, those Lutetians’

and in the address *Romaing!* ‘Roman!’ (p. 32), as well as other phonetic quirks (such as *avé* instead of *avec* ‘with’), are not reproduced in the translations—these linguistic peculiarities are indeed not relevant to the story. In the utterance *Tous fadas ces Lutéciengs* (p. 28), *fada* is also an originally southern French term for “crazy.” Thus the expression functions as the counterpart to the sentence uttered three panels earlier by Obelix, *Ils sont fous ces Lutéciens* ‘They are crazy, those Lutetians’ (normally referring to the Romans). Some translations also render *fada* with a second (colloquial) word for “being crazy” (e.g., pt. *taralhoco* instead of *louco*, ca. *guillat* instead of *boig*, it. *picchiatello* instead of *pazzo*, de. *plemplem (sein)* instead of *spinnen*); in English both lines simply read *crazy*; in the Spanish and Swedish versions the wordplay is entirely lost. Semantic exaggerations of the Marseille characters, also (stereo)typical for a French reader, are retained.

In the pirates’ crew (p. 44) there is a black member whose Franco-African accent is caricatured by replacing the graphic <r> with an apostrophe. In recent years this has prompted accusations of racism among philologists (e.g., Duval 2022), although the speech pattern is only one aspect. How is the accent handled in the other languages?

- The replacement of <r> with an apostrophe also occurs in Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Dutch, and German. In Russian, the <r> is simply deleted.
- In other languages the <r> is replaced by a different letter or phoneme: <v> in Italian; <l> in Czech; <ł> [w] in Polish.
- In the Hungarian, Swedish, and English versions the <r> remains unchanged, with no caricature.

As for German, it should be noted that in the next volume the <r> in the black pirate’s utterances remains, then in subsequent volumes it is again replaced by an apostrophe. In newer editions the <r> is retained, maybe as a consequence the racism debate. The evolution in the other language versions remains to be seen.

Latin citations appear twice in the French original. They stand untranslated, since—as was customary in the early Asterix volumes (Gallego 2011)—they are lifted from the pink pages of the dictionary *Petit Larousse* (“pages roses”), which is the dictionary section presenting Latin and other foreign phrases and quotations. No equivalent household lexicon exists in the other languages. How, then, do the other editions handle them? In the other Romance languages, in Russian, and in English, the quotations likewise appear without translation (in Russian the Latin script is kept). This leaves readers to seek renditions on their own, if desired. By contrast, the German, Swedish, Czech, and Polish editions provide translations—in the Polish edition even naming the original author; the Hungarian edition appends a glossary page at the end of the volume with explanations of foreign terms, including the Latin citations (also with author attributions).

What becomes of other Latin elements? The quintessential Latin greeting *Ave!* remains intact in every language version, sometimes with minor graphic tweaks (the French volumes vary <Ave>~<Avé>). The Latin vocative element *o* survives in most languages just as in the original (again, with small orthographic adjustments); in Polish and Swedish *o* occasionally persists, occasionally vanishes.

On p. 28 the distance information “I MILIA PASSVVM” is left unchanged in nearly all Latin-script editions, although the <V> is rendered as <U> in Hungarian, English, and German. This suggests that readers will recognize <MILIA> here as “mile,” especially since similar-sounding equivalents exist in those languages. The Hungarian version even explains this on its final page alongside other

historical terms. Only the Czech edition—despite having a phonetically similar *míle*—replaces the Latin phrase by *1000 m.*

The Latin practice of using <V> for both the vocalic [u] and the (semi-)consonantal [w] is applied in the French original on the public-announcement panels on pp. 37 and 41. The Dutch, Portuguese, and Swedish versions preserve this convention; the remaining Latin-script editions switch to <U> wherever modern standards demand it.

5. Address Forms

Let us now consider forms of address. In the literature (e.g., Grzega 2025a), European languages are typically described by a binary opposition between T-forms (= informal forms expressing familiarity, from Latin *tu*) and V-forms (= formal forms expressing distance, from Latin *vos*). Here we introduce a third category, the historical or historicizing V-form (abbreviated in Fig. 7 as *V-hist*). What shall be meant by *historicizing V-form*? In German, for example, this means that the translators, in situations where one single person is addressed, use the pronoun *ihr* plus a second-person plural verb instead of the modern *Sie* plus a third-person plural verb (i.e. the type “Habt ihr ein Problem, Zenturio?” ‘lit. Have.2PL you.PL a problem, Centurio?’ instead of “Haben Sie ein Problem, Zenturio?” ‘lit. Have.3PL they a problem, Centurio?’; similarly, Italian employs the second-person plural *voi*, and Spanish the former second-person plural *vos*, both to address one single person, which is no longer the case in modern Italian (using *Lei*) and modern (European) Spanish (using *Usted*). English uses *you* uniformly; there is no play with the archaic *thou* (which would have been the historical singular, but is sometimes perceived by native speakers as the more distant form). In the French original no historicizing form could have been used anyway, since *vous* as an address form to a single person has persisted since the Middle Ages—one could only have generalized the T-form (as a sign of the time Before the Common Era, which did not distinguish between a T-form and a V-form). Fig. 7 gives an overview of the forms of address.

		among Gauls, with high familiarity	among Gauls, with low familiarity	among Romans, with high familiarity	among Romans, with low familiarity	among Gauls and Romans
	source	6#1#1, 9#2#2	S. 22#3#2, 28#4#2, 30#4#2, 38#3#1	5#2#1, 17#3#1, 36#1#3	5#3#3, 7#3#2	12#3#1, 20#1#3, <u>24#3#1 (polite!)</u> , 32#4#2, <u>34#1#3</u> (polite!), 47#4#1
fr	1965	T	<u>V</u>	<u>V~T</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>T~V</u>
nl	1968	T	T~V	V~T	V	T~V
ca	1969	T	<u>V~T</u>	<u>T</u>	V	T~V
es	1969	T	<u>T~V(-hist)</u>	<u>V-hist</u>	<u>V-hist</u>	<u>T</u>
de	1970	T	<u>V-hist</u>	T	V-hist	<u>T~V-hist</u>
sv	1973	T	<i>ni 'wir'</i>	T	<u>T</u>	T
pt	1973	T	V-hist~T	T	V	T~V
hu	1977	T	V~T	T	paraphrase [construction allows no categorization]	T~V
it	1978	T	V-hist~T	T	V-hist	V-hist~T
en	1979	—	—	—	—	—
pl	1992	T	T	T	<u>T</u>	T
cs	1993	T	V	T	V	T~V
ru	2003	T	V	T	V	T~V

Fig. 7: Address Forms (T = informal, V = formal, V-hist = historicizing formal, pattern “page#line#image”)

Historicizing forms of address therefore appear in the Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Italian versions—and, if one regards the generalized T as historicizing, in the Polish edition as well. Whether any of these renditions was modeled on another one is beside the point; the concept may have emerged independently.

6. Noises and Animal Utterances

On p. 18 the cork flies out of the champagne bottle with a *Pop!*, flies toward the Roman with a *Tchiip!*, and lands in his face with a *Paf!*. On p. 40 the rooster crows with the customary French *Cocorico!*. Typical French dog sounds are *ouaf!*, *waf!*, *ouah!*. Dogmatix’s only utterance, on the final page, is *Houa! Houa!*; though phonetically identical to the usual *Ouah! Ouah!*, the silent <h> gives Dogmatix an immediate touch of individuality. Fig. 8 presents an overview of how these effects are rendered across the various language versions.

	Source	p. 18	p. 40	p. 48
fr	1965	Pop! Tchiiip! Paf!	Cocorico!	Houa! Houa!
nl	1968	Pop! Tsjiiiiip! Paf!	Kukelekuuu!	<u>Woea!</u> Woef!
ca	1969	Pop! Xxxiiip! Paf!	Quiquiriquic!	Bub! Bub!
es	1969	Pop! Chiic! Paf!	¡Quiquiriquí!	¡ <u>Guau!</u>
de	1970	<u>Pfloop!</u> <u>Zisch!</u> <u>Zak!</u>	Kikeriki!	Wuff! Wuff!
sv	1973	Pop! Zzziiipp! Paf!	Kuckeliku!	<u>Vaff!</u> <u>Vaff!</u>
pt	1973	Pop! Tchiiip! Paf!	Cocoroco!	Au au! Au au!
hu	1977	Pop! Csiiiiip! Paf!	Kukuriku!	Vau! Vau!
it	1978	Pop! Tchiiip! Paf!	Chicchirichi!	Bau! Bau!
en	1979	Pop! <u>Whoosh!</u> Paf!	Cock-a-doodle-do!	Woof! Woof!
pl	1992	<u>Pof!</u> <u>Szsziiiiip!</u> Paf!	Kukuryku!	Hau! Hau!
cs	1993	<u>Lup!</u> <u>Vzzzzz!</u> <u>Prásk!</u>	Kyyryký!	Haf! Haf!
ru	2003	<u>Чпокк!</u> <u>Шви-и-и-ст!</u> Паф! [Čpokk! Švi-i-i-st! Paf!]	Кукареку! [Kukareku!]	Гав-Гав! [Gav-Gav!]

Fig. 8: Noises and Animal Utterances (underlined = new type; bold = model for others; !! = new iconic name)

It is interesting that the German and Czech versions each devise their own variants for all three champagne-cork noises. The rooster's crow is rendered with the customary onomatopoeia in each language. Dogmatix's bark likewise appears as a standard dog-sound phrase in most translations; true orthographic individualization occurs only in French. Other forms of individualization are these: In Swedish, the translator used *Vaff! Vaff!* instead of the normal phrases *Vov-vov!* and *Voff-voff!*, and the familiar Dutch *Woef-Woef!* is made distinct as *Woea! Woef!*. Further, it is unique in Spanish that the bark is not doubled.

7. Summary and Outlook

In Eurolinguistic literature of the past 15 years, it has been suggested to see something as a Europeanism if it occurs in 66 percent or 75 percent of the languages studied, depending on whether the analysis has covered a rather large or a rather small number of languages (cf., e.g., Grzega 2025b). Let us now once more examine the research questions and determine which translation strategies occur in at least 66 percent and 75 percent of the language versions under review (i.e. in eight and nine versions), and can thus be defined as European.

1. How is symbolic French linguistic material rendered? — In this context, the terms for *pastis* and *bouillabaisse* as well as the pun on *Tour de France* were particularly relevant. Only *pastix* (or the “de-humored” variant *pastis*) and *bouillabaisse* appear in at least 66 percent of the versions. The pun on *Tour de France* is considerably rarer; however, a pun on one of the three major European cycling races (France, Italy, Spain) is found in 66 percent. Other French cultural markers (which are not known outside France) are generally not retained but replaced by culture-independent ideas.
- 2a. How is typically Latin and Gaulish linguistic material rendered? — The Roman variant *Nicae* in naming the *salade niçoise* (*salade niaeoise*) is retained in 75 percent of the versions (with the exception of Swedish, Italian, and Polish). The onomastic suffixes *-ix*, *-us*, and *-um* are adopted, with the exception of *-us* in Russian. The greeting formula *Avé* and the address interjection *ô* are likewise carried over into all versions (with graphic adjustments). The Latin citations also remain, translated where considered necessary (in the non-Romance

languages except English). The word *milia* is replaced only in Czech. The situation differs for the grapheme <V> representing modern <U>: it is adopted only in Dutch, Portuguese, and Swedish.

- 2b. How is other typically European linguistic material rendered? — Here, alongside the mentioned European cycling races, the accent of people of African descent, the pun on *BP*, and the polysemy of the expression for “stars” should be considered. In over 75 percent of the versions, we find the pun on *BP*; in 75 percent a caricature of African accents; and in 66 percent the polysemy of “stars.” It is noticeable that English and Swedish each diverge from the French original twice.
- 2c. How is it handled when French and European cultural material meet in a single word? — Here, above all, the names *Cétautomatix*, *Fleurdelotus*, and *Tickedbus* were to be analyzed. Only the element *automat* appears in 66 percent of the versions.
3. Do certain translations seem to take not only the French original as a model, but also other earlier translations? — Catalan and Spanish run parallel nineteen times, but take different paths fifteen times, which may mean that the parallelisms are accidental (due to the similarity of the languages that exists anyhow). The Eastern languages (Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Russian) tend to chart their own course with names rather than adopt the French original; the same holds true for German and English. This does not simply mean that new names that are funny are coined, but often these are even new iconic names (particularly in English, German, Hungarian and Russian). No consistent pattern emerges for the non-name-related aspects. In Polish, these elements are mostly original solutions; the Russian translation generally follows the French original. In the other languages, borrowings and original creations are roughly balanced. Orientation toward another translation occurs sporadically for proper names (German serves as a model for Polish once, for Czech three times, for Hungarian once, and for Swedish once; English—more probably than Portuguese—serves as a model for Polish once). In the non-name-related aspects, there is never an orientation toward other translations.

Overall, the Asterix volumes thus contribute in many language versions to the consolidation of European cultural heritage. Even if this was probably not an “*idée fixe*” of Uderzo and Goscinny, but Asterix, Obelix and Dogmaticus aka Idéfix have become true Europeans.

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