

The Avant-texte as Methodological Tool in Translation Process Research

Dr **Vitaly Nuriev**
(Russian Academy of Sciences)

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An 'avant-texte' is a document – manuscript, rough draft, notes – that in one way or another forms part of the genesis of a published text. The analysis of such documents helps capture otherwise hidden details of textual production. While well-developed in the field of genetic criticism, the notion of 'avant-texte' is underestimated by translation studies. This paper reconsiders the status of the avant-texte in literary translation. It explores a certain mirroring between the genesis of a literary text and the genesis of its translation, and argues that studying avant-textes can greatly benefit the understanding of the translation process. Taking the example of Neil Gaiman's acclaimed novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013), the paper compares its manuscript with two different published versions in English, alongside several drafts of its Russian translation. The aim of the paper is to show that avant-textes are effective research tools that not only help elucidate the translation process as such, but can also assist in finding practical solutions to concrete translation problems.

Contact: sergey.tyulenev@durham.ac.uk