

**POET-TRANSLATORS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE:  
NERVAL, BAUDELAIRE, MALLARMÉ**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The ‘poet-translator’ is a listener whose ears are transformed through translation. The ear not only relates to the sensorial, but also to the cultural and historical. This dissertation argues that the ‘poet-translator,’ whose ears encounter a foreign tongue discovers three new rhythms: a new linguistic rhythm, a new cultural rhythm, and a new experiential rhythm. The discovery of these different rhythms has a pronounced impact on the poet-translator’s poetics. In this case, poetics does not refer to the work of art, but instead to an activity. It therefore concerns the reader’s will to listen to what a text does and to understand how it works.

Although the notion of the ‘poet-translator’ pertains to a wide number of writers, time periods, and fields of study, this dissertation focuses on three nineteenth-century ‘poet-translators’ who each partly as a result of their contact with German romanticism formed an innovative and fresh account of linguistic, cultural, and poetic rhythm: Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). Each of these ‘poet-translators’ acted as cultural mediators, contributing to the development of new literary genres and new forms of critique that came to have significant effects on Western Literature.

A study of Nerval, Baudelaire and Mallarmé as ‘poet-translators’ is historically pertinent for at least four reasons. First, how did these writers react to the emergence of comparative linguistics within the nineteenth-century? Second, what were the effects and outcomes of key technological advances, for example in the domain of the printing industry and in transportation? Third, what was the new geography of cultures and conception of nation that developed during 1815-1914? Fourth, how did the methods of translation change in nineteenth-century France? These four questions relate to cultural shifts that would have wide ranging consequences on the theorization of poetry and its translation that developed during the twentieth and twenty-first century by poet-translator-critics such as Walter Benjamin, Henri Meschonnic, Michel Deguy, and Yves Bonnefoy.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction: Experiential Rhythms of the Modern Poet-Translator .....</b>	<b>1</b>
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### **Part I: Contemporary and Historical Reflections**

<b>Chapter 1: The Contemporary Lens.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>I. Antoine Berman and the Trials of the Foreign: <i>L'Épreuve de l'étranger</i> .....</b>	<b>6</b>
i. Romantic Writers of Jena: Novalis and Schlegel .....	8
ii. An Archeology of the Modern Poet-Translator .....	10
<b>II. Walter Benjamin: Reflections on Translatability .....</b>	<b>13</b>
i. Benjamin and German Romanticism.....	13
ii. The Task of the Translator .....	16
iii. <i>Intentio</i> : Spontaneity vs. Derivation .....	17
iv. Crise de Vers: Mallarmé and Pure Language.....	18
v. Syntax: Hölderlin as Poet-Translator.....	20
vi. Echoes: Translation and the Harmonic Concept of Truth.....	22
<b>III. Henri Meschonnic: The Myths of Translation .....</b>	<b>24</b>
i. The Myth of the Sign .....	25
ii. La Poétique du traduire.....	26
iii. Embabelons: Translations and the Myth of Babel.....	27
iv. “Sonnet en -yx”: Mallarmé, Babel and the Apex of Babble.....	30
<b>IV. Michel Deguy and the Comme-un .....</b>	<b>33</b>
i. <i>Po&amp;sie</i> .....	33
ii. Ecological Reflections on Translation .....	37
iii. La lignée Heidegger-Hölderlin.....	39
iv. Compas-raison .....	41
v. Trans-en-danse .....	43
vi. Elastic Undulation .....	44
vii. Désesperanto and Universal Languages .....	45
viii. Translation and Intertextual Memory .....	49
<b>V. Yves Bonnefoy: La Communauté des traducteurs.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Historical Lens.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>I. The Commerce of Translation .....</b>	<b>55</b>
i. Economic vs. Literary Value.....	57
ii. Translation and the Speed of Production .....	59
iii. Translation and Literary Property.....	63
<b>II. New Translation Methods .....</b>	<b>66</b>
i. The Old Tradition: <i>les belles infidèles</i> .....	66
ii. “On the Different Methods of Translating” .....	67
iii. Translation and Circulation: The Audibility of the Foreign .....	69
iv. New Listeners: Verse vs. Prose .....	73
v. Imitation vs. Invention.....	81
<b>III. <i>Langues Vivantes</i> and the Reform of the French Educational System .....</b>	<b>84</b>
i. Teaching and Translating Modern Tongues.....	84

ii.	Coining New Words .....	86
iii.	Shakespeare’s Impact on the <i>Langues Vivantes</i> .....	88

**Part II: Experiential Rhythms: Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé**

<b>Chapter 3: Semblance and Resonance: Nerval as Poet-Translator .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Contextual Introduction .....</b>	<b>95</b>
i. Proper Form: <i>Bildung</i> , Translation, Realization.....	96
ii. The Maternal Tongue.....	97
iii. Tour or Touraille: Genealogy, Etymology, Properhood.....	99
<b>I. Translation and the Oral Tradition: <i>Poésies allemandes</i> .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>II. Nerval: Poète en prose.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>III. L’épreuve de l’étranger.....</b>	<b>109</b>
i. Travels Abroad and Foreign-Language Studies .....	109
ii. Crossing the Rhine River .....	114
iii. Transport.....	117
iv. Transmitting Heritage: Towers and Turns of Phrase.....	120
v. A Dream of Translation .....	124
<b>IV. Translating the Proper Name.....</b>	<b>125</b>
i. Revising “El Desdichado” .....	126
ii. Fictional Genealogy .....	131
iii. The Ruined Tower .....	133
iv. Tour à tour.....	136
v. The Black Sun and Délire .....	140
vi. Lusignan or Biron.....	142
vii. Lorely or Lorely.....	145
viii. The Rising Sun .....	146
<b>V. Nerval’s Translations of <i>Faust</i>.....</b>	<b>147</b>
i. Meta-reflection: Translating a scene of translation .....	152
ii. Parole vs. Verbe .....	156
iii. Volonté vs. Esprit.....	159
iv. Linguistic Difference .....	161
v. A Polyphonic Dream.....	163
vi. Faustian Resonances.....	166
<b>Conclusion: Strange Detours.....</b>	<b>167</b>

<i>In Transit: Nerval Dreams of Poe</i> .....	169
---	-----

<b>Chapter 4: Modernity, Sympathy, Analogy: Baudelaire as Poet-Translator .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Contextual Introduction .....</b>	<b>173</b>
i. Poe’s Ideal Reader and Translator.....	173
ii. Foreign-Language Studies .....	175
<b>I. Baudelaire’s Presentation of Poe: Fame in France and Abroad.....</b>	<b>176</b>
i. Baudelaire’s Evolving Translation Project .....	176
ii. Linguistic Invention “américaniser”.....	180
iii. Translation in Baudelaire’s Three Essays on Poe .....	186

iv.	Translation and Self-Discovery .....	188
v.	Transatlantic Circulation.....	193
<b>II.</b>	<b>Translating Prose: The Trials of the Foreign.....</b>	<b>195</b>
i.	Accents and Dialects .....	197
ii.	Revisions.....	206
iii.	Translating the Maternal Tongue.....	207
<b>III.</b>	<b>Translating “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains”.....</b>	<b>209</b>
i.	Retitling: Memory and the “Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe .....	210
ii.	Translation as Retelling: The Thousand and One Nights.....	212
iii.	Translation and Trace: <i>Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne</i> .....	214
iv.	Bedloe’s Shocks .....	216
<b>IV.</b>	<b>“The Philosophy of Composition” and “La Genèse d’un poème”.....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Poe’s Dash.....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Sounds and Noises: “The Fall of the House of Usher” .....</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Murmurs and Flows: “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.....</b>	<b>231</b>
	<b>Conclusion: Sympathy and Unparticled Matter.....</b>	<b>238</b>
	 <i>In Transit: Glanes: Baudelaire and Poe as Mallarmé’s Literary Masters .....</i>	 <b>240</b>
	 <b>Chapter 5: Fiction and Idea: Mallarmé as Poet-translator.....</b>	 <b>247</b>
	<b>Contextual Introduction .....</b>	<b>247</b>
i.	Mallarmé’s Career as an English Professor .....	247
ii.	Academic Lecturing: <i>La Musique et les Lettres</i> .....	249
iii.	Pedagogical Translation Projects .....	251
<b>I.</b>	<b>Effect.....</b>	<b>253</b>
i.	Theatrical Composition .....	257
ii.	Calque.....	258
iii.	Voix vs. Voir.....	262
iv.	Division.....	263
v.	Idea.....	265
vi.	Capitalization .....	266
<b>II.</b>	<b>Language as Fiction: “Notes sur le Langage” .....</b>	<b>267</b>
i.	Conversation vs. conversation.....	269
ii.	Temporality and Parenthetical Statement.....	270
iii.	Hours .....	272
<b>III.</b>	<b>Or.....</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b><i>Les Mots Anglais</i> .....</b>	<b>279</b>
i.	Alliteration and Onomatopoeia .....	281
ii.	L’indissoluble Hymen .....	284
iii.	<i>Wreck, write</i> : naufrage, écrire.....	287
iv.	The Unique Number and Chance .....	293
v.	Foreign Languages and Calculation .....	294
vi.	Crossing the English Channel .....	296
	<b>Conclusion: Bloc Pur .....</b>	<b>301</b>
	 <b>Conclusion: Literary Afterlives: Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé .....</b>	 <b>305</b>

i.	Avatars of Nerval.....	305
ii.	Echoes of Baudelaire .....	306
iii.	Adaptations of Mallarmé .....	308
	<b>“La Tâche du Traducteur” by Yves Bonnefoy .....</b>	<b>309</b>
	<b>Appendices: Chronology of Translations.....</b>	<b>311</b>
	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>313</b>





## **Introduction: Experiential Rhythms of the Modern Poet-Translator**

This dissertation focuses on the poetic projects of poet-translators starting from the early nineteenth-century to now. While this is a subject that has been looked at by many literary critics and by poet-translators themselves, I would like in this dissertation to propose a complementary point of view.

For example, how does close engagement with a foreign language lead to the discovery of different rhythms? How does translation affect, and profoundly modify, the linguistic, cultural, and poetic rhythms that shape what we will refer to as “experiential rhythm”?

It could be said that linguistic rhythm refers to each language; that cultural rhythm corresponds to each age or epoch; that poetic rhythm denotes the rhythms of verse and prose; and that experiential rhythm refers to lived experiences. But these rhythms are inextricably related and they therefore resist categorization and classification. Our study does not view this interconnectedness as a methodological obstacle, but instead as a dynamic, productive, and extraordinarily relevant site of critical inquiry. We endeavor to probe the depths of the “interconnectedness” that shapes rhythm. In its content and its form, our study seeks to critique the status of “interconnectedness” in the “here and now.” To carry out this critique, we turn to three nineteenth-century French poet-translators: Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898).

But why do we turn to these poet-translators? Why do we reflect on Nerval, Baudelaire and Mallarmé? Why do we contemplate their poetry and translations? Why do we take such an interest in their “experiential rhythms”? These questions are not new.

“Pourquoi encore Baudelaire?” asks Henri Meschonnic in his *Modernité, Modernité*.<sup>1</sup>

“Baudelaire, pourquoi?” asks Yves Bonnefoy in his *Le Siècle de Baudelaire*.<sup>2</sup>

“Qu’est-ce que *notre* modernité?”, et comment mesurer la proximité et l’éloignement de celle de Baudelaire...”<sup>3</sup> asks Michel Deguy.

The question “Why Baudelaire?” has become a site of “interconnectedness.” But not just that. “Why Baudelaire?” is a search for the “here and now.” “Why Baudelaire?” is an evaluation of the “here and now.” Somewhat paradoxically, the question “Why Baudelaire?” is both a site of “interconnectedness” and a sign of its loss. As the father of modern poetry, Baudelaire portrays the estrangement, the discord, and the unanticipated events that characterize the “modern experience.” Johnathan Culler observes that Baudelaire effectively depicts the “dissonant images” and the “disparate sensations” of “inchoate experience.”<sup>4</sup>

If Baudelaire is seen as the prophet of modernity, it is no doubt because his lyrics can be read as asking how one can experience or come to terms with the modern world and as offering poetic consciousness as a solution — albeit a desperate one, requiring a passage through negativity.<sup>5</sup>

The repetitive question “Why Baudelaire?” reveals that modernity is plural, and consequently, to recognize the “modernities” of the “here and now”, we must reflect on other modernities.

This dissertation is divided into two parts: “Contemporary and Historical Reflections” and “Experiential Rhythms: Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé.” The arrangement of these two parts endeavors to bring to light the plurality of modernity and to reveal the ways in which different time periods and literary movements resonate with one another.

Chapter 1 forms a contemporary lens that retrospectively reflects on the profound impact that our nineteenth-century poet-translators have had on what we will call the “modern poet-

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Meschonnic. *Modernité, Modernité*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 103.

<sup>2</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *Le Siècle de Baudelaire*, (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Deguy, "Pour piquer dans le but, de mystique nature (que faisons-nous parlant de Baudelaire?)," *Rue Descartes* no. 10 (1994): 75.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Baudelaire, James McGowan and Jonathan Culler, *The Flowers of Evil*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xxv.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.

translator.” We consider the translation theories advanced by five key twentieth- and twenty-first century ‘poet-translator-critics’: Antoine Berman, Walter Benjamin, Henri Meschonnic, Michel Deguy, and Yves Bonnefoy. Although each of these poet-translator-critics developed different, and sometimes conflicting, views on translation and its practice, they all emphasized the intimate connection between translation and experience. As Michel Deguy affirms in his *Réouverture après travaux*: “Le poème regarde à une expérience singulière et à une ‘cause matérielle’ spécifique, celle de la langue. La poésie est matérialiste.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in his *L’Autre langue à portée de voix*, Yves Bonnefoy puts forward that poetry forms the matter of experience. “La poésie est moins un texte qu’une matière qui irradie sa lumière. Et c’est cette matière dont le traducteur a la charge.”<sup>7</sup>

Chapter 2 provides a historical lens that looks at the broader cultural, aesthetic, economic and political developments of the nineteenth-century. What were the effects and outcomes of key technological advances, for example in the domain of the printing industry and in transportation? How did poet-translators react to the emergence of comparative linguistics? How did the methods of translation change in nineteenth-century France? What was the new geography of cultures and conception of nation that developed during 1815-1914? Finally, how did these developments fundamentally alter the experiential rhythms of our three nineteenth-century poet-translators?

Translation was intimately related to the artistry of Nerval, Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Each of these ‘poet-translators’ published either a famous translation or a well-known study of a foreign language before publishing their major poetic works. Gérard de Nerval, for example, first gained a literary reputation as a translator after his translation of *Faust* was published in Paris in 1828. Baudelaire published two collections of translated short stories written by Edgar Allan Poe,

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<sup>6</sup> Michel Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*, (Paris: Galilée, 2007), 99.

<sup>7</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *L’Autre langue à portée de voix: Essais sur la traduction de la poésie*, (Paris: Seuil, 2013), 47.

*Histoires Extraordinaires* (1856) and *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires* (1857), before the publication of his major poetic work *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Mallarmé began translating Poe's poetry in 1860, twenty-seven years before he would publish *Poésies* (1887).

Part 2 of the dissertation consists of three chapters arranged in chronological order in which we focus on the individual experiences of each poet-translator in our study. We argue that through the act of translation, the translating subject or "le sujet traduisant" gains self-cognizance and a deeper understanding of the writing process in and of itself. Contrary to what one might expect, translation is not merely the substitution of a text for another text, but instead a formative process.

As the American poet William Stafford writes in his essay "The Process of Writing":

A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought about if he had not started to say them. That is, he does not draw on a reservoir; instead, he engages in an activity that brings to him a whole succession of unforeseen stories, poems, essays, plays, laws, philosophies, religions...<sup>8</sup>

In this way, then, it could be said that the act of translation becomes an ideal stimulus for the "process of writing", for it exposes the translator not only to unexpected ideas and literary forms, but also to the psyche of another poet. In an essay on his English translation of Baudelaire's collection *Les Fleurs du mal*, the translator Norman R. Shapiro affirms: "[...] I do believe that a translator, to re-create the 'tune,' must, as I say, identify for a time with the author's psyche..."<sup>9</sup>

Although it goes without saying that the poet's psyche and "experiential rhythms" are ultimately inaccessible and unknowable, we nevertheless try to gain a deeper understanding of the poet-translator's creative process. To do so, we use a comparative approach that considers different versions of our writers' translations and poems. Our method therefore looks at what John Bryant refers to as the "fluid text" or "any work that exists in multiple material versions due to revisions

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<sup>8</sup> William Stafford. "The Process of Writing." In *A Field Guide to Contemporary Poetry & Poetics*. Eds. Stuart Friebert, David Walker, and David Young. (Oberlin: Oberlin College Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Baudelaire, Norman R. Shapiro, David Schorr, and Willis Barnstone. *Selected Poems from Les Fleurs du mal*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), xxxi.

(authorial, editorial, cultural).”<sup>10</sup> Bryant upholds that the “fluid text” offers “concrete representations of intentionality.” However, Bryant emphasizes that the text does not “record the intended meaning.” Instead, it reveals the “*intention to change meaning.*”<sup>11</sup> For Bryant, modifications of intention are therefore “encoded” in the text’s “material differentiations.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John Bryant, “Witness and Access: The Use of the Fluid Text.” *Textual Cultures* 2 (Spring 2007), 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

## PART I

### Chapter 1: The Contemporary Lens

Writing in the aftermath of both World War I and World War II, the five figures that form our contemporary lens made groundbreaking contributions to translation theories by probing the ontological, ethical, and political implications of translation. Their critical works reveal that the questions opened by translation are wide-ranging. In several respects, these questions concern what Francis Marmande has referred to as the transgressions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

Rien [n'est audible], sans les bouleversements — géopolitiques, d'abord, mais pas seulement : comportementaux, générationnels et évidemment économiques — de l'après-guerre dans le monde. Ce que signifient, portent et laissent en chantier les différentes luttes de libération nationale, l'immense procès de décolonisation ; la recomposition des forces, des puissances et des influences, l'accélération des croissances et des communications, la réduction des dimensions et des distances, l'intégration violente du spectacle dans l'objet, dans la marchandise et dans l'idée ; l'accroissement de la population du monde et l'accentuation des inégalités à vivre ; le changement des pratiques de lecture, d'acquisition et de symbolisation, donne à la question un tour nouveau.<sup>13</sup>

These rapid economic, technological and geopolitical changes prompted critical considerations on the ethical role of poetry and translation in society. Michel Deguy coins the neologism “*poétique*” to highlight the intimate relationship between poetics and ethics.

#### **I. Antoine Berman and the Trials of the Foreign: *L'Épreuve de l'étranger***

Writings are the thoughts of states; archives are their memories.  
Novalis, Pollen, 46

Over the course of his career as a professor, critic and translator, Antoine Berman taught several seminars on translation at the Collège international de philosophie and his critical corpus is largely based off of these seminars.<sup>14</sup> In his comprehensive study *L'Épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et*

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<sup>13</sup> Francis Marmande. “Écritures de la transgression au XXe siècle.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 373.

<sup>14</sup> Berman offered the following seminars: 1. La notion de littéralité en traduction (hiver 1984); 2. Traduction, langue maternelle, langue étrangère (printemps 1984); 3. Philosophie et traduction (commentaire de “La tâche du traducteur”, de Walter Benjamin (hiver 1984-1985); 4. La défaillance de la traduction (printemps 1986); 5. Histoire de la traduction en France (printemps 1987); 6. La babel traductive: traduction spécialisée et traduction littéraire (printemps 1988); 7. Commentaire de traduction de John Donne et Friedrich Hölderlin (printemps 1989). See Antoine Berman, *L'âge de la traduction*. (Paris: PUV, 2008), 9.

*traduction dans l'Allemagne Romantique* (1984), Antoine Berman provides a compelling account of how the German Romantics of the *Athenaeum* group critically reflected on the cultural, methodological, philosophical, poetic, and aesthetic implications of translation. Through these reflections, the German Romantics raised critical awareness of poetry and its translation. “La théorie romantique de la traduction, poétique et spéculative, constitue à bien des égards le sol d’une certaine conscience littéraire et traductrice moderne.”<sup>15</sup> According to Berman, reflecting on the historicity of the modern poet-translator is an essential feature of modernities, a plurality (re)constituted through a reflection and critique of other modernities. Meschonnic eloquently advances this idea in his *Modernité modernité*, a work whose title suggests a modernity that reflects on others as a means to deepening a critical understanding of the present. For Meschonnic, this modernity is not a concept, but an empirical condition.<sup>16</sup>

In a separate study on translation, his essay “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign”, Berman noted that his title was inspired by an “expression that Heidegger uses to define the pole of poetic experience in Hölderlin.”<sup>17</sup> In his account of Hölderlin’s poetic experience, Berman underscores that, to a great extent, the act of translation triggered his madness, because it challenged the relationship between the “Self-Same (*Propre*) and the Foreign.”<sup>18</sup> According to Berman, Hölderlin viewed translation as a means to “intensify” and to reveal the “strangeness” of language. To illustrate the ways in which translation brings “strangeness” out into the open and prompts textual deformation, Berman theorizes what he refers to as an “analytic of translation,”

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<sup>15</sup> Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Here it will also be helpful to consider one of the ways in which Emmanuel Levinas in *Entre Nous: essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2010), 73, describes modernity as a haunting of the indescribable: “[...] hantise de l’inexprimable, de l’ineffable, du non-dit, fût-il mal dit ou lapsus, hantise de la généalogie et de l’étymologie des mots – la modernité c’est cela aussi.”

<sup>17</sup> Antoine Berman, “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign,” in *The Translation Studies Reader* ed. Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 284.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



which outlines twelve different “deforming tendencies” involved in translation: rationalization, clarification, expansion, popularization, qualitative and quantitative impoverishment, the destruction of rhythms, of underlying networks of signification, of linguistic patternings, of vernacular networks, of expressions and idioms and, finally, the effacement of the superimposition of languages. Although this study mainly focuses on rhythm, networks of signification, and linguistic patterning, its primary interest will not be the ways in which translation deforms or “destroys” these textual elements in the original or source text. Instead, it looks at how translation activates a formative process.

*i. Romantic Writers of Jena: Novalis and Schlegel*

An archeology of the modern “poet-translator” is, as Berman suggests, an essential feature of modernity itself: “La constitution d’une histoire de la traduction est la première tâche d’une théorie *moderne* de la traduction. À toute modernité appartient, non un regard passéiste, mais un mouvement de rétrospection qui est une saisie de soi.”<sup>19</sup> In several regards, this modernity finds its origins in the reflections that emerged with what Antoine Berman refers to as the Romantic revolution. Through their emphasis on reflection, German Romantics such as Novalis and Schlegel raised awareness of the poetic medium. In Germany, Schlegel pioneered an aesthetic, critical and nearly Copernican revolution of poetry through his German translations in blank verse of fourteen plays written by Shakespeare, which he published between 1797 and 1810.<sup>20</sup> Berman shows how Schlegel’s attempt to faithfully translate Shakespeare’s iambic pentameter led to a new

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<sup>19</sup> Berman, *L’épreuve de l’étranger*, 12. See also Bianca Theisen “The Emergence of Literary History and Criticism” in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 485-490. Theisen explains that Schlegel’s work *Gespräch über die Poesie (Dialogue on Poetry)* written in 1800 came to define the Romantics project: “a new coupling of philosophy and poetry, forms of translation that are literary themselves, modes of critique that have become scholarship; in short, the institution of literary criticism as Schlegel delineates it in and with his *Dialogue* (303)” (487).

<sup>20</sup> For more on this see Michael Eskin. “The German Shakespeare.” in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 460.

understanding of the relationship between poetry, philosophy, philology, and criticism. For Berman, Schlegel's writing opens a space of experimentation. "Quant à F. Schlegel, ses écrits littéraires (comme *Lucinde*) ne dépassent guère le stade de l'expérimentation. Comment donc caractériser cet espace? Probablement en ceci qu'il n'est pas *un espace d'œuvre, mais pourtant d'intense réflexion sur l'œuvre absente, désirée ou à venir.*"<sup>21</sup>

Berman's *L'Épreuve de l'étranger* is a prime example of the intellectual tendency to contemplate translation through the lens of German Romanticism. But Berman was not the first critic to draw these parallels. He instead followed the lead of Walter Benjamin, whose philosophical reflections on translation were deeply influenced by what are called the Jena Romantic writers, namely Schlegel and Novalis.<sup>22</sup> In a similar vein to Berman and Benjamin, recent translation studies like Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (2004), have also focused on these writers. To develop her understanding of the "untranslatable," Cassin borrows Novalis's term "logology", grounding her work in the German Romantic movement. Cassin's reading of Novalis's philosophical notebooks, specifically, those known as the *Logological Fragments* (1798), helped her theorization of sophistic.<sup>23</sup> For Cassin, "logology" relates to a performative philosophy: those who practice this philosophy do not speak to make a determined argument but they instead "philosophize in

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<sup>21</sup> Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, 114.

<sup>22</sup> Berman translated and commented on Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator"; see Antoine Berman, *L'âge de la traduction*. (Paris: PUV, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Fragment 162 of the *Logological Fragments* is especially noteworthy, for it explains that "Romanticization is qualitative exponentiation": "The world must become romanticized. So one finds the original sense renewed. Romanticization is nothing but qualitative exponentiation. The lower self becomes identified with the better self in this operation. In the same way we ourselves are such a qualitative exponential series. This operation is still totally unknown. In it I give the common sense a higher sense, the quotidian a longing, homesick aspect, the familiar the majesty of the unfamiliar, the finite an infinite shine — hence I romanticize it. — The inverse is the operation for the higher, unfamiliar, mystic and infinite. — this becomes, through these combinations, logarithmic — it becomes a familiar expression. Romantic philosophy. Novel language. Lingua romana. Higher exchange and reduction." See Novalis, *Pollen and Fragments: Selected Poetry and Prose of Novalis*, trans. Arthur Verslus (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1989), 56.

language,” speaking so that they may hear their voice and listen to its echoes as they create a world-effect. According to Cassin, “language is and is only the difference of languages,” and the act of translating involves “understanding how different languages produce different worlds, making these worlds communicate, and disquieting them by playing the one against the other [...]”<sup>24</sup>

ii. *An Archeology of the Modern Poet-Translator*

In his *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, Berman refers to his work as an “*archéologie de la traduction européenne*.”<sup>25</sup> Let us briefly consider a few chief examples of the “modern poet-translator.” The French “poet-translator-critic” Valery Larbaud translated many prominent writers, including S. T. Coleridge and James Joyce, who, with Larbaud’s help, gained worldwide fame.<sup>26</sup> In addition to his work as a translator, Larbaud also played the role of critic. In 1946, he published a collection of essays entitled *Sous l’invocation de saint Jérôme* in which he analyzes several different questions relating to translation.<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Hocquard and Claude Royet-Journoud were also significant poet-translators and encouraged Franco-American exchange by co-editing two anthologies of new American poets: *21 + 1: poètes américains aujourd’hui* (1986) and *49 + 1: nouveaux poètes américains* (1991).<sup>28</sup> In her recent study, *La Seconde Profondeur* (2016), Christine Lombez highlights the intimate relationship between translation and poetic creation in the works of several key twentieth-century writers, studying such noteworthy examples as Yves

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<sup>24</sup> Barbara Cassin, “Sophistics, Rhetorics, and Performance; or, How to Really Do Things with Words,” trans. Andrew Goffey *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 42.4 (2009): 363.

<sup>25</sup> Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, 280.

<sup>26</sup> Georges May, “Valery Larbaud: Translator and Scholar,” *Yale French Studies* 6 (1950): 83-90.

<sup>27</sup> Valery Larbaud, *Sous le signe de saint Jérôme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Hocquard translated several American and Portuguese poets: Charles Reznikoff, Michael Palmer, Paul Auster, Benjamin Hollander, Antonio Cisneros, and Fernando Pessoa. Claude Royet-Journoud translated the American poet George Oppen.

Bonnefoy, Armel Guerne, Eugène Guillevic, Boris Pasternak, and Jean Prévost and considers Samuel Beckett's self-translations.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to remember that the poet-translator was also a phenomenon outside France. The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda translated Walt Whitman. The Nobel-prize-winning Mexican poet Octavio Paz translated extensively from Japanese, English, French, Portuguese, Swedish, Chinese, and Sanskrit and viewed poetic translation as the "inverted parallel of poetic creation."<sup>30</sup> During the first phase of Paz's "twin processes," the translator attentively reads and imaginatively interprets the "fixed material of a poem." This "fixed material" is a set of points that guides and determines the act of writing, which Paz refers to as the second phase. The poetry written by Paz was in turn translated by William Carlos Williams and Samuel Beckett. The American poet Ezra Pound was another notable poet-translator, having translated from as many as thirteen different languages, including Chinese and Egyptian. Pound sought to create the effects of foreign words in the English language and his translations, therefore, had philological objectives.<sup>31</sup>

One of the most remarkable examples of the intimate relationship between translation and the poetic experience is seen in the case of Paul Celan. As a polygot, Celan had the ability to translate from several different languages. Through his continued work as a translator, Celan came to live the poetic experience as an encounter with the Other or Others. In his detailed overview of Celan's work as a translator, John Felstiner begins by closely examining Celan's unsuccessful attempts in the 1950s to translate the correspondence between Rainer Maria Rilke and André Gide and explains that this translation project ultimately failed due to challenges posed by linguistic

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<sup>29</sup> Christine Lombez, *La Seconde Profondeur. La traduction poétique et les poètes traducteurs en Europe au XX siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> In "Translation, Literature and Letters," Paz compares the translation of poetry to an "inverted parallel of poetic creation" (159), remarking that translation and poetic creation are essentially "twin processes" (160). See Octavio Paz, "Translation, Literature and Letters" in *Theories of Translation*. eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 152-162.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Alexander, "Ezra Pound as Translator," *Translation and Literature* 6.1 (1997): 29.

difference: Rilke and Gide corresponded in French, leaving Rilke to communicate in a language that was not his native tongue. Celan believed that an appropriate solution to this challenge would not only require an act of translation, or a movement between languages, but also an act of translocation, or a movement between places.<sup>32</sup> Although his attempt to translate the correspondence between Rilke and Gide was unsuccessful, Celan succeeded in translating several other works.<sup>33</sup> As Felstiner observes, “Celan went on to do remarkable, often brilliant work in the art of translation: Valéry’s *La Jeune Parque*, Rimbaud, Char, Supervielle, Michaux, along with a dozen other French poets, and Shakespeare, Dickinson, Frost, as well as Aleksandr Blok, Sergein Esenin, [and] Osip Mandelstam.”<sup>34</sup>

Now let us turn to the critical works written by Walter Benjamin, a key contemporary figure that Antoine Berman both critiqued and translated. In his *L’Âge de la traduction*, Berman underscores that Benjamin’s understanding of translatability is intimately related to untranslatability. “*Quand la visée d’intraduisibilité l’emporte décisivement sur la visée de traduisibilité, l’œuvre s’effondre comme œuvre.*”<sup>35</sup> In this way, then, untranslatability serves as a vital sign of a work’s future potential. With concern to Walter Benjamin’s own work as a translator-critic, untranslatability has certainly proven to be valuable. The persistence of Benjamin’s critical reflections is reinforced by the untranslatable poetry of both Baudelaire and Mallarmé. As Benjamin explained: “*Spleen et idéal*. Because of the abundance of connotations in this title, it is not translatable. Each of the two words on its own contains a double meaning.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> John Felstiner, “‘Ziv, That Light’: Translation and Tradition in Paul Celan,” *New Literary History* 18.3 (1987): 611–631.

<sup>33</sup> In *Poétique du traduire*, 65, Meschonnic notes that Celan uses the German word-concept *Nachdichtung* as a means to stress the idea that translation may be regarded as an “after poem”: “Celan, dans ses traductions, est un *Nachdichter*, la *Nachdiditung* est un poème d’après un poème, entre la transcription et adaptation.”

<sup>34</sup> Felstiner, “Ziv, That Light,” 611.

<sup>35</sup> Berman, *L’Âge de la traduction*, 69.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life* ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 28.

## II. Walter Benjamin: Reflections on Translatability

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) has left an undeniable mark on twentieth-century and twenty-first century theories of language and translation. Not only did Benjamin translate French literary masterpieces, such as Charles Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (between 1914-1915 and 1921) and sections of Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, into German but he also advanced important ideas concerning the role of the translator, most notably in his seminal essay "The Task of the Translator" which first appeared as a prologue to his translations of Baudelaire's poetry.<sup>37</sup> Before considering this significant essay, however, let us briefly observe how Benjamin's earlier essays inform his understanding of translatability and set up his methodological compass.

### *i. Benjamin and German Romanticism*

A character is a completed, refined Intention.  
Novalis, *New Fragments*, 180

Two years before publishing "The Task of the Translator" (1921), Benjamin completed his doctoral thesis on German Romanticism, entitled *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, in which he investigated the "Romantic concept of the criticism of art." A brief consideration of this thesis and its presentation of Benjamin's early meditations on the powerful relationship between the work of art and the critic clarify his ideas concerning the philosophy of language and his understanding of history as an ever-changing relational configuration. In his "The Task of the Translator," this understanding of history re-emerges as a concept that is crucial to Benjamin's theory of translation.

A central concept in Benjamin's analysis of German Romantic criticism was that of "reflection," which intimately relates to what Berman calls the speculative theory of translation.

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<sup>37</sup> Benjamin was unsatisfied with each of these translations; see Berman, *L'Âge de la traduction*, 32-34.

Berman specifically underscores the idea that the Romantics envisaged a specular universe in which “reflection” takes on an ontological import due to its ability to stimulate the emergence of conscious intentions or a “devenir conscient de la poésie.”<sup>38</sup> Commenting on the vital role that both critique and translation would play in the Romantic coming-to-consciousness, Berman writes: “[...] le programme romantique consiste à transformer ce qui n’est historiquement qu’une tendance en une intention consciente d’elle-même : critique et traduction [...] s’inscrivent dans ce programme.”<sup>39</sup> In Benjamin’s description of the Romantic idea of reflection, he distinguishes between a first, second, and third act of thinking. While the first act of thinking is a “thinking of something” and thus a “material thinking,” the second act, or reflection, is “the thinking of that first thinking.”<sup>40</sup> Unlike the first and second acts of thinking, however, the third act, or “the thinking of thinking of thinking,” introduces ambiguity, precisely because it has the power to expand reflection into infinity.

Though Benjamin observes that reflection has the power to generate a limitless “infinity” through which early reflections could then be reflected in later ones, he emphasizes that the Early Romantics did not consider reflection a concept that engendered “an endless and empty process.”<sup>41</sup> Benjamin distinguishes between two kinds of infinity: an “infinity of the continuous” and “an infinity of connectedness.”<sup>42</sup> He then asserts that the Early Romantics, namely, Schlegel and Novalis, regarded reflection as an “infinity of connectedness” as opposed to an “infinity of the continuous.” This connectedness depends on the ability of an infinite subjectivity to fix itself in

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<sup>38</sup> Berman, *L’épreuve de l’étranger*, 124.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism,” *Selected Writings*, 1:127.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. In his detailed account of the Romantic idea of infinity, Berman notes that Schlegel viewed translation as a scientific, philosophical, artistic, poetic, scientific, and mathematical form that had the power to reveal the infinity of the subject. Benjamin’s frequent references to Schlegel and Novalis are better understood when read alongside “Révolution romantique et versabilité infinie,” the fifth chapter of Berman’s *L’Épreuve de l’étranger*, 111-139.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

the limited, or in a finite subjectivity. In his *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, Berman provides a helpful analysis of this idea. As Berman explains, Novalis's understanding of a "versabilité infinie" came to define the Romantic Revolution. Berman notes that the term "versabilité" is a neologism that Novalis coined in one of his fragments; the neologism produces a combination in which "versabilité" blends with "version, inversion, conversion, interversion, versement."<sup>43</sup> Berman refers to this understanding of "versabilité" as the "*principe de la traduisibilité de tout en tout*."<sup>44</sup>

Before turning to Benjamin's essay on translation, we should observe that his Romantic theorization of the artwork depends on a contemplation of its form, which he defines through "reflection." Form, as Benjamin conceives it, is "the objective expression of the reflection proper to the work"; it is a medium of reflection.<sup>45</sup> The form of the artwork imposes a limit – or what Benjamin refers to as a "limit value" – on reflection and, consequently, the artwork itself is created through "determinate reflection" and "self-restriction."<sup>46</sup> Criticism, then, acts as a thinking of – or another reflection on – a "determinate reflection." Through the critic's thinking of the "determinate reflection," a "thinking" that is required to create the artwork, a self-consciousness arises that in turn transforms the artwork itself and therefore, works of art require criticism to survive: "Criticism of a work is, rather, its reflection, which can only, as is self-evident, unfold the germ of the reflection that is imminent to the work."<sup>47</sup> In a significant remark pertaining to criticism and form,

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<sup>43</sup> Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, 125.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism," 1:156.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> In an unpublished fragment written in June 1930, "The First Form of Criticism that Refuses to Judge," Benjamin draws a parallel between his theory of criticism and his theory of translation: "1. [...] The initial task is to present the critic's own subjective viewpoint. In connection with the experience of reading. [...] the exegesis, the ideas, the admiration and enthusiasm of past generations have become indissolubly part of the works themselves, have completely internalized them and turned them into the mirror-images of later generations. [...] And here, at this highest stage of this investigation, it is vital to develop a theory of the quotation [...] criticism is the ongoing life of the works themselves. 2. Even though criticism must be divorced from literary history, the exclusive focus of the new and the topical must be no less lethal. Indicate that this theory of criticism as a manifestation of the life of works has a connection with my theory of translation" ("The First Form of Criticism that Refuses to Judge", *Selected Writings*, 2:372-373). In "Literary History and the Study of Literature", an essay that appeared in *Die literarische Welt* in April



Benjamin observes: “By limiting itself in its own form, [the work of art] makes itself transitory in a contingent figure, but in that fleeting figure it makes itself eternal through criticism.”<sup>48</sup> Benjamin’s idea of “form” as a medium of reflection or as an “objective expression proper to the work” furthers an understanding of his subsequent essay “The Task of the Translator” in which he asserts that “[t]ranslation is a form.”<sup>49</sup> By positing translation as a “form,” Benjamin develops his idea of “translatability” as an “essential feature of certain works.”<sup>50</sup>

ii. “*The Task of the Translator*”

Written in 1921, “The Task of the Translator” (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”) first appeared in 1923 as a prologue to Benjamin’s retranslation of Baudelaire’s “Tableaux Parisiens.” In the essay, Benjamin compares translation to an artwork’s literary afterlife: “[A] translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife.”<sup>51</sup> For Benjamin, the life of art surpasses a metaphorical comparison and should be treated with an “unmetaphorical objectivity.”<sup>52</sup> Since life is not limited to “organic corporeality,” he argues that even works of art have life. Benjamin explains that “life” refers to “history” as opposed to “nature”: “[T]he history of the great works of art tells us about their descent from prior models, their realization in the age of the artist, and what in principle should be their eternal afterlife in succeeding generations.”<sup>53</sup> Benjamin considers the experience of a work of art to be a historical experience but also argues that the work of art can

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1931, Benjamin explains that the study of literature “should above all struggle with the works. “Their entire life and their effects should have the right to stand along with the history of their composition. In other words, their fate, their reception by their contemporaries, their translations, their fame. [...] What is at stake is not to portray literary works in the context of their age, but to represent the age that perceives them — our age — in the age during which they arose. It is this that makes literature the organon of history; and to achieve this and not to reduce literature to the material of history, is the task of the literary historian” (*Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 464). See also Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism,” *Selected Writings*, 1:159.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” *Selected Writings*, 1:254.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 254.

never be entirely present. Before properly detailing the task of the translator, Benjamin writes that “[t]he philosopher’s task consists in comprehending all of natural life through the more encompassing life of history. And indeed, isn’t the afterlife of works of art far easier to recognize than that of living creatures?”<sup>54</sup> Benjamin observes that there is a “philosophical genius that is characterized by a yearning for that language which manifests itself in translations.”<sup>55</sup>

In his commentary on the history of the work of art, or its “afterlife,” Benjamin explains that the “survival” or “fame” of a given artwork depends less on its original language than on what it expresses and argues that there is an affiliation or “kinship” between languages.<sup>56</sup> In other words, although languages vary in their ways of expressing meaning, they nevertheless share a similarity. For this reason, Benjamin maintains that translation from one language to another unveils an active third presence, a “pure speech” that precedes and brings about both languages: “[T]o turn the symbolizing into the symbolized itself, to regain pure language fully formed from the linguistic flux, is the tremendous and only capacity of translation.”<sup>57</sup>

### *iii. Intentio: Spontaneity vs. Derivation*

Benjamin argues that the “derivative” intention of translation is of utmost significance, for it reveals a “pure language” that situates itself at a far distance: “[...] all suprahistorical kinship between languages consists in this: in every one of them as a whole, one and the same thing is meant. Yet this one thing is achievable not by any single language but only by the totality of their

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>56</sup> In “The Path to Success, in Thirteen Theses,” an essay published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in September 1928, Benjamin comments on how fame has become much more difficult to achieve in the modern age. Nerval, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé were well aware that their careers as writers depended on fame, and they therefore experienced the effects described by Benjamin: “Fame, or rather success, has become obligatory and is no longer the optional extra it formerly was. In an age when every wretched scrap of paper is distributed in hundreds and thousands of copies, fame is a cumulative condition. Quite simply: the less successful the writer, the less available his works.” See Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 2:145.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 261.

intentions supplementing one another: the pure language.”<sup>58</sup> According to Benjamin, the “intention” of the poet is “spontaneous, primary, manifest,” whereas the intention of the translator is “derivative, ultimate, ideational.”<sup>59</sup> Our study aims to show, however, that the poet-translator in practice actually moves in between these two intentional limits, and accordingly, the poet-translator’s writing is both “spontaneous” and “derivative.”

*iv. Crise de vers: Mallarmé and Pure Language*

To illustrate his understanding of “pure language”, Benjamin includes a quotation from Mallarmé’s critical poem, *Crise de vers*. As we will observe in Chapter 5, Mallarmé aspired to inaugurate a pure poetry and, on several occasions, expressed that he intentionally conceived the effects that his verses would have on his readers: “Le vers ne doit donc pas, là, se composer de mots; mais d'intentions, et toutes les paroles s'effacer devant la sensation.”<sup>60</sup> Fittingly, Benjamin incorporated a citation in which Mallarmé not only calls attention to the imperfect nature of language but also comments on the ultimate absence of a supreme language. Benjamin cites Mallarmé in the original French and, curiously enough, he does not translate the quote:

Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême : penser étant écrire sans accessoires, mais tacite encore l’immortelle parole, la diversité, sur terre, des idiomes empêche personne de proférer les mots qui, sinon se trouveraient, par une frappe unique, matériellement elle-même la vérité.<sup>61</sup>

Not unexpectedly, this untranslated quotation from *Crise de vers* is an especially significant moment in Benjamin’s essay. And yet, this moment raises questions: for example, what role does this untranslated quotation play in Benjamin’s general ideas on translation?

In his “Des Tours de Babel,” Jacques Derrida upholds that the “performative force” of Mallarmé’s quotation leaves a trace of an untranslatable proper name in Benjamin’s essay.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Selected Writings*, 1: 258-259.

<sup>60</sup> Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 1:137.

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 1:259.

Benjamin vient d'abord de renoncer à traduire Mallarmé, il l'a laissé briller comme la médaille d'un nom propre dans son texte; mais ce nom propre n'est pas totalement insignifiant, il se soude seulement à ce dont le sens ne se laisse pas transporter sans dommage dans un autre langage ou dans une autre langue [...] Et dans le texte de Mallarmé, l'effet de propriété intraduisible se lie moins à du nom ou à de la vérité d'adéquation qu'à l'unique événement d'une force performative.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, Samuel Weber claims that “Benjamin obviously knew why he did not want to translate this passage of Mallarmé. The text is clearly untranslatable.”<sup>63</sup> Weber goes on to draw on his own reading of Mallarmé’s verb “empêcher” to argue that Benjamin’s “pure language” can be understood as both immanent and transcendent.<sup>64</sup> According to Weber, “the turn of phrase ‘empêche personne’” in Mallarmé’s passage “literally means, ‘hinders no one from proffering those words.’”<sup>65</sup> For Weber, Benjamin’s “pure language” relates to the “inexpressiveness” and the “in-significance” of both interruption and “caesura” and, for this reason, “the material embodiment of pure language goes on all the time.”<sup>66</sup> Yet in addition to silence and inexpressiveness. Berman emphasizes that Benjamin’s understanding of “pure language” relates to dialect: “Nous disons – tout à fait hardiment, et courant le risqué de toutes les équivoques – la pure langue, c’est le dialecte. Plus précisément: l’essence dialectale de la langue.”<sup>67</sup> This claim suggests that orality and inexpressiveness are not mutually exclusive, but nevertheless in tension. As Benjamin observes in

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<sup>62</sup> Joseph F. Graham, *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 221, quoted in Derrida’s “Des Tours de Babel.”

<sup>63</sup> Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's -abilities*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 75.

<sup>64</sup> Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé: Poésie, mythologie et religion* (Paris: J. Corti, 1988), 449, has emphasized that Mallarmé understands language as immanent. Mallarmé’s view of language as immanence was the outcome of his spiritual crisis in Tournon in the spring of 1866, which inspired him to meditate on both nothingness and beauty. Commenting on this crisis as it relates to Mallarmé’s understanding of immanence, Marchal writes: “Le réalisme poétique, celui qui croit au pouvoir des mots, le cède à un pur nominalisme sur fond de néant, ce qui revient à dire que la poésie n’est pas substantiellement différente que du langage courant, qu’elle est même tout entière dans le langage sans dépassement possible vers un ciel des idées ou la réalité en soi. En d’autres termes, la poésie n’est pas un surlangage, qui atteindrait magiquement ce que manque toujours le langage trivial et trouverait ainsi une légitimité ontologique. La situation de la poésie par rapport au langage se trouve alors inversée : elle ne pose plus en terme de transcendance, mais en termes d’immanence ; elle n’est rien d’autre qu’un langage dans le langage.”

<sup>65</sup> Weber, *Benjamin's -abilities*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. “Pure language as the word without expression, pure word, is [...] designated as the caesura that, all of a sudden, stems the rush of ideas, arrests its flows, impedes its progression, cuts against the grain of the grammatical expectation of meaning.”

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

his essay “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man”: “Within all linguistic formation a conflict is waged between what is expressed and expressible and what is inexpressible and unexpressed.”<sup>68</sup>

*v. Syntax: Hölderlin as poet-translator*

La Syntaxe  
– Mallarmé, “Le Mystère dans les lettres”

Benjamin argues that the translator should translate the original work literally, stressing that it is far more important for a translation to preserve a work’s “way of meaning,” or its syntax, than to preserve the meaning itself or what it communicates. Benjamin thus values translations that concentrate on a work’s form as opposed to its semiotic content. For Benjamin, a translation should aim to render that which is poetic and “beyond communication”; it should thus concern itself with what he refers to as a work’s “essential substance.”<sup>69</sup> In his prioritization of the “literal rendering” over fidelity to semiotic content, Benjamin presents Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles as an example. Commenting on the reception of Hölderlin’s translations, Benjamin notes that the reading public of the nineteenth century held them to be “monstrous examples of [...] literalness,” primarily due to their incomprehensibility.<sup>70</sup> As he writes, “[a] literal rendering of the syntax casts the reproduction of meaning entirely to the winds and threatens to lead directly to incomprehensibility.”<sup>71</sup> Hölderlin’s attentiveness to the original’s syntax (ie. to what Benjamin calls its way of meaning) rendered his translations opaque and unintelligible. For Hölderlin, translation was not a means of communication; its purpose was not to transmit information but

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<sup>68</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 1:66.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

instead to shed light on the original work's essence. Benjamin thus compares Hölderlin's translations to "prototypes of their forms."<sup>72</sup>

But Benjamin goes on to emphasize that Hölderlin's translations nevertheless pose an "enormous danger."<sup>73</sup> In his view, they disrupt the semiotic content of the original to such an extent that meaning is lost in a limitless chasm.<sup>74</sup> As Benjamin puts it, in Hölderlin's translations meaning "plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language."<sup>75</sup> The encounter with such an expansion of language runs the risk of silencing the translator. Despite the dangers of Hölderlin's translations, Benjamin still strongly insists that communication and comprehensibility should not be the criteria according to which a translation is judged, noting that translations that "read as if [they] had been originally written in [the target] language" should not be deemed the most deserving of praise.<sup>76</sup> Instead, he suggests that we should value translations that "lovingly incorporate the original's way of meaning." To qualify these

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 250-278. In his detailed study on Hölderlin's work as a translator, Berman calls attention to several important questions that translation raised concerning the relationship between the national and the foreign. For example, Berman explains that Hölderlin desired to uncover the origin of German words to learn about the sources of his native tongue. Hölderlin incorporated these etymological discoveries in his own poetic language. Furthermore, Hölderlin expressed a deep fascination with both Greece and the Greek language. In his translations, he explored the Greek and German language in more depth. Regarding the implications of Hölderlin's work as a translator, Berman comments on the poet-translator's "lexical" and "syntactic" literalness: "...pour traduire ce qu'il interprète comme la littéralité du texte original [...] Hölderlin remontait aux sources étymologiques de l'allemand, à ce qui dans cette langue, est littéralité et origine. La traduction devient dès lors – la rencontre – choc et fusion – de deux archaïsmes [...]" (268).

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 1:262. Benjamin's remarks align with an observation made by Heidegger in his 1946 essay "What are poets for?" In the opening of his essay, Heidegger quotes from Hölderlin's elegy "Bread and Wine": "...and what are poets for in a destitute time?" (89). According to Heidegger, the "destitute time" can be characterized by a "default in God." Hölderlin's "destitute time," as Heidegger interprets it, refers to an era in which "divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history" (89). Heidegger refers to this era as an "abyss" (*Abgrund*) or an age in which there is a "total absence of ground" (90). And yet, he asserts that it is necessary to experience the "abyss". "In the age of the world's night, the abyss of the world must be experienced and endured" (90). Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, an imprint of HarperCollins, 2001).

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 1:260.

literal and loving translations, Benjamin uses the adjective “translucent.” Through “translucent translations”, pure language “shines on the original more fully.”<sup>77</sup>

*vi. Echoes: Translation and the Harmonic Concept of Truth*

That like the murmur in the shell,  
Its echo dwelleth and will dwell  
Edgar Allan Poe, “Al Araaf”

Defining the task of the translator, Benjamin writes: “The task of the translator consists in finding the particular intention toward the target language which produces in the language the echo of the original.”<sup>78</sup> It is especially illuminating to compare Benjamin’s observation on the “echo” to his understanding of “pure language” as “the totality” of intentions “supplementing one another.” Since the translator must discover the “intention of the original” in order to create its echo, it follows that pure language, or “the totality of [...] intentions supplementing another,” gives rise to a “totality” of echoes “supplementing another.”<sup>79</sup> These accompanying echoes bring forth harmony, an idea to which Benjamin attributed great value.

In his fragment “Language and Logic” (1920-1921), Benjamin asserts that it is important to embrace what he refers to as the “harmonic concept of truth.”<sup>80</sup> Benjamin holds that “truth” becomes manifest with a “sound like music” and he emphasizes that a “harmonic concept of truth” has the power to challenge the validity of concepts of truth that are dominated by a “false quality of water-tightness.”<sup>81</sup> Considering Benjamin’s “harmonic concept of truth” alongside his comparison between translation and the echo lends insight into his musical description of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>80</sup> In “The Theory of Criticism”, an unpublished fragment written in 1919-1920, Benjamin explains the Romantic understanding of “harmony”: “The multiplicity of works of art is harmonious, as the Romantics perceived, and, as the latter also suspected, this harmony does not stem from a vague principle peculiar to art and implicit in art alone. Rather, it arises from the fact that works of art are ways in which the ideal of the philosophical problem makes itself manifest.” See *ibid.*, 218.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., “Language and Logic,” 272.

Hölderlin's translations: "In them the harmony of the languages is so profound that sense is touched by language only by the way the aeolian harp is touched by the wind."<sup>82</sup>

In his second comment on the "echo," Benjamin portrays the translator as standing outside a "language forest," calling into it so as to produce a reverberation.

Unlike the work of literature, translation finds itself not in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one.<sup>83</sup>

While Benjamin does not mention the myth of Echo and Narcissus, there are several parallels between "The Transformation of Echo" in the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Benjamin's theories on translation. Just as Echo comes to lack the power to initiate speech and must therefore follow another, translation also follows another. And just as Echo's voice renders Narcissus's words foreign and distorted, translations oftentimes render the words of the original unrecognizable. Benjamin similarly describes translation as a "giving voice," writing that the translation must "give voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony [...]."<sup>84</sup> Much like Echo who, through her love, gives new life to Narcissus's words, Benjamin suggests that translation should "lovingly incorporate the original's way of meaning."<sup>85</sup>

To conclude our discussion on Benjamin's theories of translation, let us note that throughout his essay he repeatedly uses the German preposition *über*, meaning "over," "above" or "beyond," in nouns related to translation: *Überleben* (afterlife), *Übersetzung* (translation), *Übersetzbarkeit* (translatability), *Übersetzer* (translator), *Übermittlung* (transmission),

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>83</sup> See Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Selected Writings*, 1:258-9. On the echo, see Bettine Menke and Robert J. Kiss, "'However One Calls into the Forest...': Echoes of Translation," in *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism*, ed. Beatrice Hanssen and Andrew Benjamin (New York: Continuum, 2002), 83-97.

<sup>84</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 1: 260.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



*Übertragung* (transmission/ translation), *Überdauern* (to survive or to carry on).<sup>86</sup> The preposition suggests distance and Benjamin in this way presents translation as an act of distancing; it is a movement beyond and, as such, it recalls the fourth thesis in Werner Hamacher's *Minima Philologica*: "To be able to speak means to be able to speak beyond everything that has been thus spoken and means never to be able to speak enough. The agent of this 'beyond' and of this 'never [speaking] enough' is philology. Philology: transcending without transcendence."<sup>87</sup> Although Hamacher does not explicitly address the act of translation here, his philological observations are directly relevant to this study. As Berman reminds us in *L'épreuve de l'étranger*, translation is intimately related to philology: "...la traduction comme telle, comme acte n'ait champ propre clairement délimité (en tant que travail de langage avec le langage), c'est qu'elle soit *tantôt l'à-côté de la poésie, tantôt l'à côté de la philologie*."<sup>88</sup>

### III. Henri Meschonnic: The Myths of Translation

Throughout his career as a professor, poet, translator, and literary critic, Henri Meschonnic published fifteen books of poetry. For Meschonnic, translation is first and foremost an empirical act and, since it shapes experience, it cannot be grounded in a set theory or logic. As he expressed

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<sup>86</sup> Antoine Berman, *L'Âge de la traduction*, 76-77, has commented on the "chaine des über..." in Benjamin's essay. Berman also offers a helpful summary of the history of the preposition's philosophical and critical importance: "...du Romantisme à Heidegger, la pensée allemande ne cesse de réfléchir sur ce "über," à propos de la traduction, de la critique, de la pensée de l'existence." Berman mentions, for example, Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, Goethe's *Übermeister*, Heidegger's *Überwindung* (willpower, volition), and Rilke's frequent use of words with the preposition *über*, such as the verb *überstehen* (get over, recover from, survive). In his eighth conference on translation at the Sorbonne in 1893, Michel Bréal commented on the special use of the German preposition: "Mais voici où commence quelque chose de nouveau. En allemand, dans beaucoup de cas, la préposition est devenue l'essentiel, et les verbes accessoires." See *De l'ensiegnement des langues vivantes: Conférences faites en lettres de la Sorbonne* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1893), 109. Bréal (109) goes on: "La particule *aus* ayant été combinée avec différents verbes pour marquer une idée d'épuisement et de vide – je citerai seulement *aus-giessen, aus-shütten, aus-leeren*, - on a pu ensuite l'adjoindre à des verbes d'un sens tout autre, pour marquer la même idée de vide et d'épuisement, tandis que le verbe est là pour dire de quoi l'on est épuisé ou vide".

<sup>87</sup> Werner Hamacher, *Minima Philologica*, trans. Catherine Diehl and Jason Groves (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>88</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 300.

in his *Critique du rythme*: “La poésie ne renvoie pas à une *expérience*. Elle la fait. Elle se transforme et nous vous transforme en la transformant.”<sup>89</sup>

*i. The Myth of the Sign*

... les traductions ne traduisent ni des mots, ni des phrases, mais des œuvres...  
Henri Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire*

In his *Poétique du traduire*, Meschonnic exposes the myth of the sign, which he characterizes as a literary disaster. By arguing against the unity of the sign, Meschonnic challenges the conventional discourse of translation studies, calling into question the divide between target-oriented translations (*ciblistes*) and source-oriented translations (*sourciers*). Meschonnic explains that this divide transmits a false understanding of rhythm. While he does not deny the actuality of Saussure’s division between the signifier and the signified, he moves against the myth of the sign, challenging traditional interpretations of rhythm and emphasizing the movement of discourse as opposed to the sign’s fixity. Meschonnic argues that this binary division endorses positivist deception. He refers to these theories as misleading pseudo-sciences and maintains that they should not be used to theorize literary translation. To put this differently, Meschonnic does not disprove the actuality of semiotics as a functioning of the sign but upholds that language and literary works cannot be reduced to semiotics as they also involve semantics. A poem, for him, is more than the linguistic signs of which it is composed.

In their work *Traité du Rythme*, Gérard Dessons and Henri Meschonnic seek to mobilize the sign through a new understanding of rhythm as a continuum as opposed to a discontinuum. For this reason, they take issue with classical definitions of rhythm founded on the discontinuous nature of language: the sign’s discontinuity, the word’s autonomy, and the phrase’s grammatical singularity. While syntax, sound, sense, morphology, and vocabulary are fundamental functions

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<sup>89</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 63.

of language, they also veil the continuous nature of language. Challenging Plato's definition of rhythm, which has dominated Western thought, Meschonnic refers to Democritus and Heraclitus to distinguish between *rhuthmos*, the configuration of what is in movement, and *schema*, the organization of immobile things. For Meschonnic, rhythm should not be understood as a *schema*, but instead as a *rhuthmos*, the flow of language in its continuum. The distinction Dessons and Meschonnic make between *rhuthmos* and *schema* allows them to expand the notion of rhythm beyond the limits of meter. While meter is undoubtedly a vital aspect of rhythm, they argue that it does not represent rhythm in its entirety: meter does not capture language's continual nature or its status as *rhuthmos* but is instead governed by a *schema*, the measurement of that which is immobile. Since rhythm is a movement of speech that exceeds meter, it is therefore directly related to the enunciator, to the subject who speaks.

## *ii. La Poétique du traduire*

C'est la traduction, c'est la littérature qui sont à analyser,  
éventuellement même pour situer les états d'âme du traducteur.  
Henri Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire*

Meschonnic compares poetics to a critique of the status and the function of language, and thus a critique of linguistics, philosophy and the human sciences. He views the traditional opposition between oral and written as a conceptual shortcoming and argues that the reader should use his or her sense of hearing when organizing the visual features of a written text. He was particularly attentive to the ways that the "framing of discursive values" shapes the reader's experience of literary works. Meschonnic stressed that these "discursive values" are unpredictable and unknowable since they depend on the subject as a "multiple being" formed through a process that he called "subjectivisation." For Meschonnic, the process of "subjectivisation" creates a text's "signifiante," a term that conveys emotional and corporal continuity.

On peut vous peindre aujourd'hui autrement. Non plus dédoublé en entité duelles et discontinues, mais comme un continu de rythme où le mouvement de signifier à votre corps, vos gestes, votre voix, votre histoire.<sup>90</sup>

Meschonnic critiques “le mimétisme du son” and its privileging of the psychobiological relationship to language. He argues that the ear is not only sensorial but also cultural and historical. While Meschonnic does not deny mimetic desire, he contends that this desire is not located in language, but instead the speaking subject “...seul le sujet-langage travaille la langue.”<sup>91</sup> For Meschonnic, language is related to voice, an emission of the body, of the body that is a subject, of a social and historical body. Since vocal intonation has the power to contradict linguistic content, Meschonnic upholds that words are first rhythmic and oral and then semantic and lexical.

### *iii. Embabelons: Translation and the Myth of Babel*

...la traduction est babélien, c'est-à-dire récuse toute totalisation.  
Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*

In addition to his translations of poetry, Meschonnic published at least eight volumes of Biblical translations. Like several other translators and translation theorists, Meschonnic often revisited the two Biblical stories that stage the initial events of language theory: the Fall and the Tower of Babel. In his essay *Sur la Traduction*, Paul Ricœur draws a parallel between Benjamin's essay “The Task of the Translator” and the state of living “after Babel”, which echoes the title of George Steiner's seminal study *After Babel*:

...la dispersion et la confusion des langues, annoncées par le mythe de Babel, viennent couronner cette histoire de la séparation en l'apportant au cœur de l'exercice du langage. Ainsi sommes-nous, ainsi existons-nous, dispersés et confus, et appelés à quoi? Eh bien...à la traduction ! Il y a un après-Babel, défini par la “tâche du traducteur,” pour reprendre le titre une première fois évoqué du fameux essai de Walter Benjamin.<sup>92</sup>

Since the myth of the Tower of Babel also captures the imagination of our nineteenth-century poet-translators, it is therefore especially noteworthy to consider Meschonnic's observations.

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<sup>90</sup> Meschonnic, *La Rime et la vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 48.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Sur La Traduction* (Paris: Bayard, 2004), 33-34.

The eleventh chapter of Genesis presents the myth of the Tower of Babel: “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”<sup>93</sup> To punish the people for their arrogant attempt to build the tower, God came down and confused their tongues and scattered them abroad, after which the people stopped building their city. Divine punishment therefore enacted the same fear that had motivated the building of the tower: the fear of being scattered. In his *La Rime et la Vie*, Meschonnic offers a particularly perceptive interpretation of the myth of Babel, which he compares to the myth of the sign:

Le mythe du signe – mythe, en ce qu’il est unité-vérité totalité et mobilisateur – se superpose au mythe de Babel. La diversité continue d’être le Mal. La différence linguistique est ce que la conception traditionnelle de la traduction tente d’effacer, recherchant l’illusion du naturel, du non-traduit, de l’écrit pour vous maintenir dans votre langue, tout pour éliminer la distance linguistique, historique, culturelle.<sup>94</sup>

Meschonnic accentuates the value of linguistic, historical, and cultural difference. He pushes against those who regard diversity as a source of evil and instead welcomes the difference revealed through translation.

In his “L’Atelier de Babel,” Meschonnic provides a detailed account of his own experience translating this episode from the Hebrew Genesis into French. He identifies two key challenges: the passage’s syntax and the pun or “calembour” focusing on the word “Babel”: “...il tourne dans une matière verbale régie par la figure étymologique et toute orientée par le calembour.”<sup>95</sup> Meschonnic maintains that a semantic relationship between confusion and language itself, or “the lip,” structures the Bible story.

*Langue – safa*, étymologiquement “lèvre”, métaphore du langage. Dès l’akkadien et l’hébreu biblique, le langage est tantôt la langue (l’organe), *lachon*, tantôt la lèvre, *safa*, tantôt la bouche, *pê*, également représentations d’ouverture : le bord de la mer est la “lèvre” de la mer en hébreu.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Gen. 11:4 (KJV).

<sup>94</sup> Meschonnic, *La Rime et la vie*, 77.

<sup>95</sup> Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire*, 558.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

In his comments on his own translation of the Biblical story, Meschonnic offers a detailed description of his motivation to coin the French verb “embabeler.” He begins by calling attention to the relationship between Babel and the Hebrew *bâlal* (“il confondit, il brouilla”).<sup>97</sup> He then stresses that his neologism “embabeler” relates to the Hebrew *naval*, which derives from *bâlal* meaning “mélanger, mêler, confondre” (to mix, to confuse, to confound). Additionally, Meschonnic draws a connection between *bâlal* and *bilbel*, which signifies “confondre, embrouiller” (to confuse, to mix up), which echoes with *balbala* (nightingale) and is reminiscent of the French verb *balbutier* (to stammer, to stutter, to trip over your words, to babble). In his description of his coining of “embabeler” to signify the divine mixing and confusing of languages, Meschonnic writes: “...j’ai aventuré le verbe embabeler, dérivé de Babel, puisque pour nous, et déjà en hébreu, Babel est elle-même la confusion.”<sup>98</sup>

Many others have also reflected on the significance of the proper name Babel. In Weber’s account of the story, he points out that “the name of Babel itself [...] means both confusion, imposed by God on language, and ‘gate of the god.’”<sup>99</sup> In “Des Tours de Babel,” Derrida, for example, comments on Voltaire’s entry on Babel in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, in which Voltaire cheekily calls into question the idea that “Babel” means “confusion.” Voltaire breaks the word down into its two constituent phonemes: *Ba* and *Bel*. Voltaire notes that while *Ba* signifies “father” in oriental languages, *Bel* signifies God or city of God. Using Voltaire’s “calm irony” as the point of departure for his own critique of Babel as double, or as both a proper and a common noun, Derrida reads two examples of “confusion” in the Biblical story: in addition to God’s confusion of the tongues, the builders themselves are confused by God’s punishment. Derrida also

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<sup>97</sup> The predecessors analyzed by Meschonnic are Rabinat, Segond, Chouraqui, and Saint Jerome. In Derrida’s essay “Des Tours de Babel,” he compares Segond’s translation to Chouraqui’s.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 570.

<sup>99</sup> Weber, *Benjamin's -abilities*, 88.

comments on Voltaire's association between "Babel" and a syllable meaning "father": "Mais Voltaire suggère autre chose encore: Babel ne veut pas seulement dire confusion au double sens du mot, mais aussi le nom du père, plus précisément et plus communément, le nom de Dieu comme nom du père."<sup>100</sup>

For Derrida, the word Babel therefore calls attention to questions regarding the proper "name" and, even more importantly, challenges whether an absolute idiom or an absolute "properness" can truly exist. As Derrida understands it, the "absolute proper name" or the "secret proper name" is always "inscribed" in a "network contaminated by common names."<sup>101</sup> Consequently, an effect of absolute properness cannot exist in a "state of purity." Instead, it occurs through differential relations, or what he refers to as the "differential structure" of the mark. As Derrida puts it: "[t]he proper name is a mark: something like confusion can occur at any time because the proper name bears confusion within itself."<sup>102</sup> Derrida's understanding of the "differential structure" and the proper name as a mark directly relates to his ideas concerning language and the impossibility of the sign.

*iv. "Sonnet en yx": Mallarmé, Babel, and the Apex of Babble*

Aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore  
Mallarmé, Sonnet en yx

To extend Meschonnic's Babelian exercise in and about translation to the issues we will be addressing later in this dissertation, it will be helpful to briefly highlight the relevance of the Tower of Babel and the act of babbling for the poet-translators comprising the corpus of this dissertation. One need only reflect on Mallarmé's symbolic "Sonnet en 'yx'." The sixth line of the sonnet presents echoes of Babel, a myth that captivated Mallarmé: "Aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore." In

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<sup>100</sup> Graham, *Difference in Translation*, 211, quoted in Derrida's "Des Tours de Babel."

<sup>101</sup> Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 107.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

this line, the repetitive consonant /b/ in “**aboli bibelot**” seems to give rise to the sonorous inanity, the juxtaposed “aboli bibelot” acting as an incoherent babble. Moreover, the letters that spell out this prattling seem to transpose the sounds in the proper noun “Babel”: the first syllable “ba” is found backwards in “**aboli**,” and the second syllable “bel” is found in the middle of “**bibelot**.” Such phenomena are typical of and very common in Mallarmé’s poetry and *poèmes en prose* and are indeed a well-known characteristic of his poetic writing.

In addition to what I will here call this “hidden Babel”, the line seems to sound out a childlike inanity or babbling. In several entries of the *Dictionnaire des onomatopées françaises*, Mallarmé’s near contemporary Charles Nodier notes that the consonant /b/ is not only the first consonant of all alphabets but is also the first letter that children combine with vocal sounds:

**BABIL, BABILLARD, BABILLER** *Babil* abondance de paroles sur des choses inutiles, manie importune de parler continuellement. De la **lettre b qui résulte de la simple disjonction des lèvres, et qui est la première que les enfants combinent avec les sons vocaux**. Aussi est-elle la première consonne de tous les alphabets. Nicod dérive ce mot de *Babel*, à cause de la confusion de langue qui y eut lieu. Ménage le fait venir de *bambinare*, qui a été fait de diminutif de *bambo*, transféré selon lui dans l’italien du syriaque *babion*, qui signifie *enfant*. De la même racine, nous avons créé

BABIOLE, une chose de peu de conséquence, une bagatelle qui peut occuper que des enfants;

BABOUIN, BAMBIN, un petit enfant qui articule à peine; en gallois *bach*, d’où vient le nom de Bacchus, qu’on représente ordinairement comme un enfant gros et joufflu;

BAMBOCHE, un enfant grotesque et contrefait, une marionnette ridicule;

BAMBOCHADE, un genre de Peinture qui ne s’exerce que sur des formes triviales, sur des marionnettes et des *bamins*.

Ménage aurait trouvé d’ailleurs une étymologie plus exacte et plus naturelle encore dans le grec, où l’on dit *bao*, *babazo*, *babalo*, et *bambaino* pour *loquor*. Mais le fait est que tous ces mots et leur immense famille sont composés d’après le son naturel.

**Baba, babe, en arabe, signifient bouche, ouverture; be** a le même sens en langue celtique. Dans la même Langue, *enfant* se dit *vap*, *mab*, *vab* et avec le diminutif, *babic*, un petit enfant.

On dit dans le latin *garrulitas*, *garrulus*, *garrire*, autre Onomatopées; dans l’italien, *garrire*, *cicalare* et *ciacherare*; dans l’espagnol, *babillar*, *chalar*, *chicarrar*. [...]

Madame Pernell dit dans le *Tartuffe*:

C’est véritablement **la tour de Babylone**

Car chacun y **babille** tout au long de l’aune.<sup>103</sup>

Beyond calling attention to /b/ in these entries on the onomatopoeic nature of “BABIL, BABILLARD,

<sup>103</sup> Charles Nodier, *Dictionnaire raisonné des onomatopées française* (Paris: Demonville, 1808), 15-17.



BABILLER,” Nodier explains that for Nicod, these words all derive from Babel. On a final note, according to Rudder’s dictionary *Ces mots qui font du bruit*, all these words derived from Babel, moreover, correspond to the sounds made by birds: “blabla” or “blablabla.”<sup>104</sup>

As we would expect from an adept of the story of Babel, babbles resound in Mallarmé’s poetry. The sixth line of his “Sonnet en –yx,” “Aboli bibelot d’inanité sonore,” echoes with the nurse’s incantation found in an early version of *Hérodias* that Mallarmé would later abandon: “**Abolie**, et son **aile** affreuse dans **les larmes** / Du **bassin**, **aboli**, qui mire **les alarmes**.”<sup>105</sup> In this incantatory phrase, the mirroring “larmes” in the rhyme pair “larmes-alarmes” seems to dramatize the French verb “mirer.” The nurse’s enunciation of an enchantment produces this specular effect: as she voices her incantatory spell, the lines of the poem spell out the letters of Mallarmé’s name (“larmes – mire les alarmes”). In this way, then, the lines evoke the Babel-like tension between proper noun or proper name (Mallarmé) and common nouns (“larmes” and “alarmes”).<sup>106</sup> This tension is consistent with Jean-Maulpoix’s assertion that the abandonment of Babel acts as the ultimate source of Mallarmé’s writing: “au commencement de l’écriture, pour Mallarmé, n’est pas le Verbe [...] mais la chute ou l’abandon de Babel, sans qui ‘n’existerait pas le vers, tel qu’il lui appartient en propre de rémunérer ‘le défaut des langues.’”<sup>107</sup>

One may further observe that echoing with the story of the Tower of Babel is what the linguist Roman Jakobson has called the “the apex of babble,” namely, the period preceding a child’s introduction into their own maternal tongue, a time during which the child has access to

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<sup>104</sup> Rudder defines “blabla” or “blablabla” as “n. m. 1937. Bavardage d’oiseaux”; see *Ces mots qui font du bruit*, 52.

<sup>105</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1:137. This verse also recalls Mallarmé’s “A la nue accablante tu...” (*OC*, 2: 106: “A la nue accablante tu / Basse de basalte et de laves”) and the second verse of “L’azur” (“Accable, belle indolemment comme les fleurs”).

<sup>106</sup> For more on Mallarmé and names, see Michael Temple, *The Name of the Poet: Onomastics and Anonymity in the Works of Stéphane Mallarmé* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995). For the “larne” in Mallarmé, see 83-85; for the “alarme” in Mallarmé” see 88-90.

<sup>107</sup> Jean-Michel Maulpoix, “Imparfaites en cela que plusieurs,” in Sylvie Parizet, ed., *Le Défi de Babel* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2001), 25.

the sounds of every language: “[N]o limits can be set on the phonic powers of the prattling child.”<sup>108</sup> But learning one’s own maternal tongue requires distance from this infinite and infantile phonic possibility. It not only involves a retuning of the ear but also what Daniel Heller-Roazen has called a “phonic amnesia,” a forgetting that rids the child’s memory of “the apex of babble.”<sup>109</sup> Yet despite this period of phonic amnesia, memories of the “apex of babble” can nevertheless resurface. Heller-Roazen explains that these memories persist in the form of “echolalias,” sounds that remind the child of the one “immemorial babble that, in being lost, allowed all languages to be.”<sup>110</sup>

#### IV. Michel Deguy: Translation and the Comme-un

##### i. *Po&sie*

Des paroles inconnues chantèrent-elles sur vos lèvres,  
lambeaux maudits d’une phrase absurde ?  
— Mallarmé, “Le Démon de l’analogie”

le démon de la néologie agglutinante  
— Deguy, *Donnant Donnant*<sup>111</sup>

For nearly forty years, Michel Deguy has served as the “*rédacteur en chef*” of the literary journal *Po&sie*.<sup>112</sup> The journal focuses its attention on the ethical, ontological, aesthetic, philosophical, and ecological implications of the poetic experience, exploring the ways in which poetry reveals both oneness and diversity. Since its founding in 1977, *Po&sie* has introduced French readers to poets and translators from around the globe, promoting awareness of different cultural and

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<sup>108</sup> Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>111</sup> This poetic “fragment” is from Deguy’s “La défenestration de la rue Lafayette – Un appareil pour Kermarrec.” Deguy’s fragment echoes with Mallarmé’s “Le démon de l’analogie”, transforming the demon into a “démon de la néologie”.

<sup>112</sup> In addition to Deguy, the original editorship included Jacques Roubaud, Robert Davreu, and Alain Duault, who were each translators. Roubaud, a member of Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle), translated both prose and poetry, notably Lewis Carroll’s nonsense poem *The Hunting of the Snark*. Davreu translated English poets such as E.E. Cummings, Percy Shelley, and John Keats. Davreu translated the tragedies of Sophocles.

linguistic backgrounds. Commenting on the contemporary importance of *Po&sie*, Jean Michel-Maulpoix emphasizes its mixture of different poets and voices from both the past and the present. “...les poètes actuels y mêlent leurs voix à celles du passé, [...] la création s’y confronte à la réflexion philosophique, [...] la traduction y est affirmée comme activité.”<sup>113</sup> Jacques Neefs calls attention to the performative dimension of the journal. “La revue elle-même est conçue comme un lieu présent, performatif par le poème et pour le poème, le lieu d’une sorte de ponctualité ouvrante, selon un principe Hölderlinien de l’habitation poétique.”<sup>114</sup>

Eleven years before founding *Po&sie*, Deguy had called attention to an alarming dilemma: the considerable absence of translations in France. In Paris, one could not even find works by such poets as Petrarch and Ezra Pound. Deguy stressed that a critical understanding of France’s poetic tradition is essential to addressing this lack:

...il y a un besoin urgent chez nous d’une réactivation de cette tradition où la poésie française a ses racines, c’est-à-dire sa sève, et qui comprend la littérature grecque, latine, judéo-chrétienne, puis *européenne*, c’est-à-dire italienne, espagnole, anglaise, allemande, américaine...*La conscience critique* de la poésie moderne exige cette remémoration.<sup>115</sup>

Deguy felt *Po&sie* could help to solve this urgent problem. The journal made several translations available to the French reading public and, as the ampersand in its title suggests, it stressed that poetry and translation are vital modes of interaction and exchange. Much like an ideogram, the ampersand in *Po&sie* is a visual metaphor. It indicates the relations formed by the conjunction “and” or “et” and in so doing, it articulates a special way of envisaging poetics, creating a comparison that reveals both likeness and difference.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Jean Michel-Maulpoix. “Au XXe siècle.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 324.

<sup>114</sup> Jacques Neefs, “La Poésie n’est pas seule: le long cours de la revue *Po&sie*,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 20.3 (2016): 386.

<sup>115</sup> Michel Deguy, “Poésie et connaissance,” *MLN* 81.3 (1966): 256.

<sup>116</sup> The ideogram is “a symbolic representation, or metaphor.” See “ideogram, n,” in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2016), accessed February 24, 2017.

In what follows, we will consider how this title (*Po&sie*) is a written neologism as opposed to a spoken one. Understanding *Po&sie* as a neologism depends on one's sense of sight; one must visually recognize and perceive the metaphor symbolized through the ideogram "&". In addition to combining two words, *Po&sie* combines two kinds of written characters, the ideogram and the phonogram.<sup>117</sup> While the pictorial ideogram (&) appeals to the reader's sight, the phonograms, or the written letters of the alphabet (p-o-s-i-e), appeal to the reader's sense of hearing. When paired together, the ideogram and the phonogram form a written neologism.

Like analogy, the ideogram "&" operates as a comparative gesture. The conjunction "et" plays an important role in Deguy's philosophical ideas. It has the ability to signify a connection between contradictions and it is not necessarily a sign of similarities, as one might expect. By way of italics, Deguy accentuates the ethical and theoretical importance of this contradictory "et": "il faut du collectif *et* du solitaire; il faut du mot à mot *et* du paraphrasé; il faut du bilingue *et* du monologue."<sup>118</sup> Deguy argues that this indispensable aporetic pairing opens a space for aesthetic reflection that allows opposites to come together while also acknowledging separation.

Above all, the ideogram "&" indicates that *Po&sie* is a shared experience. The journal's editors commented on the value of meaningful exchange in a note accompanying the first issue, published in 1977:

Le signe Po&sie aimerait dire le et qui est à l'intérieur de la poésie, un et de diversité, de pluralité &: non pour abréger (ce serait plutôt l'inverse) mais esquisser un idéogramme qui symbolise l'instabilité, la nouveauté, la place faite au rapport, aux interactions.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> The *OED* defines the phonogram as "a written character or symbol representing a spoken sound." Of particular interest for this study, it includes a citation from Isaac Taylor's *The Alphabet, an Account of the Origin and Development of Letters* (1883): "It is probable that the step by which the advance was made from ideograms to phonograms arose out of the necessity of expressing proper names."

<sup>118</sup> Michel Deguy, "Traduction/ Adaptation" in *La Traduction-Poésie: à Antoine Berman* ed. Martine Broda (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1999), 99.

<sup>119</sup> Quoted in "Comité," *Po&Sie*, <http://www.pourpoesie.net/?q=content/comite>.

In this same note, the editors summarized the main objectives of *Po&sie*. They intended for the journal to become an interactive space in which writers from around the globe could voice questions and concerns regarding the future of poetry. Indeed, for Michel Deguy, poetry is always in process: in question (“La poésie en question”) or in questions (“La poésie en questions”).<sup>120</sup>

In the conclusion of the editorial note, the committee forewarned its readers of a risk that could compromise the future of poetry: “le risque de sa dislocation moderne.”<sup>121</sup> *Po&sie* ventures to proactively work against this impending risk. By opening a space for contemplative dialogue, the journal counteracts the danger of mass-media culture or what Deguy refers to as “le culturel”. For Deguy, the word “culturel” takes on negative connotations. It denotes the uncertainties that characterize today’s age:

*Culturel* est le mot qui nomme notre temps, notre âge. C’est une datation philosophique : l’époque de la technique, en termes heideggériens, cette époque du *nihilisme* dans sa phase *postmoderne*, qui est un temps de mutations sans précédent que l’euphémisme en usage désigne comme ‘mondialisation’, [...] âge ou époque du *capitalisme culturel*.<sup>122</sup>

To express the adverse outcome of “le *culturel*”, Deguy coins the word “déterrestation”, a term used to convey how the world or earth (“terre”) has become increasingly uninhabitable. Deguy upholds that the technological advances that have come to define “le *culturel*” have distanced humanity from language and nature.<sup>123</sup> In his succinct analysis of Deguy’s understanding of “le *culturel*”, Martin Rueff notes that it signals a loss of experience. “Le culturel détruit le temps et

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<sup>120</sup> Deguy wrote two articles using this slightly varied title in which the question moves from singular to plural: “La poésie en question” *MLN* 85.4 (May 1970): 419-433; and “La poésie en questions,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 56 (1972): 19-42. In the 1970 essay (419), an attempt to “combat” the linguistic studies which have appropriated poetry, Deguy addresses the severe decline in the number of visible poets, noting that poetry is considerably less sought after: “Le poème est de moins en moins lu, peut-être parce que de plus en plus illisible; le poète de moins en moins vu, quasi-invisible; non vu, non lu.” Deguy maintains that the association between linguistics and poetics is a primary cause – and also sign – of poetry’s waning significance

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in “Comité.”

<sup>122</sup> Michel Deguy. *La Fin dans le monde* (Paris: Hermann, 2009), 32.

<sup>123</sup> Michel Deguy. *Comme si Comme ça. Poèmes 1980-2007* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 237. This quotation is found in Deguy’s recueil *À ce qui n’en finit pas* (1995).

les conditions objectives de l'expérience. Il dédouble le réel en son même éternellement offert à consommation et à répétition dans la grisaille dépressive d'un réel vidé d'expérience."<sup>124</sup>

*ii. Ecological Reflections on Translation*

Le péril global de perte du sens est-il tel qu'il nous fasse courir le risque de perdre le sens qui nous permet d'évaluer une perte de sens et la perte du sens? (On dirait une inquiétude *écologique*...)

Michel Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*

According to Deguy, the declining value of language, or Logos, is symptomatic of “déterrestration”: “[...] la sortie du ‘logos’ ou du milieu de l’être-parlant (J. Cl. Milner) de pensée, langue, parole, raison, médiation...”<sup>125</sup> Deguy explains that the pervasive presence of images on screens has diminished the imaginative force of language: “...l’image à l’écran fascine et stérilise l’imagination.”<sup>126</sup> He fundamentally calls into question the screen and software; Deguy directly relates the French term “logiciel” to “Logos” and he questions how these technological advancements have impacted the relationship between humanity, language, and the world at large: “Un écran est-il une chose? I-pad ou I-pod, médium des mondialisés où apparaissent des trucs qui ne sont plus des choses.”<sup>127</sup> Deguy explains that, in addition to images on screens, advertisements are another leading cause of language’s decline: “La publicité ronge et détruit la logosphère, ou sphère des vérités.”<sup>128</sup> According to Deguy, language has been reduced to information due to “le *capitalisme culturel*”: “...devenir information-communication de la langue ou propagande de consommation et, en fin d’histoire, de sortie du logos...”<sup>129</sup> Deguy critiques the dominant languages of mass-media culture, such as “Wall-Street english” and “globishisation”, because they

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<sup>124</sup> Martin Rueff, *Différence et Identité: Michel Deguy situation d'un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme culturel*, (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2009), 71. For more on this, see Chapter 2 “Le culturel” in *ibid.*, 59-96.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>126</sup> Michel Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, 104.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>129</sup> Michel Deguy. “Poétique et philosophie.” *Po&sie* 144 (2013): 8.

generate nonpoetic statements of tautology (i.e., A is A) as opposed to poetic relations of likeness, expressed through “comme” or “as” (i.e., A is to B as C is to D). Deguy passes judgment on showy advertisements, arguing that *Logos* has been transformed into a logo.

To raise awareness of the spoken word, or Logos, Deguy advances an “ecological” line of reasoning. Deguy highlights how the word “écologie” illustrates his main argument regarding language. “Dans écologie, il y a ‘logie’; c’est la place pour la poésie, qui ne prend pas de photos, mais qui parle.”<sup>130</sup> Through his ecological understanding of poetry, Deguy strives to render the world, and also words, more inhabitable, thus working against “la déterrestation”: “La poésie concerne l’habitation terrestre.”<sup>131</sup> Deguy maintains that the etymology of “ecology” reinforces this idea of the habitable and livable: “*Écologie* est le mot qui nomme le souci de ‘l’écoumène.’ L’*étymon* grec, *oikos*, est généralement traduit par *maison*, *séjour*, *habitation*.”<sup>132</sup>

Through its title, the literary journal *Po&sie* uses the power of visual metaphor to remotivate the spoken word. Much like the flashing advertisements described by Deguy — “lueurs publicitaires dans les vitrines qui s’idéogrammatisent”<sup>133</sup> — the title incorporates an ideogram. While the journal seeks to attract readers with the ideogrammatic ampersand, it also hopes the visual will be vocalized. In his poem “BD”, Deguy draws a parallel between visualization and vocalization, rhyming “esperluette”, or ampersand, with “luette”, meaning uvula, a tissue at the back of the throat that plays an important role in speech, particularly in the pronunciation of consonants:

bonjour de *Po&sie*, qui agite son  
esperluette: on espère en votre luette.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, 29.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Michel Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 164.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.

Echoing with the “esperluette” is the verb “espérer”, which expresses the hopes for the ampersand: “on espère en votre lulette.”

iii. *La lignée Heidegger-Hölderlin*

Comment traduire le “demeurer poétiquement” hölderlinien transmis?  
Michel Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*

Fifteen years prior to founding *Po&sie*, Deguy published a translation of *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (1951) under the title *Approches de Hölderlin*, establishing himself as one of Martin Heidegger’s preliminary French translators. Through his work on Heidegger, Deguy developed a triangular configuration of thinking formed by the inextricable connection between philosophy, poetry, and translation. Deguy’s “poèmes en pensée” or “poèmes philosophiques” exemplify this triangular configuration. Describing his pensive prose, he stresses the importance of reflection, explaining that the philosophical poem “réfléchit volontiers sa terminologie, sa logique, sa tropologie.”<sup>135</sup> Through the repeated suffix *-logie* (“terminologie,” “tropologie”), Deguy reinforces the ecological dimensions of his poetic and philosophical ideas. For Deguy, “l’écologie est une *logie*.”<sup>136</sup>

In his philosophical poems, Deguy often incorporates citations and even autocitations. By way of his frequent recourse to quotation, Deguy opens a dialogic space of reflection: “le *logos* dia-logique philosophique né du dialogue.”<sup>137</sup> According to Deguy, translation motivates this reflective activity. Like Benjamin, Deguy asserts that translation is “le milieu même de la réflexion.”<sup>138</sup> In several poems, Deguy quotes Heidegger and on more than one occasion uses the word “Dichter”, which in German signifies “poet”: “Dichter dans l’allemand hölderlinien-

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<sup>135</sup> Michel Deguy. “Poétique et philosophie.” *Po&sie* 144 (2013): 4.

<sup>136</sup> Michel Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, 39.

<sup>137</sup> Michel Deguy, “Renaissance. Réflexion. Refondation,” in *États provisoires du poème. XI, Renaître, refaire, refonder?* ed. Paul Andreu, Jean-Marie Barnaud, and Jacques Bonnaffé (Le Chambon-sur-Lignon: Cheyne-Manier-Mallinettel, 2011), 103.

<sup>138</sup> Deguy, “Poétique et philosophie”, 4.



heideggérien.”<sup>139</sup> Through the use of the German word “Dichter”, which resembles the French verb “dire”, meaning “to say,” Deguy strengthens his thoughts on the spoken word. Dominique Combe has emphasized the importance of both Heidegger and Hölderlin for poetic modernity:

La modernité n’est pas seulement fondée sur la ‘poésie de la poésie’, ainsi qu’on le répète à satiété après les commentaires de Heidegger sur Hölderlin, mais sur la poésie de la non-poésie, poésie de la prose. La prosaïsation apparaît non seulement comme le signe de la modernité, mais comme la modernité elle-même...<sup>140</sup>

While an in-depth study of the resonances between Deguy and Heidegger lies beyond the scope of this project, one significant example does merit consideration, because it visually shows how translation opens a space of distance. On the opening page of his short poetic treatise *La poésie n’est pas seule* (1987), Deguy used the German word *Gelassenheit*: “Il ‘me’ faut de l’ascèse, du stoïcisme, du zen, du monastique, de la *Gelassenheit* pour penser.” At the bottom of the page, Deguy provides a footnote translating the German: “*Gelassenheit*: terme de Heidegger traduit par ‘sérénité.’”<sup>141</sup> Through the spatial disposition of the page, Deguy draws a separation between the untranslated and translated. The translation of “*Gelassenheit*” occupies a marginal space on the page and is thus at a distance from the body of the text. Through this contrast between an “untranslated inside” (the body of the text) and a translated outside (the footnote), Deguy acts out his assertion: his serenity depends on his own personal engagement with Heideggerian thought and thus his knowledge of the foreign language. A remark made by Thomas Pavel in his *Le mirage linguistique* (1988) sheds light on Deguy’s frequent inclusion of foreign words: “...le choix du mot étranger indique nettement que ‘derrière’ la langue il y a quelque chose d’irréductible à celle-ci. Ce quelque chose est pourtant insaisissable, car celui qui parle ne se retire que pour utiliser tout

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<sup>139</sup> Deguy. “Renaissance. Réflexion. Refondation”, 102.

<sup>140</sup> Dominique Combe, “L’œuvre moderne,” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 438.

<sup>141</sup> Michel Deguy, *La Poésie n’est pas seule: Court traité de poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 15.

de suite le système de différences et de résonances d'une autre langue."<sup>142</sup> In this case, the irreducible German word *Gelassenheit* is an enabling condition of Deguy's thought ("Il me faut...pour penser") but, as Pavel has suggested, this enabling condition is elusive and cannot be simplified. A prime example of this resistance to simplification is that Deguy offers a different translation of *Gelassenheit* in his *Réouverture après travaux*: "Peut-être une traduction pour la *Gelassenheit* proposerait-elle a bon droit le terme d'hésitation."<sup>143</sup>

Given that Deguy develops a triangular configuration of thinking, it is not surprising that he also translated poetry. Deguy has translated poems from several different languages (Spanish, Greek, Italian, and English): he translated Góngora, Sappho, Dante, and several American poets. Over the course of his literary and academic career, Deguy has thus played the role of a "poetic diplomat" of sorts, introducing French readers to new poets, styles, and writing practices. While *Po&sie* is the chief example of Deguy's "diplomatic activity," he also co-edited, with the poet-translator Jacques Roubaud, the bilingual anthology *Vingt poètes américains* published by Gallimard in 1980. The anthology compiled upcoming and influential American poets, whose poems were printed alongside their French translations. Gertrude Stein and Robert Duncan were among the twenty American poets included in the bilingual anthology.

#### *iv. Compas-raison*

"Tout par compas"  
— Baude Cordier. arr. C Young for Chamber Ensemble  
Album: Figures of Harmony: Songs of Codex Chantilly

According to Deguy, the act of translation sheds light on the "comme-un," it helps one recognize the many different correlations made possible by the French conjunction "comme": "On reconnaît par le *comme*; en disant d'une chose 'elle est comme cela'; en faisant trembler l'unité

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<sup>142</sup> Thomas G. Pavel, *Le mirage linguistique: Essai sur la modernisation intellectuelle* (Paris: Minuit, 1988), 79.

<sup>143</sup> Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*, 168.

dans de rapprochement de *deux*, qui sont l'un comme l'autre.” Through translation, one gains a deeper understanding of human “comme-unauté.”<sup>144</sup> An experience of the “comme-un de(s) choses” unites this “comme-unauté.”<sup>145</sup> In several of his poems, Deguy accentuates “le don du comme”, laying emphasis on “rapprochement” and “comparaison.” In his fittingly titled poem “Compas-raison”, Deguy incorporates quotations from poets and thinkers like Montaigne and Mallarmé who also meditated on the gift of “comme.” By quoting Montaigne, Deguy shows that a verbal form of the word “comme,” “commer,” once circulated in French: “*Montaigne*. Si je ne comme bien, qu'un autre comme pour moi.” (verbe *commer*, vieux et inusité – Littré; signifie faire des comparaisons; fut supprimé en 1878 par l'Académie française.”<sup>146</sup> From Mallarmé, Deguy quotes the first stanza of “Éventail”, a poem whose first line draws a parallel between the conjunction “comme” and language. Through its use of the term “logis”, meaning dwelling or abode, the final line calls to mind a relationship between language and habitation. Mallarmé’s precious “logis” therefore echoes with Deguy’s understanding of “éco-logie.”

Avec comme pour langage  
Rien qu'un battement aux cieux  
Le futur vers se dégage  
Du logis très précieux.<sup>147</sup>

The *logis/logie* pair reinforces the idea of language, poetry, and questions relating to habitation or the livable world, thus recalling Deguy’s quotation of Hölderlin, “demeurer poétiquement sur cette terre (Hölderlin).”<sup>148</sup> The title of Deguy’s poem, “Compas-raison,” also plays with the word “comparison”, inviting one to imagine it as a compass of reason, an instrument used to measure directions of language and logic. The compass in “compas-raison” can also be likened to a

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<sup>144</sup> Deguy, *La Poésie n'est pas seule*, 41.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>146</sup> Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 83. See also “Les Plaisirs du Seuil” in *Gisants* (1985).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>148</sup> Deguy. “Renaissance. Réflexion. Refondation,” 102.

measurement of musical potentiality. In the English language, compass can signify the “full range of tones which a voice or musical instrument is capable of producing.”<sup>149</sup>

v. *Trans-en-danse*

Recurring throughout Deguy’s many essays and critical reflections is the prefix *trans-*, from the Latin preposition meaning “across, to or on the far side of, beyond, over.”<sup>150</sup> Deguy relates the *trans-* to fiction in his poem “L’Iconoclaste”: “Trans-en-danse / Le *trans* est la fiction.”<sup>151</sup> Unsurprisingly, the preposition “en” figures throughout this poem: “**En** tout rien tout bonheur” (423), “**En** quoi croit la croyance / **En** l’expressivité” (423), “L’imagination est l’hôte de l’inconnaissable / Ayant plongé au fond de l’inconnu / Elle en revient **en** poèmes chez les humains” (425). In the poem’s second stanza, Deguy dances with the preposition and its letters, which appear in — “en” — different words. Some of these words echo with the “en” while others merely show its visual presence:

Tu seras réduit **en** temps  
Sablier ton corps passe **en** âme  
Ton âme dist**en**due  
Poussière maint**en**ant  
Tout dev**ien**t temps. Le temps se perd  
La mort ét**en**d sa pulvérisation  
Que restera-t-il **en**tre les seins de la paren**th**èse ?  
Tes dernières paroles.<sup>152</sup>

As the body passes into the soul, an echo of the “en” sounds in the adjective “dist**en**due”. The dancing “en” plays a vital role in the transcendent movement from life to death; it seems to dilate (“dist**en**due”) and prolong the effects of death, spreading out lost time (“La mort ét**en**d sa pulvérisation”). As these examples illustrate, Deguy’s understanding of “trans-en-danse”

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<sup>149</sup> See “compass, n,” *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2016), accessed March 4, 2018.

<sup>150</sup> See “translation, n,” *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2016), accessed February 11, 2017.

<sup>151</sup> Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 424.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

associates notions such as translation, transposition, and transcendence with dance-like movements, conjuring an image of poetry in which new thoughts and words are found in others.

Like Deguy, Meschonnic also accentuates the prefix *trans-*. In his *Critique du rythme*, Meschonnic refers to rhythm as an “entité réelle transcendante” and he underscores its transformative function, calling attention to the discourse it reveals; this discourse is “trans-subjectif”, “trans-historique”, and “trans-idéologique.”<sup>153</sup> Noting the parallels between poetic discourse and theoretical discourse in a chapter entitled “Activité Théorique, Activité Poétique”, Meschonnic emphasizes the significance of the affective nature of the speculative activity. For Meschonnic, theoretical discourse engages both the personal and the impersonal and, in doing so, highlights what he calls the “*transpersonnel*.”<sup>154</sup> In his subsequent chapter, “L’enjeu de la théorie du rythme”, Meschonnic uses the prefix “trans” to describe how an attentiveness to rhythm as a configurative formation of the subject brings to light political components: “L’écriture, exposant l’état politique du sujet dans une société montre et fait du sujet de l’écriture un trans-sujet.”<sup>155</sup>

#### vi. *Elastic Undulation*

To further explore the implications of translation and the inherently idiomatic nature of language, Deguy uses Mallarmé and Baudelaire as his points of departure. He emphasizes the incantatory quality of their poems, which is achieved through rhythmic effects such as diæresis and the “e muet.”

L’affaire de la poésie française est, formellement considérée celle de l’*e* (amuïssement et élision) et de la *diérèse en général* : étirement, élonguabilité, de la séquence, jeu de l’accélération et du ralentissement possibles. Il s’agit, avec le poème, de faire (re)passer la langue au ralenti, pour ausculter et entendre sa capacité ou contenance. “Élastique ondulation”, disait Baudelaire...<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 21, 29 and 87.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>156</sup> Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*, 13.

According to Deguy, the listener, who with pleasure or “jouissance” hears an “elastic undulation” created by rhythmic effects, comes to comprehend the intimate relationship between language – both the national language and the poet’s own language or style – and the particularity of the idiom. Commenting on the irreducibility and untranslatability of idiomatic language, Deguy coins his own idiom, “idiomacité”:

... cette jouissance est celle de la profonde idiomacité ou intraductibilité de l’idiome (que est aussi son intraductibilité), d’une part, qui est favorisée par l’itérativité paronomastique où elle reconnaît le son, le ton, le chant de sa “maternelle,” s’alentissant ou s’emportant, s’étalant ou s’abrégeant, intensifiée ou diminuée...<sup>157</sup>

In his parenthesis, Deguy expresses untranslatability as “intra-ductibilité”, thus emphasizing the prefix *intra-*. If we understand untranslatability as a value inherent in the great literary works of art, and therefore, as a value that establishes the work’s inherent translatability, the term “intra-ductibilité” refers to that which within (“intra”) the work of art renders it inherently untranslatable and yet also “à-traduire.”<sup>158</sup> The figures and devices composing the work itself (“le ton,” “le son,” “l’itérativité paronomastique,” “les jeux de mots,” “le non-sens,” “les refrains glossolaliques,” “les inventions onomatopéiques,” “l’ivresse de la signification”) constitute its “intra-ductibilité” or that which generates its untranslatability from “within.” A deeper understanding of “intra-ductibilité” is afforded by considering an issue that might appear unrelated: the question of universal language.

### *vii. Désesperanto and Universal Languages*

Unlike poetry which aims to achieve “intra-ductibilité”, universal languages aim to not require translation. During the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the desire to improve global and international communication led to the invention of several new “universal

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<sup>157</sup> Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 424.

<sup>158</sup> On this point, Hamacher, “Intensive Languages,” 491, observes that the “essence of language, its translatability, its possibility of translation, defines it as a possibility beyond all possibilities, as extrapossibility and the possibility of an impossibility. But if translatability is the possibility of and demand for the *essence* of a work, and if as such a possibility it oversteps every possible actuality, then it must also be the possibility of – and demand for – and impossibility of translation, the possibility of – and demand for – untranslatability.”

languages”: Esperanto, Ido, Novial, Volapuk, and Basic English.<sup>159</sup> Taking into account the emphasis that Deguy lays on the untranslatability of the idiom, it is not surprising that he dismisses these newly invented languages. In his essay “Poésie et connaissance,” Deguy argues that Esperanto is the opposite of poetry: “La poésie est le contraire de l’esperanto.”<sup>160</sup> In an attempt to render everything translatable and communicable, universal languages such as Esperanto have done away with Deguy’s cherished idioms. He attacks Esperanto in his poem “Paris, Frimaire”, transforming the language of “hope” into one of hopelessness through his creation of a satirical idiom, “désesperanto”:

Les sous-titres analphabets  
Font de la traduction en désesperanto  
Burger Burgerking et Macdo.<sup>161</sup>

Like Esperanto, fast food restaurants like “Burger Burgerking et Macdo” do not require translation since globalized food chains such as these tend to offer their customers standardized menus. Restaurants, such as McDonald’s and Burger King, proliferate the negative consequences of “le *culturel*”: they generate identity (i.e., A is A), thereby suppressing plurality and difference.

Much like Deguy, Walter Benjamin also considered the consequences of Esperanto, most notably its historical implications. In thesis K of his “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History,’” Benjamin argues that universal language engenders a Universal history and as a direct result, awareness of the particular fades. Benjamin upholds that in order to comprehend different

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<sup>159</sup> Morag Shiach, “‘To Purify the Dialect of the Tribe’: Modernism and Language Reform,” *Modernism/Modernity* 14.1, (Jan. 2007): 23-24.

<sup>160</sup> Deguy, “Poésie et connaissance,” 259. Deguy’s critique of Esperanto aligns with the primary motivation of Barbara Cassin’s recent philosophical dictionary, the *Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*. See Barbara Cassin. “The Energy of the Untranslatables: Translation as a Paradigm for the Human Sciences,” trans. Michael Syrotinski, in *Translation and the Untranslatable*. ed. Michael Syrotinski (Edinburgh University Press, 2015): 146. “We were not trying to establish – in the wake of Ido, a kind of philosophical Esperanto and international auxiliary language [...] What we have shown instead with this truly collective work [...] is that we are dealing with a completely different kind of philosophical freedom and practice, at once more global and more diverse, and bound up with words, with words in languages: after Babel, with pleasure.”

<sup>161</sup> Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 166.

histories, humanity needs different languages: “The multiplicity of ‘histories’ is closely related, if not identical, to the multiplicity of languages.”<sup>162</sup> Benjamin compares Universal history to Esperanto and, like Deguy, he views this language as hopeless: “Universal history in the present-day sense is never more than a kind of Esperanto. (It expresses the hope of the human race no more effectively than the name of that universal language.)”<sup>163</sup> Like Benjamin, Berman has also critiqued “espéranto”:

Et tel est, peut-être, l’essentiel de la conscience traductrice moderne: une exigence maximale de ‘savoir’ au service d’une ré-alimentation de la capacité parlante du langage, d’une certaine manière lucide *d’habiter et de défendre Babel* à l’heure où la Tour-des-Multiples-Langues (c’est-à-dire celle des Différences) est menacée par l’expansion d’un jargon déracinant qui n’est même pas l’espéranto, ce rêve humaniste naïf qui révèle maintenant son vrai visage de cauchemar.<sup>164</sup>

In addition to Esperanto, Deguy critiques “Basic English”, a language that C. K. Ogden invented in order to aid commerce and technological communications and thereby promote a global citizenry. Ogden’s invention of “Basic English” reduced the English vocabulary to 850 items. The word “Basic” functions as both an adjective and an acronym for “British, American, scientific, international, commercial.” The title of Ogden’s book *Debabelization* (1931) aptly describes the consequences of “Basic English”: the reduction of those treasures for the poet, the idiomatic expressions.<sup>165</sup> Unlike Deguy who attempts to “rebabelize” language through “idiomaticité”, Ogden eliminates complicated idiomatic expressions. Calling attention to the harmful effects of “Basic English”, Deguy compares the language to a cancer: “...l’anglais basique globisch qui cancérise la langue...”<sup>166</sup> Elsewhere, he writes “...la mutation du genre humain se

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<sup>162</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History’”, in *Selected Writings*, 4:404.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Antoine Berman, *L’Épreuve de l’étranger*, 289.

<sup>165</sup> See Charles K. Ogden, *Debabelization: With a Survey of Contemporary Opinion on the Problem of a Universal Language* (London: Kegan, 1931). In addition to inventing Basic Language, Ogden worked as a translator. Ogden translated the “Anna Livia Plurabelle” section of Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* into Basic English; see Jesse Schotter, “Verbivocovisuals: James Joyce and the Problem of Babel,” *James Joyce Quarterly* 48.1 (2010): 89-109.

<sup>166</sup> Michel Deguy, *La Fin dans le monde*, 21.



‘communiqu[e] plutôt en ‘acronymes globenglish.’<sup>167</sup> In his prose poem “Notes d’un voyage vers le grand référent,” the first sentence of which reads: “Le voyage en Extrême-Culturel les emmena d’abord au pays de la Traduction,” Deguy portrays the “voyage en Extrême-Culturel” as the poetic necessity of English translations:

L’imposition de la traduction frappait toute langue ; pour toute langue y compris plus secrètement l’anglais lui-même dans sa propre mutation, la prescription contraignante de sa traductibilité à l’anglais contemporain préformait chez les poètes un poème de leur langue adapté par avance à la version anglaise qui en serait l’officielle, - un poème de la langue qui n’était déjà plus un poème de leur langue. Et les plaintes bilingues des Hongrois, des Coréens, des Slovènes, mais bientôt des Français, hâteraient une mutation qu’elles voulaient conjurer.<sup>168</sup>

In his essay “Le Débat,” Deguy argues against the kind of “global citizenry” advanced by Ogden’s “Basic English”. He specifically critiques the globalized “industry of translation”, which he also refers to as the “universel facile.”<sup>169</sup> In doing so, he distinguishes between two different kinds of translation:

Il y a deux traduire: celui qui vise par la ‘traduction instantanée’ confiée à l’interprétariat et bientôt aux machines à traduire, supprime la différence: le but est de la ‘communication,’ c’est-à-dire de favoriser ‘en temps réel’ l’infinité simultanée des ‘transactions’ économiques dans un Marché mondial. Et celui qui, par *amour* des langues, et de *ma* langue, et de *Lalangue*, creuse la différence abyssale où elles voisinent i. e (ne) s’entendent (pas), sonde et protège l’intraduisibilité : Babel est le trésor, ce sont les littératures qui protègent les langues. “Poésie” est précisément l’audition de cette diction précieuse de Babel.<sup>170</sup>

Whereas the first kind of translation nullifies temporal distance, the second kind of translation, in a passage reminding us of Benjamin’s theories, calls for duration, maturation, and history. In his comments on this extended temporality, Deguy uses the expression “le temps passe” three different times. He first explains that the translator spends time reading and rereading: “...le temps passe

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<sup>167</sup> Deguy, “Renaissance. Réflexion. Refondation,” 87.

<sup>168</sup> Deguy, *Donnant Donnant*, 402.

<sup>169</sup> Daniel-Heller Roazen, *Echolalias*, 58-59, has referred to this century as the “monoglot millennium” and has highlighted the creation of the “endangered languages project” by UNESCO in 1993. Jürgen Trabant, “Theses on the Future of Language,” in *The Humanities between Global Integration and Cultural Diversity* ed. Hans. G. Kippenberg and Birgit Mersmann (Berlin; Boston: de Gruyter, 2016), 135, has recently predicted in his “Theses on the Future of Language” that “only 600 from the still existing 6,000 languages will survive by the end of the century” (135). In Thesis 1.2, Trabant argues that even ‘big’ languages will be degraded to vernacular languages in the process of globalization. One High Global Language will exclusively be used for the superior discourses” (136).

<sup>170</sup> Michel Deguy, “Le Débat” *Littérature* no.156 (2009): 14.

entre la première lecture de l'original et la dernière lecture de la traduction *décidée*...".<sup>171</sup> He then notes that the translator also spends time writing in the margins: "...le temps passe en commentaires et discussions, amplifications interminables – élongation ou condensation – du textuel à traduire".<sup>172</sup> Finally, time is spent consulting the dictionary, this utopia of synonyms "où se retranscrit l'étrange pratique de traduire."<sup>173</sup>

### viii. *Translation as Intertextual Memory*

For Deguy, the final translation, or the "traduction *décidée*," represents only one among several potential translations. Deguy's emphasis on interminable amplifications suggests that the number of potential translations is unlimited. To illustrate this limitlessness, Deguy compares the original text to a musical score: just as a musical score is played differently by different musicians, so too does the original text lend itself to plurality. Deguy elaborates on the relationship between musical "trans-en-danse" and untranslatability in "*An die Musik*", a poem that fittingly uses a German title. The irreducibility of music stems from its perpetual evolution, from the unpredictability of each moment: "Il y aurait de l'inconnu et du nouveau au fond; du non traductible, non interprétable, non réductible..."<sup>174</sup> Deguy explains that the translator who endeavors to translate this untranslatable music has a wide-ranging number of choices. Deguy stresses, however, that some decisions are more desirable than others. To discover these more felicitous choices, Deguy advises the translator to listen for latent intertextual echoes in the target language and he describes intertextuality as a form of literary memory:

To perpetuate this memory and ensure poetic maturation and survival, the poet-translator carefully reflects on the relationship between self and other. Entering into a dialogical relationship

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<sup>171</sup> Deguy, *La Raison Poétique*, 106.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 95.

with other voices, echoes, verses or refrains, the poet-translator endeavors to conjure the presence of the foreign, welcoming alterity: “donner voix à cette altérité.”<sup>175</sup> Deguy’s ecological mission depends on the hospitality of the foreign. To illustrate this idea, he changes the /c/ in “eco” to a /g/, thus transforming /eco/ into /ego/. Following this play on words, Deguy stresses that “écologie” is not an “égo-logie.” Through the reflection activated by translation, the self learns to live in an “in-between” space or “entre-soi” and the recognition of otherness moves the ego beyond its normal boundaries.<sup>176</sup> Through “trans-en-danse”, the interiority of a particular lived experience (“...qui ‘vit **en** moi’”) resonates *in*, and also *within*, the language of another: “...cette âme étrangère qui ‘vit en moi’, cette autre vérité qui ‘habite l’homme intérieur’, désaltérant l’ego et qui l’a rendu hospitalier à l’altérité.”<sup>177</sup> Through his recurrent use of quotation, Deguy’s triangular configuration of thought perpetuates echoes of writers who have greatly inspired him.

To conclude, let us consider “Aide Mémoire”, a poem in which Deguy reflects on the ethical import of comparison:

La comparaison entretient l’incomparable  
 La distinction des choses entre elles  
 Poésie interdit l’identification  
 Pour la douceur du *comme* rigoureuse.<sup>178</sup>

Through a rigorous method of comparaison or, again, “compas-raison”, Deguy’s poetry enriches language — “Le poème en confie le défaut à sa langue.”<sup>179</sup> This verse echoes with Mallarmé’s memorable assertion in his *Crise de vers*. Deguy’s poem also encompasses memories of Baudelaire, drawing attention to the sympathetic feeling of semblance that Baudelaire’s writing encourages. To stimulate this sympathetic response, Baudelaire frequently used the word

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>178</sup> Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça*, 107.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

“comme”, a conjunction that has the capacity to transform one’s vision of the world.<sup>180</sup> In the lines evoking Baudelaire, the repeated preposition “en”, or “in”, suggests metamorphosis and the rhythmic danse of “trans-en-danse”:

Changer le monde? Non!  
Oui: **en** lui-même disait Baudelaire  
C’est-à-dire **en** sa figure par le *comme*.<sup>181</sup>

#### V. Yves Bonnefoy: *La Communauté des traducteurs*

C’est vrai que je suis un traducteur, et plus encore peut-être quelqu’un qui s’intéresse au problème de la traduction comme apport possible à la création poétique et au devenir de la société.  
— Yves Bonnefoy, Entretien avec Joumana Hadad (2004)

Yves Bonnefoy has translated the works of William Shakespeare, John Keats, and William Butler Yeats among others.<sup>182</sup> Like the poet-translators that we have already observed, Bonnefoy upholds that translation is an experience. According to Bonnefoy, this experience deepens and intensifies the “here and now” or the *hic et nunc*. Through an attentiveness to the musicality of language and the world at large, translation reawakens presence. In the *Avant-propos* to his *La communauté des traducteurs*, Bonnefoy describes a special kind of reading, one which stimulates personal dreams, projects and aspirations within the reader. According to Bonnefoy, foreign-language poetry inspires this hopeful kind of reading, what he calls ‘une lecture *écrivante*’:

Et ce que je dois souligner, de mon point de vue d’aujourd’hui, c’est que les lectures de cette sorte ne se cantonnent pas à des textes qui sont écrits dans leur langue, ne les préfèrent pas. Au contraire elles se portent vers des poèmes d’autres langues, d’autres cultures avec le surcroît de fascination qui naît d’un mouvement d’espérance.<sup>183</sup>

Much like Michel Deguy, Bonnefoy gives prominence to the virtues of community and to the dynamic potential of the conjunction “comme.” In his collection of essays *La Communauté des*

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<sup>180</sup> Benveniste notes that Baudelaire used the word “comme” more than any other words in his poems. “comme 328 (le mot le plus fréquent absolument/ de Baudelaire) ainsi que 36 < si on y ajoute les équivalents, le/ total dépasse 400.> pareil 14 semblable 15 tel 10.” See 10, f° 15/ f° 48 p. 120. In 17, f° 8/ f° 129, Benveniste remarks: “Je crois que *correspondance* est le mot-clé/ de sa poétique.” See Benveniste, *Baudelaire*, 282.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Bonnefoy has also translated the works of John Donne, Giacomo Leopardi and Francesco Petrarca.

<sup>183</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *La Communauté des traducteurs* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2000), 10.

*traducteurs* (2000), Bonnefoy focuses on questions relating to poetic translation and the difference between languages, as in his essay *La Petite phrase et la longue phrase* (1994), which begins with a question, articulated with the word “comme,” concerning linguistic difference: “Peut-on voir sa propre langue comme du dehors, comme si c’était une langue étrangère?”<sup>184</sup>

In his 2004 interview with Joumana Hadad, Bonnefoy suggests that a translation should aim to rekindle the original poetic experience instead of following the work’s syntactic movement: “Ce que je prône, vous le voyez, c’est une traduction hardie, qui cherche à recommencer l’expérience plutôt que suivre le texte dans la littéralité de son propos.”<sup>185</sup> For Bonnefoy, phrases are translatable, but words are not: “...le chestnut-tree de Yeats n’est ni le marronnier ni le châtaignier, car son environnement, qui fait partie de son sens, c’est pour l’anglophone un village d’Angleterre ou d’Irlande, ou tel college d’Oxford.”<sup>186</sup> Unlike words, which tend to closely embody local particularities, Bonnefoy explains that phrases are more universal and the translator must therefore attend to the phrase as opposed to the word.<sup>187</sup> By arguing against a literal approach to syntax, Bonnefoy’s ideal translation approach differs from the one proposed by Benjamin in his “The Task of the Translator.” Yet despite this difference, Bonnefoy and Benjamin both emphasize the experiential nature of translation. Bonnefoy likens this experience to a forgotten childhood, which when remembered opens a frame of mind that day-to-day life tends to discourage: “Cette expérience de la présence, de l’évidence, est peu fréquente et vite oubliée, dans la société ordinaire.”<sup>188</sup> Translation, then, takes on an ethical dimension for Bonnefoy. He goes so far as to

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<sup>184</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *La Petite phrase et la longue phrase* (Paris: La TILV, 1994), 1, my emphasis.

<sup>185</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *L’inachevable. L’entretien sur la poésie* (1990-2010) (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2010), 420.

<sup>186</sup> Bonnefoy, *La Petite phrase*, 26.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

claim that translation can help save the world: “Elle est une des activités de notre temps malheureux qui pourrait contribuer à sauver le monde.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 44.

## Chapter 2. The Historical Lens: Translation in Nineteenth-Century France

Le romantisme ne pouvait se développer que sous des influences étrangères : il y en eut d'heureuses comme Shakespeare, Goethe, qui élargirent notre génie poétique.  
Rémy de Gourmont, *Promenades Littéraires*.

Nineteenth century France saw a period of literary renovation during which a plurality of modern poetic forms began to challenge the homogeneity of the academic and classical tradition. Defining characteristics of these new developments include an emergent tension between verse and prose (“Vos auteurs favoris en prose? – ceux qui font des vers”),<sup>190</sup> a new perception of time and singular experience (“La modernité est le toujours je-ici maintenant”),<sup>191</sup> and a heightened attention to the sonorous and semantic potential of words (“...arriver de la *phrase* à la *lettre*, par le mot...”).<sup>192</sup> Yves Bonnefoy explains that this new attentiveness to the word came to define not only nineteenth century poetry, but also its legacy: “Si le XIXe siècle a un avenir à ce plan du ‘changer la vie’ qui me paraît l’essentiel, c’est parce qu’on aura su reconnaître le mot redevenant poésie comme l’essentiel de son legs.”<sup>193</sup> To a great extent, this new sensibility to the materiality of language was motivated by a rise in foreign language translations.

Between the years 1815 to 1914, the circulation of translations in France significantly increased and writers began to propagate new translation methods.<sup>194</sup> These new methods were intimately tied to the emergence of French Romanticism around 1830. Pre-nineteenth-century German Romantics had greatly contributed to the development of the French Romantic movement; their poetic and philosophical ideas inspired French writers to oppose classical conventions,

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<sup>190</sup> See the reproduction of a questionnaire that Mallarmé responded to as part of a “jeu de société” in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres Complètes* (hereafter, *OC*), ed. Bertrand Marchal (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 2:xix.

<sup>191</sup> Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme: Anthropologie historique du langage* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1982), 27.

<sup>192</sup> See “Notes sur le langage,” in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Igitur, Divagations, Un coup de dés*, ed. Bertrand Marchal (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 71.

<sup>193</sup> Bonnefoy, *Le Siècle de Baudelaire*, 15.

<sup>194</sup> Yves Chevrel, Lieven d’Hulst, and Christine Lombez, *Histoire des traductions en langue française: XIXe Siècle, 1815-1914* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2012).

promoting inventive rather than imitative translations. In this way, then, one could say that French Romanticism “imported” German Romanticism: prominent writers of the French Romantic movement like Victor Hugo, Stendhal, and Madame de Staël endorsed the ideals advanced by Novalis, Schlegel, and Goethe.

While the first half of the nineteenth-century saw the development of the French Romantic movement, the second half of the century saw the advent of modernity and the French Symbolist movement. During this time, poets radically called into question the ways in which literary activity consciously reflects on contemporary society and events.

...la création littéraire est en effet conçue comme une révolution permanente qui exprime d’abord et avant tout l’exigence pour la poésie d’être la conscience de son époque pour un public à venir. Et cette révolution engage pour chaque œuvre la question de sa place dans l’Histoire de la poésie, et non seulement cette question mais celle, radicale, de la poésie elle-même. D’où, durant toute la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, une intense activité de théorisation, lisible au premier d’abord dans la multiplication des arts poétiques, préfaces théoriques, essais, manifestes, et le caractère polémique de cette réflexion.<sup>195</sup>

The proliferation of translations in nineteenth-century France and elsewhere contributed to these critical reflections and this “permanent poetic revolution.”<sup>196</sup> Before considering these aesthetic developments, however, let us first take into account the economic implications of translation.

## I. The Commerce of Translation

— *Tous les journaux et toutes les librairies sont disposées à imprimer des traductions, toute la question est donc de trouver des ouvrages propres à faire une grande impression.*  
Charles Baudelaire to Jean-Marc Baud, 22 July 1860

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<sup>195</sup> Claude Millet “L’écèlement poétique; 1848-1913.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 264.

<sup>196</sup> In his “L’œuvre moderne.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 433-434. Dominique Combe notes that literary historians have proposed different dates to mark the emergence of European modernity. “Les historiens de la littérature [...] s’efforcent de discerner des lignes de rupture, des événements susceptibles de partager le cours de l’histoire en un ‘avant’ et un ‘après’ pour dater l’origine de la modernité (les Lumières, le romantisme, le symbolisme etc.). Un certain consensus (Lukács, Adorno, Benjamin, Sartre) s’établit même pour faire de 1848 — et tout particulièrement des Journées de juin — le point de départ de la modernité européenne. La publication, la même année 1857, des *Fleurs du Mal* et de *Madame Bovary* paraît évidemment corroborer une telle périodisation. Mais les arguments en faveur de la Révolution française, du tournant du siècle, ou de 1830, sont également recevables, de sorte qu’on ne saurait véritablement dater la modernité, qui consiste dans un mouvement continu et diversifié. Aussi faut-il préciser que ce qu’on désigne généralement par le défini singulier *la modernité* n’est en somme que l’une des modernités plurielles, sous le régime de laquelle sont placés aujourd’hui écrivains, lecteurs et critiques.”



Throughout the nineteenth-century, economic developments and changing material conditions increased international communication. The commerce of translation expanded to an industrial scale, and to a great extent, this expansion was facilitated by the large-scale production of paper-based literature, the growth of steam power, and the invention of electric telegraphy, which helped to launch “a modern revolution in communications technology.”<sup>197</sup> These ever increasing speeds of transportation and modes of production greatly expedited the exchange of literary material and they marked a significant shift from manuscript to print. According to Hayes, this shift “not only contributed to the broadening readership of amateur literary efforts, it also changed the status of the verse text.”<sup>198</sup>

In 1827, the same year that Nerval published his first translation of Goethe’s *Faust*, to which we will return in our next chapter, Goethe called attention to these new literary developments by announcing the rise of what he referred to as *Weltliteratur*, “world literature.” Goethe identified three key developments that prompted the emergence of *Weltliteratur*: a growth in travel, a mounting interest in foreign languages, and a rising presence of foreign literature in periodicals. In England, these periodicals included *The Foreign Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review* and, in France, periodicals such as *Le Globe*, *La Revue Française*, and *Le Temps* frequently printed translations of foreign texts as well as reviews of these works.<sup>199</sup> These periodicals popularized short tales that could be digested easily by the readerly consumer, such as those written by Poe. Daniel Sangsue refers to the nineteenth-century as the golden age of tales, or “contes.” “Le XIXe siècle est [...] l’âge d’or du conte et de la nouvelle en France — mais cet âge

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<sup>197</sup> Gerald Kennedy. “‘A Mania for Composition’: Poe’s Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building,” *American Literary History* 17 no.1 (2005), 23.

<sup>198</sup> Kevin Hayes, *Poe and the Printed Word*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>199</sup> Johann W. Goethe, “V. Extracts from the Conversations with Eckermann: *Weltliteratur*,” in *Literary Essays: A Selection in English*, trans. and ed. Joel E. Spingarn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1921), 267.

d'or est indissociable et dans une grande mesure tributaire d'un épanouissement international: qu'on pense à Hoffmann, Irving, puis à Poe et James, ou encore à Pouchkine, Gogol et Tourgueniev."<sup>200</sup> Sangsue notes that these brief narrative forms were extremely profitable. "[...] la forme narrative brève peut être une manière économique de monnayer la fatale transposition des grands modèles."<sup>201</sup>

In his *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, Antoine Berman emphasized that Goethe's reflections on world literature were intimately related to his awareness of the world market (*Weltmarkt*), which came into view during the early nineteenth-century: "L'apparition d'une *Weltliteratur* est contemporaine de celle d'un *Weltmarkt*, d'un marché mondial de produits matériels."<sup>202</sup> In considering the relationship between translation and poetic creation in a modern context, it will therefore be important to address questions relating to political economy, such as value and exchange. How does economic value shape literary value? And how does literary value, in turn, come to influence economic value? Although economic and literary values correlate to one another, there is nevertheless tension between them. This issue is indispensable, because as poet-translators, Nerval, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé experienced this tension.

*i. Economic value vs. literary value*

Car l'historicité a de la valeur.  
— Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*

In his article "Words and Things, Goods and Services: Problems of Translation between Language and Political Economy," (2006) Paul Manning proposes uniting a discourse on language with a discourse on economics. He begins by asserting that, for Ferdinand de Saussure, linguistics and economics are similar sciences, for they are both sciences of value and, consequently, both

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<sup>200</sup> Daniel Sangsue, "Formes brèves. Le conte et la nouvelle au XIXe siècle." in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 93.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>202</sup> Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 90.

“concerned with *a system for equating things of different orders.*”<sup>203</sup> Yet while economics is concerned with concrete material value — and, thus, with quantitative dimensions — language instead “tends to be assimilated to a marginalized object of economic exchange.”<sup>204</sup> The science of economics involves the exchange of concrete tokens, commodities and material objects (“their comparison is ultimately token-mediated”<sup>205</sup>), whereas the science of language relates to the exchange of abstract signs: “circulation in language involves constant commutation between types and tokens, *langue* and *parole*.”<sup>206</sup> To underscore the connection between these two sciences, Manning calls attention to the act of translation, which he explains is a means by which “economic exchanges and linguistic exchanges are seen to be essentially identical or at least homologous.”<sup>207</sup>

In his discussion of political economy, Manning draws on the ideas developed by the Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith (1723-1790), specifically emphasizing his understanding of durability. Smith characterized durability as a type of productivity that concerns wealth or value. According to Smith, the most durable linguistic activities, such as a beautiful poem, achieve durability through the materiality that composes them. More importantly, though, linguistic activities attain durability through “the fashion of [their] making,” or their form.<sup>208</sup> Smith attributed linguistic wealth and value to texts or performances that are not easily perishable and referred to these undying objects as “objects of taste.” A prime example of such an object is “a recitable, memorizable poem which you can appreciate over and over again.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Paul Manning, “Words and Things, Goods and Services: Problems of Translation between Language and Political Economy,” *Language and Communication* 26 (2006): 273.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

Similarly, Antoine Berman in his *L'Épreuve de l'étranger* draws attention to the parallels between translation and monetary exchange. For Berman, the broader idea of translatability or “traduisibilité généralisée” is analogous to the exchange between two different currencies: “[...] les mathématiques se changent en poésie comme le franc en dollar.”<sup>210</sup> Berman goes on to explain that, just as some currencies are stronger than others, so too do some literary works have more potential. For the poet-translators in our study, the question of literary value was particularly problematic and the growing demand for speedy literary output further complicated this issue.

### *ii. Translation and the Speed of Production*

Je suis tellement forcé de travailler vite  
pour avoir la somme, que je n'ai pas un moment.  
— Gérard de Nerval to Eugène de Stadler, 1 January 1841.

In his 1829 essay on “World Literature,” Goethe noted a key development: it was possible to “obtain books speedily, instead of waiting.”<sup>211</sup> Speedier transportation, production, and circulation, however, significantly reduced the amount of time that poet-translators could devote to their artistic endeavors. In a letter to his father from November 26, 1839, Nerval described two components of literary output: while the first involved publishing one’s own productions in newspapers and reviews, the second component referred to a slower and more difficult creative process, which he referred to as true poetic study:

Le travail littéraire se compose de deux choses : cette besogne des journaux qui fait vivre fort bien et qui donne une position fixe à tous ceux qui la suivent assidûment, mais qui ne conduit malheureusement ni plus haut ni plus loin. Puis le travail des livres, du théâtre, l'étude de la poétique, choses lentes, difficiles, qui ont besoin de travaux préliminaires fort longs et de certaines époques de recueillement et de travail sans fruit ; mais aussi, là est l'avenir, l'agrandissement, la vieillesse heureuse et honorée.<sup>212</sup>

Like Nerval, Baudelaire also struggled with questions related to the speed of literary production.

In his *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, he commented on the swift rhythm that regulated artistic

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<sup>210</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 136.

<sup>211</sup> Goethe, *Literary Essays*, 98.

<sup>212</sup> Nerval to Dr. Étienne Labrunie. 26 November 1839, *OC*, 1:835.

creation: "...mais il y a dans la vie triviale, dans la métamorphose journalière des choses extérieures, un mouvement rapide qui commande à l'artiste une égale vélocité d'exécution."<sup>213</sup>

Due to the rapidly expanding journalism industry, literary production needed to be fast. To earn a living through the pen, writers were required to promptly publish their material.

Baudelaire critiqued the high demand for fast artistic production in his essay *Comment on paie ses dettes quand on a du génie*, in which he portrayed the genius as someone who is acutely aware of time: "[...] le génie de l'invention sent la nécessité de doubler, tripler, décupler ses forces dans la proportion du temps qui diminue, et de la vitesse approchante de l'heure fatale."<sup>214</sup> Due to his economic struggles, Baudelaire closely considered the sums he would earn for his creative labors. Debt preoccupied him and, accordingly, he depicted 'his' genius lost in calculation: "[...] le cerveau poétique tapissé de chiffres comme le cabinet d'un financier."<sup>215</sup> As a poet-translator, Baudelaire experienced both the positive and negative effects of the quick circulation of literary material. He knew well that his career as a writer — and as a translator — depended on his ability to produce new material speedily and successfully disseminate old material in the form of reprints and edited volumes. Baudelaire regretted the fast-paced nature of his work and on several occasions argued that the pressure to hastily turn out material made it increasingly difficult to craft truly inspired works. On February 11, 1865, he wrote a letter to his mother, Madame Aupick, in which he complained about the conditions of his literary career, specifically the relationship between money, time, memory, and reprints: "Des livres qui ne se réimpriment pas se font oublier, et c'est de l'argent perdu. — Mais il faut une certaine tranquillité d'esprit pour combiner des idées, des images, des mots. Et je suis bien loin de cette tranquillité."<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, 2:686.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>216</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 11 February 1865, *Correspondance*, 2:458.

Baudelaire was skeptical of the rising production of translations in France. The swelling presence of translations overwhelmed him and he questioned their literary merit.<sup>217</sup> On July 22, 1860, he wrote a letter of advice to his friend Jean-Marc Baud, whose sister was an aspiring translator. Baudelaire explained that, unlike most translators, Baud's sister had true artistic potential and her translated manuscript showed great literary promise: "Tout m'a paru excellent, et il serait bien heureux pour nous que toutes les traductions dont nous sommes accablées fussent aussi bien faites. Cela est littérairement bien."<sup>218</sup> Baudelaire explained that choosing the right publishing house was of utmost importance. "...évite bien de vendre à des maisons qui, comme la maison Hachette, font de la traduction une entreprise de la camelote."<sup>219</sup> Baudelaire was especially critical of the translations published by Lacroix, which were printed rapidly, sold cheaply, and translated incorrectly. Baudelaire noted that the errors in these translations were strikingly obvious: "Je sais comment ces messieurs font faire leurs traductions, — à 25 francs la feuille, — par des gens qui ne savent pas la langue. J'ai eu entre les mains l'*Histoire de la guerre Crimée de Kinglake* [...], et je devinais les contresens sans avoir le texte anglais sous les yeux."<sup>220</sup> Baudelaire thus came to look down on translations. In a letter written to his mother on February 18, 1865, he explained: "Je regarde les traductions comme un moyen de paresseux de battre monnaie."<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Like Baudelaire, Poe was also skeptical of foreign translations. Kevin Hayes explains that in America "[all the popular European authors of Poe's day made it into cheap American editions. Many of the sentimental, picaresque works of the French novelist, Charles-Paul de Klock, for example, were available in cheap English translations during the early 1840s. [...] One vociferous opponent of cheap literature [...] harshly criticized the dissemination of such seemingly vulgar French literature." Kevin Hayes, *Poe and the Printed Word*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 89.

<sup>218</sup> Baudelaire to Jean-Marc Baud, 22 July 1860, in *ibid.*, 68.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Baudelaire to Michel Lévy, 15 February 1865, in *ibid.*, 461. In this same letter, Baudelaire does not identify himself as a translator. "J'ai consacré beaucoup de temps à Edgar Poe, parce qu'il me ressemble un peu. Je ne suis pas traducteur."

<sup>221</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Paul Meurice, 18 February 1865, in *ibid.*, 458.

But Baudelaire himself was extremely concerned with the financial incentives of translation. In several letters, Baudelaire included detailed accounts of the sums he earned for his translations of Edgar Allan Poe's tales. In a letter written to his mother on March 9, 1865, Baudelaire explained that he had yet to receive any news regarding his payments: "Rien de neuf, je ne sais rien quant aux fragments d'Edgar Poe (*Marie Roget et Habitations Imaginaires*) appartenant au livre qui va paraître. Ces fragments sont-ils placés, ou faut-il renoncer aux 600 ou 700 francs, qu'ils représentent ? Si tu savais quel supplice c'est, quand on est intéressé à recevoir des nouvelles relatives à l'argent, de n'en recevoir aucune !" <sup>222</sup> Baudelaire's numerous references to finance expose the continual tension between the market value or cost of an artwork and its literary value. In an earlier letter to his mother, from May 6, 1861, Baudelaire explained: "...je sais aujourd'hui l'immense valeur de l'argent, et je comprends la gravité de toutes choses qui ont trait à l'argent." <sup>223</sup> In addition to understanding the value of money, Baudelaire was aware of the value of words. As Meschonnic observes in his *Critique du rythme*, "Baudelaire, avant tout théoricien a eu l'idée de la valeur des fréquences dans le vocabulaire." <sup>224</sup>

In a similar vein to Baudelaire, Poe and Mallarmé also wrestled with issues of economic and literary value. In a review article published in 1841 on the subject of Charles Dickens, Poe evoked the "horrid laws of the political economy [that] cannot be evaded even by the inspired..." <sup>225</sup> Mallarmé expressed a similar idea in his famous conclusion: "Tout se résume entre l'Ésthetique et l'Économie Politique..." <sup>226</sup> Nerval too had similar concerns. Susan Dunn asserts that, for Nerval, "money is the sign, not of exchange, but rather the impossibility of commerce

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<sup>222</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 9 March 1865, in *ibid.*, 473.

<sup>223</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 6 May 1861, in *ibid.*, 153.

<sup>224</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 55.

<sup>225</sup> Cited in Terence Whalen, "Edgar Allan Poe and the Horrid Laws of Political Economy," *American Quarterly* 44.3 (1992): 381.

<sup>226</sup> See his article "L'évolution littéraire," in Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 403.

between the two worlds of *rêve* and *réalité*.”<sup>227</sup> Dunn goes on to assert that Nerval began to replace the value of coins, tokens and gold with the value of literature and poetry.<sup>228</sup>

### *iii. Translation and Literary Property*

Sir John Hill, who passed for the translator of Swammerdam’s work on insects, understood not a word of Dutch. He was to receive 50 guineas for the translation, and bargained with another translator for 25 — the other being in a like predicament paid a third person 12 pounds for the job.  
—Edgar Allan Poe, *Supplementary Pinakadia* 28

One more issue warrants consideration before returning to our aesthetic investigation: the question of literary property and plagiarism. In *Against World Literature: The Politics of Untranslatability*, Emily Apter shows that translation complicates questions relating to authorship, plagiarism, and legality: For Apter, translation represents:

a unique case of art as authorized plagiarism or legal appropriationism, the translation is encouraged to pilfer the original with no risk of copyright infringement or allegations of forgery. It is granted this license because it implicitly claims to be *of* the original [...] Translation thus challenges legalistic norms of ownable intellectual property.<sup>229</sup>

Although these issues will not be the central focus of this study, it will nevertheless be essential to briefly consider them here.

During the nineteenth century, property laws were the subject of much debate. Given that translations were viewed as a creative process, they were rarely included in property laws abroad. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, these laws were called into question and accusations of plagiary frequently broke out between rival writers, editors, and translators. Nerval’s translation of the second part of Goethe’s *Faust* (1840), for example, became the topic of a heated debate concerning literary property rights. After an argument was made that Nerval had allegedly plagiarized Blaze de Bury’s translation, a debate erupted between the two translators and

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<sup>227</sup> Susan Dunn, “Nerval and Money: The Currency of Dreams,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 19.1 (1990): 56.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>229</sup> Emily Apter, *Against World Literature. The Politics of Untranslatability*, 303. See the chapter “What is Yours, Mine, and Ours”, 298-319.



their respective editors, Charles Gosselin and Charpentier. The editor of de Bury's translation threatened to open a court case against Gosselin, arguing that Gosselin's edition had stolen 'his' title: "Je vais poursuivre devant les tribunaux M. Charles Gosselin, pour avoir usurpé le titre des *Deux Faust*, qui est ma propriété, car il n'existe pas dans l'original..."<sup>230</sup> In July 1840, Nerval countered Charpentier's accusations in a letter written to the assistant editor of the *Journal de la Librairie*. Addressing the allegedly 'stolen' title, Nerval insisted that the title '*deux Faust*' was not Charpentier's property but instead the property of anyone who so desired to use it: "Le titre *deux Faust* n'est pas à Charpentier, mais à tout le monde, puisqu'elle existe deux *Faust* de Goethe et qu'il est impossible de les intituler autrement."<sup>231</sup>

The debate over the second *Faust* was not the only literary property battle to involve Nerval. On September 23, 1854, Nerval wrote a letter to the "agent de la société des auteurs", M. Godefroy, expressing the need for international laws governing translations: "À mon retour d'Allemagne, j'ai cru devoir vous aller rendre compte des démarches que j'avais faites, dans l'intérêt de mes confrères, principalement à Leipsick et à Weimar, pour obtenir la réalisation et l'exécution des traités internationaux relatifs aux *droits de la traduction*."<sup>232</sup> Baudelaire similarly demanded to receive credit for his translations. After discovering that his writing had been printed elsewhere without his name, Baudelaire grew irate: "J'ai trouvé ici dans des journaux et des livres allemands (comme j'en avais déjà trouvé dans des journaux anglais), de longs fragments de *mes livres* ou de *mes articles*, tirés cependant de journaux français peu connus."<sup>233</sup>

Another heated controversy over literary ownership concerned French 'translations' of Poe's tale "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Before Baudelaire's translation appeared in *Le Pays*

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<sup>230</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:1452.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 873.

<sup>232</sup> Nerval to Godefroy, 23 September 1854, *OC*, 2: 1177.

<sup>233</sup> Baudelaire to Michel Lévy. 31 August 1864, *Correspondance*, 2:403.

in February, 1855, lawsuits were filed after two Parisian journalists, Gustave Brunet and E. D. Forgues, published ‘translations’ of the tale which they disguised as their own original work. The lawsuit received a great amount of press and helped bring attention to Poe’s name in France.<sup>234</sup>

The absence of international copyright laws made it difficult for aspiring writers like Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Poe to earn a living. In America, publishers could legally import foreign material and sell it at a cheap price and writers were therefore required to defend their authorial rights. Poe and other American authors thus “stake[d] their hopes on an international copyright agreement,” as Terence Whalen has observed,<sup>235</sup> but it was not until 1891 that an amendment to the Copyright Act protected foreign works and translations.<sup>236</sup> Gerald Kennedy observes that while Poe desired international copyright laws, he was unable to fully align with the “progressive Democrats” who were fighting for this same cause.<sup>237</sup> These questions concerning international property laws help us to better understand the debates surrounding the emergence of new translation methods in France.

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<sup>234</sup> Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” in *Tales and Sketches*, *CW* 2:525, provides a succinct summary of the details surrounding this debate: “. . .two Parisian journalists [. . .] printed different adaptations, each as if original with himself. The first was ‘Un Meurtre dans exemple Bans les fastes de la justice,’ signed G. B. (Gustave Brunet) in *La Quotidienne*, June 11, 12 and 13, 1846. The second was ‘Une sanglante énigme’ signed O. N. (for Old Nick, pen name of E. D. Forgues) in *Le Commerce*, October 12, 1846. In *La Presse* of October 14, 1846, there appeared an article pointing out the parallels as if they were plagiarized. Forgues (whose review of Poe’s *Tales* appeared at almost the same time) revealed *his* source as the American Poe in the next day’s issues of *Le Commerce* and *Le National*. A lawsuit brought by Forgues against M. de Girardin, editor of *La Presse*, was dismissed by a court on December 9, and this gave further publicity to Edgar Poe.”

<sup>235</sup> Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*, 36.

<sup>236</sup> Colleen Boggs, “Translation in the United States,” in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Vol. 4*, eds. Peter France and Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>237</sup> J. Gerald Kennedy. “‘A Mania for Composition’: Poe’s Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building,” *American Literary History* 17 no.1 (2005), 11. “Sometime prior to 15 March 1844, Poe received from Cornelius Matthews a copy of the American Copyright Club’s ‘able pamphlet’ (*Letters* 1: 245), which spelled out views on literary property remarkably similar to his own. His pragmatic alliance with the club and with Young America (their memberships overlapped) placed him nevertheless in an uneasy situation. Both groups were comprised of progressive Democrats, and, though, he shared their sentiments on copyright and recognized in Duyckinck a potential advocate and sponsor, Poe disliked their jingoism and found ludicrous Young America’s headlong enthusiasm for explicitly American themes and subjects.”

## II. New Translation Methods

### *i. The Old Tradition: Les belles infidèles*

Translations composed during the classical period, referred to as *les belles infidèles*, betrayed the original work. As the name *les belles infidèles* suggests, these translations were beautiful ('belles') but nevertheless unfaithful ('infidèles'). Instead of accurately translating the source text, they catered to the expectations of the listener, creating translations that would appeal to the 'delicate' French ear. Consequently, translators tended to use conventional French verse such as the alexandrine, the equal 6-6 syllabic line, to translate foreign works. With the emergence of Romanticism, however, new translation practices gradually began to challenge the classical tendency to perpetuate *les belles infidèles* and encouraged translators to preserve rather than domesticate the foreignness of the "translated" text.

Unlike translations written under the Ancien Régime, which tended to assimilate foreign texts to the French language, translations in nineteenth-century France attempted to embrace the foreignness of texts. Classical translators were primarily concerned with their own society: the French society, which was governed by what has been called "internal colonialism," described as the "submission of the parts of France to the central power, especially for the submission of languages and cultures under the domination of language."<sup>238</sup> Ruled by "tyrannical" artistic structures such as the alexandrine and the theatrical law of three unities, foreign texts were translated as if they had always belonged to the French canon and translations that failed to were judged negatively.<sup>239</sup> However, beginning around the revolutions of 1830, there was a national

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<sup>238</sup> Jürgen Trabant, "Language and the Ear: From Derrida to Herder," *Herder Yearbook: Publications of the International Herder Society* 1 (1992): 6.

<sup>239</sup> Benoit Léger, "Vie et mort du traducteur: de l'ancien régime au Second Empire (1727-1857)," *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 19.1 (2006): 32.

redistribution of languages and translators began to tell themselves, “Je *traduis* un autre.”<sup>240</sup> Translators who feigned authorship were looked down upon. For example, Baudelaire called Forgues, one of the accused plagiarists of Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, a ‘canaille littéraire’ for having attempted to pass off Poe’s work as his own.<sup>241</sup>

ii. “*On the Different Methods of Translating*”

On June 24, 1813, the same year that Madame de Staël published *De l’Allemagne*, Schleiermacher publicly shared his theories on translation by reading his treatise “Methoden des Übersetzen” (“On the Different Methods of Translating”) at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin. Schleiermacher’s experience as a translator of Plato’s dialogues, which he first published in 1804, sparked extensive reflections on the different approaches a translator might take to a text and the theories he advanced came to have a great impact on Benjamin’s essay “The Task of the Translator” (discussed in Chapter 1).

In this treatise, Schleiermacher showed that, to a large extent, new translation practices were often met with disapproval, noting that translations that “move the reader toward the writer” were often viewed as “detrimental” to language.” According to Schleiermacher, this detriment was due to translations that put the “mother tongue through foreign and unnatural contortions.”<sup>242</sup> Despite these risks he argued that it was valuable to cultivate an adaptable language. For Schleiermacher, native languages should be flexible, not regulated by fixed norms set by the native culture. Accordingly, he promoted translations that pushed the boundaries of one’s maternal tongue and challenged the cultural codes of the target language.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>241</sup> Haskell M. Block, “Poe, Baudelaire and His Rival Translators,” in Marilyn Gaddis Rose and Aldo S. Bernardo, eds., *Translation in the Humanities* (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1977), 61.

<sup>242</sup> Schleiermacher, “On The Different Methods of Translating,” in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

Early in his treatise, Schleiermacher makes two key distinctions between “translating” and “interpreting”: that between oral and written and that between equivalent and different. While “interpreting” is an “oral transfer,” “translating” is a “transplantation of written works.” Unlike “oral transfer,” writing “gives [...] works permanence.”<sup>243</sup> Secondly, while interpretation finds “equivalence” or “identity” between two linguistic systems, translation calls attention to linguistic and literary difference. In other words, it highlights the “untranslatable” or that which has no exact equivalent. In this regard, while interpretation corresponds to a commercial activity that necessitates exchangeable equivalents, translation deals with that which cannot be equally exchanged.

Following his distinction between “translating” and “interpreting,” Schleiermacher identified two kinds of interpretation: paraphrase and imitation. Both kinds of interpretation, as he explained, are unable to convey “living speech” and, accordingly, they cannot capture the impressions of the original work. In his elaboration on the two methods available to the “true translator,” Schleiermacher explained that one may either “move the reader toward the writer” or “move the writer toward the reader.”<sup>244</sup> Unlike translations that move “the writer toward the reader,” Schleiermacher argued that those that move the “reader toward the writer” refer everything back to the translator’s cultural conventions. These translations are normative because they hide the lexical and syntactical traces of the foreign tongue. Lawrence Venuti has observed that Schleiermacher’s disapproval of normative translations stemmed from questions relating to “nationalist cultural politics.”<sup>245</sup> Venuti maintains that Schleiermacher used his theories on translation as a means to work against French empire. By promoting a translation method that was

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>245</sup> Lawrence Venuti, “Genealogies of Translation Theory: Schleiermacher,” *TTR* 4.2 (1991): 136.

different from that of France, Schleiermacher aimed to establish a “true German Empire.”<sup>246</sup> Venuti characterizes Schleiermacher’s approach as “anti-French,” because it deliberately challenged the methods that had “dominated France since neoclassicism.”<sup>247</sup>

Schleiermacher’s treatise is a testament to the growing consciousness of and interest in the “life of language” in the early nineteenth century. Through his focus on the endurance and “untranslatability” of written literary texts, he emphatically stressed that both words and literary works evolve over time. Utterances that live on create “new impulses.” Berman has duly noted that through his understanding of the intersubjective relationship between writer and reader (translator), Schleiermacher helped to found modern hermeneutics.<sup>248</sup>

### *iii. Translation in Circulation: The Audibility of the Foreign*

La littérature mondiale est ainsi la co-existence active de toutes les littératures *contemporaines*. Cette contemporanéité, ou cette simultanéité, est absolument essentiel au concept de *Weltliteratur*.

Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*

On August 28, 1838, Nerval wrote a letter to Alexandre Dumas during his stay in Karlsruhe, Germany. Nerval explained to Dumas that, to his dismay, a German drama would not be played that night at the theater, which instead would be playing a German representation of Dumas’s drama *Kean*: “Quel malheur! je viens à Callsruhe pour voir une pièce allemande jouée en allemand et l’on joue ce soir *Kean* (en allemand il est vrai).”<sup>249</sup> Two years later, Nerval wrote another letter to Dumas, explaining to his friend that his plays were popular in Prague: “On y joue beaucoup vos pièces notamment *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* et *l’Alchimiste* traduit en vers sous le titre de *l’Orfèvre de Florence* (*Der Juvelier*).”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>248</sup> See “F. Schleiermacher et W. von Humboldt: la traduction dans l’espace herméneutico-linguistique,” the tenth Chapter of Berman’s *L’Épreuve de l’étranger*, 226-249.

<sup>249</sup> Nerval to Alexandre Dumas, 28 August 1838, *OC*, 1:813.

<sup>250</sup> Nerval to Alexandre Dumas, 25 February 1840, in *ibid.*, 855.

In the preface to his *Poésies allemandes* (1830), treated in our next chapter, Nerval gave an account of both the poetry and the translations written by the German lyric poets whom he translated. Commenting on Schiller's extensive work as a translator, Nerval noted that he especially admired Schiller's translations of Racine and Shakespeare, because they were not imitations: "[...] Schiller n'imitait ni Shakespeare ni Racine, mais il faisait comme eux, et peut-être aussi bien."<sup>251</sup> Later in his preface, Nerval noted that Bürger translated *Macbeth* in both verse and prose: "Bürger a laissé des chansons, des ballades, des contes, des épigrammes, et quelques traductions fort estimées en vers et en prose. Parmi ces dernières on distingue *Macbeth*, que Schiller traduisait aussi."<sup>252</sup> Similarly, Goethe was also a poet-translator ; he translated the works of Diderot, Voltaire, Euripedes, Racine and Corneille as well as poems in Italian, English, Spanish and Greek.<sup>253</sup> In his *Poésies allemandes*, Nerval translated a poem written by Schiller in 1800 and entitled "An Goethe, als er den *Mahomet* von Voltaire auf die Bühne brachte" ("À Goethe: Lorsqu'il traduisit pour le théâtre le *Mahomet* de Voltaire"). In the poem, Schiller advises Goethe not to use French plays as theatrical models, since the French, according to Schiller, are limited by fixed rules: "...renfermés dans d'immuable limites, ils s'y maintiendront sans oser les franchir."<sup>254</sup> Schiller critiques the French theater because it prohibits the sounds of nature: "...de ce magnifique séjour sont bannis les sons rudes et naïfs de la nature."<sup>255</sup> Through his work as a translator, Nerval therefore gained critical awareness of how Germany perceived France.

Like Nerval, Edgar Allan Poe and Thomas de Quincey, the two main writers whom Baudelaire translated, had also taken an interest in translation. Writing for the popular English

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<sup>251</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 24.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>253</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 88.

<sup>254</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 106.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

*Blackwood's Magazine*, Thomas de Quincey published translations of Jean Paul Richter, Emmanuel Kant, and other German writers. In his critical essays, de Quincey stressed the importance of stylistic translations and made efforts to preserve the idiom. In 1821, he boldly declared that the fate of English literature depended on a conscious awareness of foreign works.<sup>256</sup> That same year, de Quincey published his romantic autobiographical account *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821), a work which Baudelaire would translate and adapt. Commenting on De Quincey's work as a translator, Eric Dayre observes that his translations of Kant's philosophical prose inspired both the form and reflections of his confessions.<sup>257</sup> In considering de Quincey's work as a translator, it is important to situate him in relation to his American literary double Edgar Allan Poe, whom Baudelaire and Mallarmé both translated.

While Poe was not himself a translator, the idea of translation fascinated him and he often incorporated foreign languages into the plotlines of his tales. He also published several reviews of translations in American periodicals. On May 1835, *The Southern Literary Messenger* printed his review of a translation made by G. W. Featherstonhaugh, "I Promessi, Sposi, or the Beloved Brothers; A Milanese Story of the Seventh Century: as translated for the Metropolitan, from the Italian of Alessandro Manzoni." Poe pointed out that the translation had many inaccuracies but nonetheless praised its style, which he described as "for the most part, Italian, in English words."<sup>258</sup> In this particular case, he argued that the audibility of the foreign idiom is valuable, for it communicates the "untranslatable phrases of popular dialogue," thus exposing the English ear to new expressions. According to Poe, the "strength of a language is in the number and variety of its

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<sup>256</sup> See Kenneth Haynes, "British literary culture." In *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Vol. 4*, eds. Peter France and Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>257</sup> Eric Dayre, "Poème philosophique ou prose littéraire: De la poésie critique de Kant à l'autobiographique chez De Quincey," in *Perspectives Comparatistes*, eds. Jean Bessière and Daniel-Henri Pageaux (Paris: H. Champion, 1999), 121-152.

<sup>258</sup> Poe, *Complete Works*, 8:18.



idiomatic phrases.”<sup>259</sup> Poe also compared this beneficial style to a disadvantageous one, remarking that “Smollett, in his translation of Don Quixote, through extreme fastidiousness, threw away an opportunity of doubling the force of the English language.”<sup>260</sup> In 1836, Poe had also published a review of E. F. Ellets’s translations of various French, Italian, Spanish, and German poems, explaining that the translations proved the “lady’s acquaintance with the modern languages” but remained too close to the meaning of the text, disregarding the “*poetical characters*” of the originals. Poe was especially critical of her translations of the French *chansonnier* Pierre-Jean de Béranger: “as specimens of the *manner* of the French *chansonnier*, we have no patience with them.”<sup>261</sup>

Despite his early argument in favor of the idiom, Poe made a different case in an item of his *Marginalia*, published in *Graham’s Magazine* in November 1846. In this item, Poe critiqued C. H. Town’s translation of *Les Mystères de Paris*, a serial novel by Eugène Sue, whom Poe had also accused of plagiarism. Poe faults Town’s “too literal rendering of idioms” and his “too literal rendering of *local peculiarities of phrase*”:

There is one point (never yet, I believe, noticed) which, obviously, should be considered in translation. We should so render the original that *the version should impress the people for whom it is intended, just as the original impresses the people for whom it (the original) is intended*. Now, if we rigorously translate mere local idiosyncrasies of phrase (to say nothing of idioms) we inevitably distort the author’s designed impression.<sup>262</sup>

After making this point, however, Poe distinguished between the “oddities” or “idiosyncrasies” of a nation and those of an author. He maintained that, contrary to the “oddities” of a nation, the “oddities” of an author have a “similar effect upon *all* nations” and, consequently, they “should be literally translated.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>261</sup> “Review of Zizendorf and Other Poems,” in *ibid.* 139.

<sup>262</sup> Poe, *Complete Works*, 16:105.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 106.

As translators of Poe, Baudelaire and Mallarmé both encountered Poe's "oddities" and made several attempts to translate his strange "phraseology." Hearing this foreign tongue opened their ears to language's poetic qualities and heightened their awareness of language's physicality and materiality through the sounds of phonemes, the visual relationships between letters, and puns. As an example, Jacques Michon puts forth that Mallarmé's fascination with the English language further drew his attention to the expressive value and sonority of certain letters:

Le langage se découvre et se donne dans la distance; dans l'échange quotidien le langage sert de véhicule à la pensée, il est occulté ou effacé par elle, mais dès que l'on se trouve affronté à une langue étrangère ou peu familière, l'attention se déplace et se porte naturellement sur l'aspect physique de ses mots; le langage devient alors présent par ses phonèmes ou par ses lettres, et s'investit d'un sens vague dit poétique qu'ignore l'usage habituel.<sup>264</sup>

By expanding and transforming the habitual use of their native tongue, nineteenth-century French poet-translators remapped and reorganized how readers perceive and inhabit the world.

#### *iv. New Listeners: Verse vs. Prose*

Il y a lutte interminable dans ce monde entre la poésie et la prose...  
Madame de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*

La poésie, le vers, la prose sont de faux universaux. La prose poétique et le poème en prose ont troublé le système traditionnel d'oppositions...  
— Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*

Translation challenged the limits between verse and prose and led to the creation of new literary genres, such as the *poème en prose* and the *poème critique*. The emergence of these new literary forms was closely tied to the task of translating poems that were deemed "untranslatable." Schiller's "Das Lied von der Glocke" (1799) and Poe's "The Bells" (1849) are particularly striking examples of poems that challenged the limits between verse and prose. In her *De l'Allemagne*, Madame de Staël commented on the musical effects of Schiller's "Das Lied von der Glocke" and questioned if a prose translation in French could render these effects.

Peut-on avoir l'idée d'un poème de ce genre par une traduction en prose? c'est lire la musique au lieu de l'entendre. [...] L'originalité de ce poème est perdue quand on le sépare de l'impression que produisent une

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<sup>264</sup> Jacques Michon, *Mallarmé et les Mots Anglais* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1978), 26.

mesure de vers habilement choisie et des rimes qui se répondent comme des échos intelligents que la pensée modifie; et cependant ces effets pittoresques des sons seraient très hasardés en français. L'ignoble nous menace sans cesse: nous n'avons pas, comme presque tous les autres peuples, deux langues, celle de la prose et celle des vers.<sup>265</sup>

Although Madame de Staël had declared the poem was untranslatable, Nerval nevertheless undertook the challenging task of translating Schiller's musical verse. He included a prose translation of the poem entitled "La Cloche" in his *Poésies allemandes* (1830).

Edgar Allan Poe's onomatopoeic poem "The Bells" brought to light similar difficulties about translation. Listening to the poem's repetitive string of monosyllables "[f]rom the bells, bells, bells, bells/ bells, bells, bells", one easily understands why Baudelaire declared it untranslatable in his essay "Edgar Allan Poe, Sa vie et ses ouvrages" (1852).

Edgar Allan Poe aimait les rythmes compliqués, et quelques compliqués qu'ils fussent, il y enfermait une harmonie profonde. Il y a un petit poème de lui, intitulé *les Cloches*, qui est une véritable curiosité littéraire; traduisible, cela n'est pas.<sup>266</sup>

Mallarmé also acknowledged the complicated rhythmical effects that Poe used to compose "The Bells". Unlike Baudelaire, however, Mallarmé endeavored to translate this "untranslatable" poem, and to do so, he made a prose translation rather than an imitative verse translation. In his *Scolies*, Mallarmé called attention to the poem's arresting repetitions, referring to "The Bells" as a demon for the translator.

De tous ces poèmes, le seul effectivement intraduisible! non pas (comme d'autres) en raison de l'atmosphère spéciale de passion ou de rêverie qu'il émane: je crois que cette impalpable richesse ne se perd pas tout entière au passage d'une langue à l'autre, bref qu'il est un démon pour les traducteurs. La difficulté, quant à une œuvre si nette et sonnante, regorgeant d'effets purement imitatifs mais toujours dotés de poésie première, gît en l'emploi de certain procédés de répétition [...]<sup>267</sup>

The musicality of Poe's "The Bells" and Schiller's "Das Lied von der Glocke" gave rise to what we will call an "untranslatable eventness." To produce this "untranslatable event", Schiller and Poe conscientiously devised the materials with which they composed their poems. In other words,

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<sup>265</sup> de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, 232-233.

<sup>266</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1019.

<sup>267</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:781.

they were attentive to form, or the fashion of their poem's making. By consciously planning the composition of their poems, Schiller and Poe created "objects of taste," or in other words, objects that have linguistic and literary value due to their durability. This willful desire to bring into being works with intrinsic translatability, and thus with built-in untranslatability, came to define the Romantic movement. The Romantics poets deliberately planned the sonority and musicality translatability. Berman succinctly describes this inextricable connection between musicality and potentiality, noting that the theories advanced by the German *Athenaeum* group gave emphasis to the ineffable and the incommunicable, giving rise to a dialectic between translatability and untranslatability, as we mentioned in Chapter 1. As Berman emphasizes, this dialectic was willfully conceived. "L'intraduisible lui, ne peut qu'être voulu..."<sup>268</sup>

Grappling with untranslatability helped our nineteenth-century poet-translators craft new genres. Nerval's translations of the German lyrics, for example, helped to introduce the prose poem, a genre that Baudelaire would later popularize with his collection of prose poems *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869). Christine Lombez contends that Nerval's translations can, in fact, be considered as one of the first example of the prose poem in France.

Les traductions en prose abouties – celles de Nerval notamment – peuvent cependant être considérées comme l'une des toutes premières formes de 'poème en prose' *stricto sensu* en France, contemporains du *Gaspard de la Nuit* d'Aloysius Bertrand et antérieures, de ce fait, aux réalisations de Baudelaire dans les années 1860.<sup>269</sup>

Nerval played a key role in this debate over verse and prose, for, although beginning his poetic career in the classical tradition, he eventually expressed a desire to surpass the poetic limits set in place during the sixteenth century.<sup>270</sup> To do so, he stressed the importance of the ear. He proposed to move against a fixed and knowledgeable ear, describing the need for listeners who would

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<sup>268</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 192.

<sup>269</sup> Christine Lombez, *La traduction de la poésie allemande en français dans la première moitié du XIXe Siècle: Réception et interaction poétique* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2009), 18.

<sup>270</sup> Lombez, *La traduction de la poésie allemande*, 18.

develop the capacity to invent new forms of literature. In the eleventh section of his *La Bohême Galante* entitled “Vieilles légendes françaises”, Nerval radically called into question the French versification of the academic tradition and expressed his desire to create a new literature, one that could express the feelings of the crowd, and that therefore, could convey the experience of contemporary events. “[...] il est arrivé qu’en France la littérature n’est jamais descendue au niveau de la grande foule.”<sup>271</sup> By adopting translation methods that no longer aspired to create unfaithful imitations, or *belles infidèles*, French poet-translators shaped different poetic forms, ones that could convey attitudes and outlooks that differed from those of the academic tradition.

In the preface to his *Spleen de Paris* (1869), Baudelaire expressed a similar aspiration. Baudelaire explained that in his prose poems, he sought to portray the unexpected events that occur in the crowded streets of Paris. In his preface, dedicated to Arsène Houssaye, Baudelaire asked a question using the verb “traduire”: “Vous-même, mon cher ami, n’avez-vous pas tenté de traduire en une chanson le cri strident du Vitrier, et d’exprimer dans une prose lyrique toutes les désolantes suggestions que ce cri envoie jusqu’aux masardes, à travers les plus hautes brumes de la rue?”<sup>272</sup>

With concern to French verse, one of the most notable shifts in nineteenth-century French verse involved the traditional medial position of the caesura, the accent on the sixth syllable dividing the alexandrine into its two hemistiches. Victor Hugo’s frequent use of a three-part (4-4-4) or ternary alexandrine in place of the conventional two-part (6-6) alexandrine challenged the classical measure, giving way to a new liberty of expression through the broken verse (“le vers brisé”). The ternary or “Romantic” alexandrine exposed a tension between the traditional measure and the syntax of spoken language. Poets also challenged traditional French verse by creating

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<sup>271</sup> Nerval, *Les Chimères*, 169.

<sup>272</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 1 (Hereafter *OC*) ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec and Claude Pichois. (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 229.

tension in syllabic count, inverting stanzas, accentuating sonorous echoes, employing rhythmically problematic enjambment, making use of irregular rhymes, and ignoring the rules of the silent *e*.<sup>273</sup>

In her *De l'Allemagne* (1813), a work which was deemed anti-French and therefore censored by Napoleon, Madame de Staël claimed that French verse was sterile and needed a dynamic renewal. To a certain extent, de Staël's critique of the French language was a means by which she expressed her disapproval of Napoleon's expansionist nationalism. By arguing that French language needed a vigorous renewal, she challenged the values of the "logical" tongue that served as the *lingua franca* of Europe.<sup>274</sup> "La stérilité dont notre littérature est menacée ferait croire que l'esprit français lui-même a besoin maintenant d'être renouvelé par une sève vigoureuse..."<sup>275</sup> Referring to the "despotisme de l'alexandrin," she identified a tension between verse and prose in the French language.<sup>276</sup> Unlike other languages that allowed for original and poetic thought to be expressed in verse, Madame de Staël argued the French language limited creative expression in verse. She accordingly suggested that the most lyrical French writers were perhaps those who wrote in prose:

Nos premiers poètes lyriques en France, ce sont peut-être nos grands prosateurs, Bossuet, Pascal, Fénelon, Buffon, Jean-Jacques, etc. Le despotisme des alexandrins force souvent à ne point mettre en vers ce qui serait pourtant de la véritable poésie.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> See Claude Millet "L'éclatement poétique; 1848-1913." in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 266-270. Millet notes that by 1886, three destructive forms of traditional French meter had come to coexist: "le vers faux, le vers libéré, [et] le vers libre." "Le vers libéré, dont on trouve à peu près le programme dans le *Manifeste du symbolisme* de Jean Moréas en 1886, a un nombre fixe de syllabes et un système d'homophonies finales, mais il s'écarte des lois du décompte en ignorant les règles sur l'*e* caduc, le hiatus, la place de la césure... La rime est remplacée par un système d'assonances, de contre-assonances, et/ou d'échos phoniques à l'intérieur du vers." (270). "Les vers libres sont des vers de rythme et de longueur variables, pas obligatoirement reliés par la rime, et qui substituent au comptage syllabique le jeu libre des accents, produit par des allitérations et des assonances." (270)

<sup>274</sup> For more on this see James Steintrager. "From Enlightenment Universalism to Romantic Individuality." in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 404.

<sup>275</sup> Madame de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, (Paris: Garnier Flammarion), 48.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

To illustrate her point, Madame de Staël invited the reader to imagine Racine as a translator of Pindar, Petrarch, and Klopstock. As she argued, Racine's translations could not capture the originality of these great poets. In French language literature, Madame de Staël stressed that originality can only be rendered in prose: "...les difficultés de la langue et de la versification françaises s'opposent presque toujours à l'abandon de l'enthousiasme."<sup>278</sup> She compared the literature of France to that of Germany, noting that the German language corresponded better to poetry than to prose and that French was instead more fit for prose than for poetry.

Interestingly enough, Poe too advanced ideas similar to those of Madame de Staël. In the conclusion to his essay "The Rationale of Verse," Poe critiqued French verse, arguing that it is the "most wretchedly monotonous verse in existence," due to its continual reliance on spondaic rhythm, the "rudiment of verse."<sup>279</sup> He characterized the spondee as the "germ of a thought seeking satisfaction in equality of sound...."<sup>280</sup> Although Poe valued equality, he argued that stress and accent should be varied, for the juxtaposition of spondees induces monotony. Although spondees were the rudiment of verse in several ancient tongues, such as in Greek and Latin hexameter, Poe explained that modern tongues have evolved beyond the spondee and now incorporate rhythmical variation, thus producing an unanticipated reading flow:

[...] spondees are not only more prevalent in the heroic hexameter than dactyls, but occur to such an extent as is even unpleasant to modern ears, on account of monotony. What the modern chiefly appreciates and admires in the Greek hexameter, is the *melody of the abundant vowel sounds*.<sup>281</sup>

Consequently, with the evolution of verse, Poe argued that the modern ear rejected spondaic rhythm, though, unlike other modern languages, French did not follow this evolutionary trend.

Poe described French as a language without accentuation and, thus, a language without

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>279</sup> Poe, "The Rationale of Verse," in *Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* 14: 260.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 263.

verse. According to Poe, French poetry cannot please the modern ear in the way that poetry written in other modern tongues can. However, Poe stressed that this evolutionary difference was caused not by the French tongue itself but instead by what he called “the genius of the people”: “The genius of the people, rather than the structure of the tongue, declares that their words are, for the most part, enunciated with a uniform dwelling on each syllable. For example — *we* say ‘syllabification.’ A Frenchman would say syl-la-bi-fi-ca-ti-on.”<sup>282</sup> Since one does not hear an iambic rhythm in French, the vocalization of French verse depends on the number of syllables.<sup>283</sup> For its lack of accentuation, Poe went so far as to claim that verse does not exist in French society of the time

... the French have no verse worth the name – which is the fact, put in sufficiently plain terms. Their iambic rhythm so superabounds in absolute spondees as to warrant me in calling its basis spondaic; but French is the *only* modern tongue which has any rhythm with such basis; and even in the French, it is, as I have said, unintentional.<sup>284</sup>

Poe’s use of the word “genius” in this essay aligns with the conception of “genius” developed by Madame de Staël in her *De l’Allemagne* (1813). James Steintrager provides a succinct account of the three qualities that constitute genius for de Staël, noting how these qualities lead to an exchange between the “universal and the particular.”

First, it describes the particularity of a given linguistic and national group. Second, it refers to the artist who draws fresh inspiration from the former (the term ‘enthusiasm’ is resurrected.) Third, it is the aspect of a given work of art that manifests the specific relation between art and nation.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>283</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *L’inachevable*, 152, comments on this distinction in an interview with Béatrice Bonhomme on the subject of French poetry: “Nous n’avons pas les moyens d’entendre dans nos phrases une structure iambique -, une syllabe faible suivie d’une autre accentuée -, pas de quoi l’entendre, c’est-à-dire la faire se répéter, ce qui instituerait tout de suite par un début de rythme un second niveau de la parole. Et pour que ce second niveau malgré tout existe, pour qu’on puisse – acte premier de la poésie – entendre les mots et pas seulement les idées qu’il véhiculent, il faut avoir recours à un compte de syllabes : nombre qui en se répétant s’imposera à l’esprit comme dans le texte une structure indépendante du sens, à laquelle, pour qu’il se montrent pour ce qu’ils sont, on pourra alors laisser se prendre les mots.”

<sup>284</sup> Poe, “The Rationale of Verse,” in *Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* 14: 261.

<sup>285</sup> James Steintrager. “From Enlightenment Universalism to Romantic Individuality.” in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 407.



In a similar vein to Poe, Baudelaire upheld that, while France was a country of philosophers, moralists and engineers, it was not a country of poets and, consequently, lacked artistic spontaneity: "...la France n'est pas poète, elle éprouve même, pour tout dire, une horreur congéniale pour la poésie."<sup>286</sup> For Baudelaire, France repressed original thought and looked down upon creative and inventive individuals: "...dans tous les genres d'invention le grand homme ici est un monstre. Tout au contraire, dans d'autres pays, l'originalité se produit touffue, abondante, comme le gazon sauvage."<sup>287</sup> In his third essay on Poe, "Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe" (1857), Baudelaire even claimed that the French are a "race antipoétique." In the same essay, Baudelaire stressed that certain phenomena cannot be conveyed by professors in the academic tradition. He writes that, faced with modern and unexpected events, the French academics often find their language deficient: "Et alors leur langue insuffisante se trouve en défaut [...]."<sup>288</sup> In his *poème critique*, the 1897 "Crise de Vers", Mallarmé asserted that languages in and of themselves are in fact inherently deficient, since the sounds of words do not correspond to the meaning they convey. Mallarmé proposed that well calculated verse compensates for these shortcomings: "...[le vers] rémunère le défaut des langues, complément supérieur."<sup>289</sup>

"Crise de Vers" serves as a testament of the significant changes undergone by classical metrics during the nineteenth-century and also the transgression of different literary genres. Dominique Combe explains that Mallarmé referred to "Crise de Vers" as a critical poem, or *poème critique*, because it erased the limits between poetic creation and critical and reflective discourse.<sup>290</sup> Here Mallarmé called attention to a marked break in conventional rhythm: "...une

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<sup>286</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres Complètes* (hereafter, *OC*), ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 2:124.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>288</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1050.

<sup>289</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 253.

<sup>290</sup> Dominique Combe, "L'œuvre moderne," 436. "...il convient de faire une place importante à ce que Mallarmé appelle le 'poème critique', qui efface les limites entre création poétique (fictionnelle), et discours critique et réflexif."

brisure des grands rythmes littéraires...”<sup>291</sup> Fostering invention, Mallarmé explained that each individual soul is like an authentic instrument that breathes forth a new prosody. What is more, Mallarmé challenged the conventional meanings of the terms “verse” and “prose”. In “L’évolution littéraire”, Mallarmé claimed that “prose” does not exist and extended verse to virtually all spoken and written language, declaring that: “le vers est partout dans la langue où il y a le rythme...”<sup>292</sup> He later asserted: “Mais, en vérité, il n’y a pas de prose: il y a l’alphabet et puis des vers plus ou moins serrés: plus ou moins diffus.”<sup>293</sup>

Mallarmé sought to liberate the ear and surprise the listener: “[...] cette surprise de n’avoir ouï jamais tel fragment ordinaire d’élocution...”<sup>294</sup> One major technological development that corresponded to these new listeners and to the emergence of new verse forms was the invention of the oscillograph, which enabled the measurement of waveform properties, such as amplitude, frequency, rise time, and distortion. These new possibilities of measurement raised awareness of the differences between individual voices and would lead to a new field of experimental phonetics.<sup>295</sup>

#### *v. Imitation vs. Invention*

Quant aux imitations, on n’en veut plus, et on a raison.  
— Gérard de Nerval, introduction to *Les Poésies Allemandes* (1830)

In her *De l’Allemagne*, Madame de Staël made a distinction between Classicism and Romanticism by noting that, whereas classicists imitated works from antiquity, the Romantics were interested in the chivalric traditions of the troubadours. While contemporary writers in France aligned with the classical tradition, she wrote, contemporary German and English writers aligned

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<sup>291</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 253.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 253.

<sup>295</sup> Peureux, *La Fabrique du vers*, 530.

with the Romantics, for having created works similar to the “chants des troubadours.”<sup>296</sup> To further distinguish the classicists from the Romantics, Madame de Staël used the verbs “réfléchir” and “se réfléchir”, noting that unlike the Romantics, the classicists reflected much less: “L’homme, réfléchissant peu, portait l’action et son âme au dehors...”<sup>297</sup> She noted further on: “...il agissait par une impulsion involontaire et sans que la réflexion pût en altérer les motifs et ni les suites de ses actions.”<sup>298</sup> Due to this lack of reflection, Madame de Staël described classicism as a simple art. Contrary to classicism, the Romantic tradition engaged with critical reflections to convey the complexities of the human soul, it therefore broke away from classicism. In considering Madame de Staël’s use of the term “Romantic”, Jean-Thomas Nordmann emphasizes that it can be considered as a synonym of “modern.” “*Romantique* tend de la sorte à valoir comme annonciateur sinon comme synonyme de *moderne*. Bien entendu cette opposition s’appuie sur l’adhésion à l’idéalisme subjectif de l’esthétique allemande, en rupture avec l’idéal classique d’imitation rationnelle de la nature.”<sup>299</sup>

To gain a further understanding of the distinction between Classicism and Romanticism, Madame de Staël’s *De l’Allemagne* can be fruitfully compared to the remarks made by King Friedrich II of Prussia in a paper entitled *De la littérature allemande* (1781), as James A. Steintrager has noted. Both studies lay emphasis on the importance of translations and together they reveal “a shift in the conceptualization of what constitutes a nation-state.”<sup>300</sup> Steintrager

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<sup>296</sup> See *De l’Allemagne*, chapter XI, 211: “Le nom de *romantique* a été introduit nouvellement en Allemagne pour désigner la poésie dont les chants des troubadours ont été l’origine, celle qui est née de la chevalerie et du christianisme”.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> Jean-Thomas Nordmann. “La ‘relation critique’ au XIXe siècle.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 452.

<sup>300</sup> James Steintrager. “From Enlightenment Universalism to Romantic Individuality.” in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 404.

explains that Friedrich's approach to "nation-building" relied on "language rather than military might."<sup>301</sup>

In order to become a nation-state, Germany has to follow the universal pattern of development already witnessed in modern nations such as England and France. One essential step is the unification of a national language through the elimination of differences in regional dialect. Another the attainment of linguistic clarity and harmony.<sup>302</sup>

Friedrich stressed the importance of "clarity" and frequently used words such as "polish," "perfection," "fixedness," and "taste."<sup>303</sup> In comparing their understanding of translations, however, Steintrager explains that "De Staël replaces Friedrich's notion of translation as the potential for modeling one's language on universals with the quest for hermeneutic penetration: to understand another nation is to get inside it through its language and literature."<sup>304</sup>

Classicism, finally, was an art of imitation but Romanticism was an art of invention.<sup>305</sup> As imitative writers, classicists were confined by strict rules. Madame de Staël claimed that French poetry was the most classicist of all modern poetry and was consequently inaccessible to the "people": "La poésie française étant la plus classique de toutes les poésies modernes, elle est la seule qui ne soit pas répandue parmi le peuple."<sup>306</sup> In his study *Racine et Shakespeare*, to which we will return in our discussion of Shakespeare, Stendhal described a heated debate between a Romantic and an Academic. In this debate, the Romantic attempts to convince the Academic that imitations of ancient works are tedious and insipid: "Imiter aujourd'hui Sophocle et Euripide, et prétendre que ces imitations ne feront pas bâiller le français du dix-neuvième siècle, c'est du

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 405.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>305</sup> For more on this distinction see *ibid.*, 408. Steintrager explains that de Staël's understanding of Romantic invention contrasted with Friedrich's emphasis on imitation, noting that "imitation and perfection in Friedrich's sense are associated with morbidity in *De l'Allemagne*."

<sup>306</sup> See *De l'Allemagne*, chapter XI, 214: "Nos poètes français sont admirés par tout ce qu'il y a d'esprits cultivés chez nous et dans le reste de l'Europe ; mais ils sont tout à fait inconnus aux gens du peuple et aux bourgeois même dans les villes, parce que les arts en France ne sont pas, comme ailleurs, natifs du pays même où leurs beautés se développent".

classicisme.”<sup>307</sup> Unlike the Academic, the Romantic values invention and admires art that reflects on present circumstances and the lived experience of the “people”: “*Ce que c’est que le romanticisme. Le romanticisme est l’art de présenter aux peuples les œuvres littéraires qui, dans l’état actuel de leurs habitudes et de leurs croyances, sont susceptibles de leur donner le plus de plaisir possible.*”<sup>308</sup> In their descriptions of Romanticism, Madame de Staël and Stendhal both used the term “people,” a significant term denoting not only the nation but also those within the nation who distanced themselves from the academics: “Peuple désigne à la fois la nation dans son ensemble et la partie de cette nation qui est la plus éloignée des académies, de leurs poétiques étroites, de leur goût délicat à l’excès.”<sup>309</sup>

### **III. *Langues Vivantes* and the Reform of the French Educational System**

#### *i. Teaching and Translating Modern Tongues*

In March 1829, the learning of *langues vivantes* became an elective option in French school systems and, by 1838, French students were required to learn a *langue vivante* in addition to a *langue classique* or a *langue sacrée*. In 1853, French students were tested for the first time on their knowledge of a *langue vivante* on their baccalaureate exams.<sup>310</sup> These new developments in French school systems marked an ever-growing cultural and linguistic exchange and directly impacted the projects Mallarmé undertook as a poet-translator. Shortly before Mallarmé began his career as an English professor, Victor Dury, the French minister of public education ruled that France would no longer hire only native speakers as foreign-language teachers and that the profession would be

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<sup>307</sup> Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare. I, 1823*, ed. P. Martino (Paris: Champion, 1925), 1:40.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>309</sup> Chevrel, D’Hulst, and Lombez, *Histoire des traductions en langue française*, 353. Commenting on the preface to the third edition of *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (1740), Paul Laforgue notes: “L’Académie ne songe plus à élever les mots au rangs des citoyens d’une république égalitaire; elle déclare au contraire qu’elle ‘a toujours cru qu’elle devait restreindre son dictionnaire à la langue commune, telle qu’on la parle dans le monde et telle que nos orateurs et nos poètes l’emploient.” See “La langue française. Avant et après la révolution,” in Louis-Jean Calvet, ed., *Marxisme et linguistique* (Paris: Payot, 1977), 94.

<sup>310</sup> Chevrel, d’Hulst, and Lombez, *Histoire des traductions en langue française*, 38.

made available to French citizens as well.<sup>311</sup>

The comparative philologist Michel Bréal played a key role in France's language reform movement. It was through a translation of *Vergleichende Grammatik (Grammaire comparée)* by Franz Bopp that Bréal advanced his career in comparative linguistics, a newly emerging field of scientific study.<sup>312</sup> In 1868, Bréal became secretary of the Société de Linguistique, which was founded in 1866. Bréal's research elaborated on the relationship between semantics and sensibility and the causes of language transformation. Among other things, he concluded that "the ultimate cause of every linguistic change lies in the will or human intelligence."<sup>313</sup> In addition, Bréal claimed that social and historical events lead to language transformations.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Bréal offered a series of ten lectures given at the Sorbonne under the title *De l'enseignement des langues vivantes* and devoted the seventh and eighth to the topic of translation. In his seventh lecture, Bréal emphasized that translating modern languages is a different and frequently more challenging task than translating Latin and Greek. Calling attention to these unique challenges, he compared the act of translating modern writers to that of translating writers such as Sophocles, Virgil, and Horace: "Traduire une page de Shakespeare, de Milton, de Shelley, de Klopstock, de Goethe, de Heine, c'est une entreprise au moins aussi difficile que de traduire une page de Sophocle, de Virgile et d'Horace."<sup>314</sup> In considering Bréal's argument, it is important to remember that translation exercises from Latin to French and from Greek to French were important components of classical French education. By

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<sup>311</sup> Jacques Michon, "La langue dans la langue. Ce que c'est que l'anglais de Stéphane Mallarmé," *Études littéraires* 22.1 (1989), 27: "L'enseignement des langues vivantes ne devait plus être confié aux seuls étrangers, mais à des instituteurs français ayant reçu la formation nécessaire."

<sup>312</sup> Heinz-Helmut Lüger, Hans W. Giessen, and Bernard Weigel, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne: Michel Bréal, un intellectuel engagé* (Limoges: Lambert-Lucas, 2012), 13.

<sup>313</sup> Piet Desmet, "The Role of Semantics in the Development of Historical Linguistics in France," *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 5 (1990): 142.

<sup>314</sup> Howatt and Smith, *Modern Language Teaching: The Reform Movement*, 95.

emphasizing the challenges of translating between modern languages, Bréal therefore raised a key question concerning foreign-language pedagogy. How could modern languages be taught if they lack a fixed or set meaning: “...dans nos langues modernes, et surtout dans les langues germaniques, les mots sont loin d’avoir une précision comparable à celle des langues antiques.”<sup>315</sup>

To create an additional distinction between modern languages and *les langues antiques*, Bréal referred to the readerly experience. Unlike words in modern languages, which circulate and change as they are used in everyday life, the words of *les langues antiques* are not in circulation. Bréal compared these words to conserved medallions: “...pareils à des médailles conservés dans la vitrine d’une collection, n’ont plus à craindre l’usure causé par la circulation, ni les dépréciations que peuvent amener les événements de l’histoire.”<sup>316</sup> The words in dead languages, as Bréal explained, are removed from contemporary historical events and are accordingly removed from the personal and subjective experiences of the modern reader (or listener). Unlike these “conserved medallions,” Bréal emphasized that the words in a *langue vivante* directly affect a reader’s personal relationship to a text: “Ajoutez une dernière circonstance aggravante: les langues mortes sont mortes pour tout le monde, au lieu qu’une traduction de langue vivante est exposée à avoir des lecteurs en qui chaque vers, chaque mot de l’original fait vibrer un souvenir.”<sup>317</sup> Unlike the words in dead languages, the words in a living language evolve as they participate in the paralinguistic aspects of everyday experiences (tempo, loudness, pause, tone, degrees of stress).

#### *ii. Coining New Words*

In considering Bréal’s emphasis on the circumstantial nature of words in a *langue vivante*, it is important to take into account the historical conflict regarding French words. This conflict broke

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 97.

out before the French Revolution and continued long thereafter. As a result of this polarized debate, a well-defined divide separated those who supported the dictionary of the Académie Française, which sought to stabilize meaning, from those who advocated for the incorporation of new words.

A prime example of an argument against the language imposed by the Académie Française was the *Néologie ou Dictionnaire de 2,000 mots nouveaux* published by Louis Sébastien Mercier in 1801. Mercier's critical dictionary stressed the value of new words, asserting that they enrich communication by giving expression to contingent experience. To offer an example, Mercier explained that those who are gifted with a picturesque imagination often create new words to convey their "sensations étrangères." Importantly, this observation of Mercier's pertains to Poe: as Burton Pollin has shown in his study *Poe, Creator of Words*, there are "over nine hundred words" that were "either coined by Poe" or that may be "rightfully ascribed to him as first instances in print."<sup>318</sup> In translating Poe's newly coined words, Baudelaire and Mallarmé often used a translation technique called the "calque", which signifies a copy, trace, or imported word. Wallaert observes that "[o]f the hundred or so words which feature in the *Trésor de la langue française* (TLF) as having been introduced into the French language by Charles Baudelaire around thirty were crafted in the process of translating Poe's tales."<sup>319</sup> As a translation strategy, the "calque" corresponds to one of the main objectives of Mercier's dictionary: it creates vigorous new locutions by borrowing foreign words.

In his definition of the term "NATIF", Mercier directly critiqued the traditional French method of translating, maintaining that French translations often resulted in a loss of the "couleur Native":

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<sup>318</sup> Burton R. Pollin, *Poe, Creator of New Words* (Bronxville, NY: N. T. Smith, 1980), 5.

<sup>319</sup> Ineke Wallaert. "Writing Foreign: The Paradoxes of Baudelaire's Neologizing Strategies in His Translations of Poe." *Palimpsestes* 25 (2012): 71.



NATIF Ce mot appliqué jusqu'à présent aux personnes, peut aussi l'être aux choses; par exemple:

Tout ouvrage étranger perd infiniment de sa couleur Native dans une traduction française, avec quelque précision et quelque énergie qu'on puisse en rendre les idées, les images et les sentiments.<sup>320</sup>

Within the international economic context described earlier, Mercier developed a lexical field relating to economy and trade (“commerce”, “enrichir”, “importer”). Elsewhere in the dictionary, he argued that France must expand its language market: “Nous avons trop redouté un commerce étroit avec les langues étrangères; notre langue serait plus forte, plus harmonieuse, si, à l'exemple des Anglais et des Allemands, nous eussions su nous enrichir d'une foule de mots, qui étaient à notre bienséance.”<sup>321</sup>

### iii. *Shakespeare's Impact on the Langues Vivantes*

C'est en grand poète que Shakespeare, en ce qu'il a  
su Dramatiser l'histoire, surtout celle de son pays.  
Mercier, *Néologie ou Dictionnaire de 2,000 mots nouveaux*

As we noted earlier, the translation of Shakespeare's dramas played a key role in the development of translation methods in Germany as they were viewed as a form of poetic critique. Antoine Berman notes that Novalis regarded A. W. Schlegel's translations of Shakespeare as a prime example of a truly modern work of art, declaring them to be of even higher quality than the English originals. As Berman observes: “Le Shakespeare allemand est ‘meilleur’ que l'anglais *justement parce que c'est une traduction*.”<sup>322</sup> Commenting on the significance of translation for the German Romantics, Berman stresses that both Novalis and Schlegel viewed translation as a “*potentialisation*.” Through this *potentialisation*, the German Romantics maintained that the idea of the original work could be rendered more perceptible during the act of translating: “Toute *Übersetzung* est un mouvement dans lequel l'*Über* est un dépassement potentialisant: ainsi peut-

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<sup>320</sup> Mercier, *Néologie ou Vocabulaire de mots nouveaux à renouveler, ou pris dans des acceptions nouvelles* (Paris: 1801), 2:158.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>322</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 170.

on dire que le Shakespeare d'A.W Schlegel est un *Über-shakespeare*.”<sup>323</sup> Commenting on the importance of what he refers to as the “German” Shakespeare, Michael Eskin observes:

It was, among other things, Shakespeare’s perceived realism and sense of history, his scrutinizing portrayals of passion and its consequences, his characters’ violation of decorum and social-linguistic codes—even the aristocrat Hamlet can be lewd and obscene talking to Ophelia—and, finally, his disregard in the construction of his plays for unity of time, place and action that enthralled such aspiring anti-classicist authors and theater practitioners as Lenz, Goethe, and Schiller.<sup>324</sup>

The German approach to translating Shakespeare inspired the French to adopt new translation methods. Shakespeare’s dramas, moreover, inspired Victor Hugo to propose educational reforms.

The decision to teach *langues vivantes* in the French school system was largely motivated by Hugo’s affinity for Shakespeare, whom his son François-Victor would go on to translate.<sup>325</sup> Barbey d’Aurevilly expressed great admiration for François-Victor’s talent as a translator, comparing his translation to his father’s own writing: “[...] il se mit à traduire dans la langue renouvelée par son père.”<sup>326</sup> According to d’Aurevilly, François-Victor used Schlegel’s German translation as a model for his own translations into French: “François Hugo se promet de donner à son pays la traduction que Schlegel avait donnée au sien.”<sup>327</sup> For Victor Hugo and his son, Shakespeare was a modern model, one whose realistic and universal dramas had the power to transform the social, psychological, and philosophical understanding of humanity. Victor Hugo’s deep appreciation for Shakespeare’s style and, most importantly, for his use of a *langue vivante* encouraged him to call for a different method of education in France, one that would create a *littérature du peuple*, a literature of the people.

In this case and throughout the nineteenth century, Shakespeare’s works were the subject

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 173. See also chapter 5, “Révolution romantique et versabilité infinie,” 111-139.

<sup>324</sup> For more on this see Michael Eskin. “The German Shakespeare.” in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 461.

<sup>325</sup> See Stamos Metzidakis and Regina M. Young, “Hugo, Shakespeare et l’enseignement des langues vivantes,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 31.1-2 (2002): 9-26.

<sup>326</sup> Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Littérature étrangère* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1893), 9.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 8. The essay also analyzes the translations made by Letourneur, A. Pichot, Guizot, de Vigny, and Deschamps.

of considerable critical reflections and debate. In “De l’imagination des Anglais dans leurs poésies et leurs romans,” the fifteenth chapter of *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, Madame de Staël used *Macbeth* to illustrate the difference in accentuation between French and English. She described the scene in which Macbeth sits down to a great feast, when a ghostly vision of Banquo, whom he has just assassinated, appears to him. Shaken by this startling and haunting presence, Macbeth cries out, “The table is full.” Madame de Staël called attention to the profound effect that Macbeth’s cry has on the play’s spectators, who experience chills as Macbeth repeats this phrase several times. Madame de Staël attributed this chilling effect to the pronunciation and accentuation of the English language, remarking that it would be impossible to produce such an effect by exclaiming “la table est remplie.”<sup>328</sup>

In his *Racine et Shakespeare 2* (1825), Stendhal brought a similar question to the forefront of the debate between the Academic and the Romantic. In several regards, the Academic may be compared to Voltaire: like Voltaire, the Academic has a strong distaste for – and fear of – drunken characters, kings and queens who speak a common and impure language, and frequent use of familiar and popular expressions.<sup>329</sup> A central question of this debate closely resembled a question posed by Voltaire in the prefaces in some of his plays: how it would be possible to convince the French public, especially readers over the age of fifty, that *Macbeth* is a great work of art? Stendhal’s Romantic character insists that *Macbeth* has been praised in America and England but

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<sup>328</sup> Madame de Staël, *De la littérature: Et autres essais littéraires*, ed. Stéphanie Genand (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013), 244: “La langue anglaise, quoiqu’elle ne soit pas aussi harmonieuse à l’oreille que les langues du Midi, a, par l’énergie de sa prononciation, de très grands avantages pour la poésie: tous les mots fortement accentués ont de l’effet sur l’âme, parce qu’ils semblent partir d’une impression vive; la langue française exclut en poésie une foule de termes simples, qu’on doit trouver nobles en anglais par la manière d’être articulés. [...] Si l’on disait en français précisément les mêmes mots, *la table est remplie*, le plus grand acteur du monde ne pourrait en les déclamant faire oublier leur acceptation commune; la prononciation française ne permet pas cet accent qui rend nobles tous les mots en les animant, qui rend tragiques, parce qu’ils imitent et font partager le trouble de l’âme.”

<sup>329</sup> For more on Voltaire’s reaction to Shakespeare, see Paul Laforgue, “La langue française. Avant et après la Révolution,” 103-108.

the Academic remains skeptical, arguing that the English language could not possibly be poetic, as it was not derived from Latin.<sup>330</sup> Stendhal's essay emphasized the importance of language used in the "now" or "dans l'état actuel."<sup>331</sup> To describe the experience of chance and the unexpected, the Romantic uses the verb "hasarder": "[...] car il faut du courage romantique, car il faut *hasarder*."<sup>332</sup> Over the course of the debate, the Romantic promotes a language captures the ephemeral nature of daily circumstances, taking one by surprise.

With concern to the translation debate in *Racine et Shakespeare*, the arguments voiced through Stendhal's Romantic character ultimately won. On April 14, 1864, Baudelaire published an essay in *Le Figaro* to commemorate Shakespeare alongside celebrations of his birth throughout Europe and the United States.<sup>333</sup> Here, Baudelaire mentioned several different Shakespearean translators: Philarète Chasles, a translator of *Romeo and Juliet* who was largely responsible for promoting the English playwright; Émile Deschamps, who translated *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* and who in 1828 published *Études françaises et étrangères*, a study that served as a manifesto of Romantic poetry; Auguste Barbier, who translated *Julius Caesar* (1848); the composer Hector Berlioz, who worked on both a prose translation and a symphonic composition of *Romeo and Juliet* (1836); and the painter Eugène Delacroix, whom Baudelaire described as a "traducteur à sa manière d'Hamlet" since he painted scenes from the play.<sup>334</sup> Baudelaire's essay drew attention to an effort on the part of the French to nationalize literary masterpieces that had acquired universal value. Translating Shakespeare's plays became a means for France to earn

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<sup>330</sup> Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare* 2, 92.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>333</sup> Baudelaire, *Écrits sur la littérature* ed. Jean-Luc Steinmetz (Paris: Librairie Générale française, 2005), 519.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 521-522. In addition to his translation, Chasles was a critic of Shakespeare, and in 1852 published a study entitled *Études sur Shakespeare, Marie Stuart et l'Arétin*. Chasles also served as the chair of the department of Langues et Littératures d'Origine Germanique" at the Collège de France; see Chevrel, d' Hulst, and Lombez, *Histoire des traductions en langue française*, 40.

prestige and remain culturally relevant. Although Baudelaire praised Shakespeare's immortality, he also reminded his fellow countrymen that, in addition to celebrating the English playwright, France must also praise its own writers and poets.

One year prior to Baudelaire's essay "Anniversaire de la naissance de Shakespeare," Mallarmé wrote a letter to his friend Cazalis indicating that he had incorporated the playwright's works into his own French foreign language curriculum. In this letter, Mallarmé wrote that he had fallen ill and could not prepare his test on *Roméo et Juliette*: "Le fait est que je ne puis faire de vers, ma tête étant trop lourde et malade, et que c'est à grand-peine que je puis préparer mon examen-Roméo et Juliette, pourtant!"<sup>335</sup> Mallarmé called attention to Shakespeare's international popularity in his *Beautés de l'anglais*, portraying him as the modern model of several different nations: "Le théâtre de Shakespeare est aujourd'hui devenu celui, non plus d'une nation, mais de tous les peuples, qui le jouent chacun dans sa langue: l'ayant adopté comme leur classique."<sup>336</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, translations of Shakespeare's plays into French opened a relationship to foreignness. Shakespeare's dramas were innovative not only for their style and vernacular but also for their heterogeneous portrayal of humanity, which depicted both exterior and interior experiences of the other. Shakespeare's vernacular freed drama from the constraints of the classical tradition, creating a space for a democratic representation of humanity. In *After Babel*, George Steiner draws a comparison between Shakespeare and the echo: "Shakespeare at times seems to 'hear' inside a word or phrase the history of its future echoes."<sup>337</sup> To return to our discussion of literary value, we can conclude that Shakespeare's works have durability. The numerous translations of his plays not only generate this durability, they also serve as proof of it.

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<sup>335</sup> Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, ed. Henri Mondor and J. G. Aubry (Paris, Gallimard, 1959), 1:93.

<sup>336</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:1370.

<sup>337</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 4.

To draw from a poet-translator in our first chapter, Henri Meschonnic details the ways in which Shakespeare's writing achieves "literary translatability" in his *Poétique du traduire*. In the chapter "Le nom d'Ophélie," Meschonnic describes the stylistic means by which Shakespeare created a distancing from ordinary or everyday language: the words used to describe Ophelia (ə' filjə) in *Hamlet* incorporate the vocal consonants of her name: "fear" (fir), "farewell" (fɛr' wɛl), "fair," "fair judgment," "fair and unpolluted flesh," (fɛr, flɛʃ), "Nymph" (nɪmf), and "grief" (grɪf). Meschonnic goes on to assert that each of these descriptive words develop a semantics of prosody. Although they may seem aleatory, the words are nevertheless packed with meaning, and they ultimately predict Ophelia's fate.<sup>338</sup>

Although Shakespeare does not properly figure in the corpus of this study, his works are emblematic of the relationship between translatability and durability. Since his works are so enduring, Shakespeare's imaginative bardic voice perpetually resonates through intertextual echoes, or rather transtextual echoes, which act as dreams or *mises en abyme* that feature haunting aural and emotive resonances, heard in our subsequent Chapters.

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<sup>338</sup> Henri Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire* (Paris: Verdier, 1999), 311: "...il y avait dans l'entour immédiat du nom (quand on le prononce en anglais bien sûr) certains des éléments consonantiques ou vocaliques, mais surtout consonantiques du nom. Une sorte d'effet de vases communicants, une sorte de diffusion des consonnes de son nom dans les mots avoisinants ou, pour dire sans métaphore préjugeant, certains mots comportaient les mêmes consonnes, les mêmes voyelles de son nom, et ces mots, mis bout à bout, du début à la fin de la pièce, ne constituent pas une liste aléatoire, mais un accompagnement plein de sens : le sens du nom dans cette pièce. Ces mots font appel à ce qui caractérise Ophélie et de ce qui contribue à son destin."

## **Part II**

### **Experiential Rhythms: Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé**

### **Chapter 3: Semblance and Resonance: Nerval as Poet-Translator**

La beauté des langues est donc tantôt l'altérité lointaine perdue, paradisiaque, l'image de l'union entre les mots et les choses, tantôt ce qu'on possède en propre, et dans quoi on se vautre avec tous les moyens du fantasme. Une beauté maternelle, incestueuse, que l'autre ne pourra jamais atteindre ni même entendre, étranger incompréhensible.

- Henri Meschonnic, *La Rime et la Vie*

#### **Contextual Introduction**

Over the course of his literary career, Nerval explored several different genres: theater, journalism, historical novels, travel literature, autobiography and poetry. Often considered as precursors to Symbolism and Surrealism, his works include dreams, mysticism, syncretism and references to the teachings of Plato and Pythagoras, particularly, the transmigration of souls. Nerval was an avid reader of esoteric and gnostic texts: he sought to find the world's essence in symbols and correspondences and looked for lexical and syntactical traces of the lost language of Paradise, the Adamic vernacular, and the original Logos that enabled all men to understand one another.

Nerval's work as a translator of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's dramatic play *Faust* motivated his interest in an original Logos and in the endless life of all souls. Before turning to our discussion of *Faust*, however, we will first look at Nerval's translations of German ballads, through which he attempted to revive France's oral poetic tradition, calling forth a memory of the past through song. These translations in turn served as inspiration for Nerval's own poetic works. As Théophile Gautier observed in an essay published in *Le Moniteur Universel* on February 25, 1854: "De cette familiarité avec Goethe, Uhland, Bürger, L. Tieck, Gérard conservera dans son talent une certaine teinte rêveuse qui put faire prendre parfois ses propres œuvres pour des traductions de poètes inconnus d'outre-Rhin."<sup>339</sup> For example, we hear the title of Nerval's poetic collection

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<sup>339</sup> Théophile Gautier, "Sur *Lorely*, *Le Voyage en Orient*, *Les Illuminés* et *Les Filles du Feu* (1854)," in *L'Hirondelle & Le Corbeau: Écrits sur Gérard de Nerval*, ed. Michel Brix and Hisashi Mizuno (Bassac: Plein Chant, 2007), 107. The review first appeared in *Le Moniteur universel* on February 25, 1854.



*Les Chimères* in his translation of Friedrich von Schiller's poem "Le Commencement du XIX siècle": "La liberté n'habite plus que dans le pays des chimères; le beau n'existe plus que dans la poésie."<sup>340</sup>

*i. Proper Form: Bildung, Translation, Realization*

Exposure to the foreign or "étranger" shaped Nerval's understanding of a perpetually emerging self, formed through an ongoing composition of combinatory processes. Through the act of translation, Nerval became acutely aware of the Romantic concept of *Bildung*, to which Goethe gave weight in his literary works. On a general level, the German term *Bildung* refers to "culture" but more specifically indicates the process of artistic formation. Berman underscores that this movement towards a "*forme propre*" is a temporal process.<sup>341</sup> To perceive Nerval's formative progression as a poet-translator, a comparison of different versions of his poems and translations is necessary. This comparative approach, however, does not privilege the final version over earlier versions. It instead aims to show that resonance challenges a linear understanding of space and time. In this way, then, *Bildung* corresponds to Meschonnic's concept of rhythm, discussed in Chapter 1: "Successivité, simultanéeité, sont indémêlables, plurielles."<sup>342</sup>

Finally, the concept of *Bildung* sheds light on Nerval's frequent references to Greek mythology (e.g., Orpheus, the Styx, the Acheron). As Berman observes, Greece is the "terre native" of several different cultural fields: poetry and poetic genres, philosophy, rhetoric, history, and grammar.<sup>343</sup> However, Berman notes that Greek antiquity contrasts with modern culture: "[...] elle paraît receler un élément profondément étranger à la culture moderne, qui renvoie

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<sup>340</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 111.

<sup>341</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 72; see also 72-86.

<sup>342</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique de rythme*, 21.

<sup>343</sup> Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 83.

probablement au mythe.”<sup>344</sup> The romantic *Bildung* therefore illuminates the dialogic nature of Nerval’s combinatory approach to composition, what Berman refers to as “*la pratique plurielle des mélanges*.”<sup>345</sup>

## ii. *The Maternal Tongue*

Faust : Les Mères ! Les Mères ! Cela résonne d’une façon si étrange.  
Nerval, *Second Faust*

In considering Nerval’s experience as a poet-translator, it is important to remember a key event from his childhood: the early death of his mother, Marie-Antoinette-Marguerite Laurent. Nerval was only two years old when his mother passed and he was therefore left with few memories of her. This maternal absence fueled Nerval’s creative output in several different ways: it motivated his literary themes, inspired his attraction to the German language and, in several regards, awakened his desire to become a translator. Nerval’s mother was buried in the German province of Silesia, and for this reason, he came to view Germany as a country where he could rejoin her, thus discovering his “maternal” tongue.<sup>346</sup> One could therefore argue that Nerval’s attraction to Germany and the German language was driven by what Antoine Berman has referred to as “*la pulsion du traduire*.” Berman explains that “*la pulsion traduisante pose toujours une autre langue comme ontologiquement supérieure à la langue propre*.”<sup>347</sup>

Motherly preoccupations also inform Nerval’s fascination with Goethe’s *Faust*, in which Faust falls in love with Marguerite, a character whose name echoes that of Nerval’s mother. “[...] Marguerite est une création de Goethe [...]. Cette figure éclaire délicieusement toute la première

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>346</sup> In *Aurélia*, Nerval writes: “Je n’ai jamais connu ma mère qui avait voulu suivre mon père aux armées, comme les femmes des anciens Germains; elle mourut de fièvre et de fatigue dans une froide contrée de l’Allemagne, et mon père lui-même ne put diriger là-dessus mes premières idées” Nerval, *OC*, 1:393.

<sup>347</sup> Berman, *L’épreuve de l’étranger*, 21-22.

partie de *Faust*...”<sup>348</sup> The occult themes of *Faust*, such as immortality, black magic, infernal descents, divine synchronism, the persistence of the past, and the eternal nature of the world or worlds came to occupy a central place not only in Nerval’s literature but also his life. The drama led him to adopt the consoling belief that each soul has an eternal existence and that it is thus possible, through both dreams and ecstatic experiences, to reconnect with lost loved ones: “Il serait consolant de penser, en effet, que rien ne meurt de ce qui a frappé l’intelligence, et que l’éternité conserve dans son sein une sorte d’histoire universelle, visible par les yeux de l’âme, synchronisme divin, qui nous ferait participer un jour à la science de Celui qui voit d’un seul coup d’œil tout l’avenir et tout le passé”.<sup>349</sup>

In several of his works, most notably his poetic collection *Les Chimères*, proper names of women are interchangeable (Marguerite, Aurélia, Marie, Beatrice, Sylvie, Adrienne, Angélique, Mélusine, Isis, Marie). Through this interchangeability, Nerval fused mythological and Christian figures with women from his own life, such as his mother and the actress Jenny Colon, whose early death profoundly marked Nerval’s works. In his *Les Chimères*, maternal figures create a space without boundaries, much like the limitless realm of the Eternal mothers in Goethe’s *Second Faust*. Significantly, then, the title *Chimères* serves as an echo of this plurality of mothers, or “mères.”<sup>350</sup> In the second sonnet of the collection entitled “Horus”, line 2 evokes Isis, the Goddess of ancient Egyptian religion who was known as a magical healer: “Isis, la mère, alors se leva sur sa couche.” In line 13, we hear a homonym of “Isis, la mère”: “La mer nous renvoyait son image adorée.”<sup>351</sup> Rhymes between “mers”, “mères”, “chimères”, and “amer” occur frequently in

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<sup>348</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2:784.

<sup>349</sup> See Nerval, *Les Deux Faust de Goethe*, 228.

<sup>350</sup> The poems comprising Nerval’s *Les Chimères* are the sonnets “El Desdichado,” “Myrtho,” “Horus,” “Antéros,” “Delfica,” and “Artémis” and the five-sonnet “Le Christ aux Oliviers.”

<sup>351</sup> Nerval, *Les Chimères*, 31.

Nerval's poetry, translations and prose, suggesting a correlation between the sea, chimera and the intense grief caused by the early absence of his mother.

*iii. Tour or Touraille: Genealogy, Etymology, and Properhood*

To fill his sense of absence and to gain a deeper understanding of his own self, Nerval undertook genealogical research and created a chart of his family's origins that was largely based in fiction and not fact. While working on this chart, Nerval discovered that the feminine noun "tour" corresponded to his paternal name, which signifies both bridge and tower in German. ("Bruck en gothique-allemand signifie *pont*. *Brown* ou *Brunn* signifie tour ou touraille.")<sup>352</sup> Much like the motherly echoes that resound throughout Nerval's works, the phoneme /tur/ generates poetic density, revealing that significations intertwine and directions perpetually shift or turn ("tourner"). Let us consider a noteworthy example from Nerval's translation of Goethe's *Second Faust* (1840). In the third act of the play, the choir sings a phrase that quickly moves from the verb "tourner" to the noun "tourbillon" ("whirlwind") and, finally, to the adjective "étourdi" ("dizzy," "stunned"). "[...] tous les sens tournent comme dans un tourbillon ; l'oreille est horriblement étourdie."<sup>353</sup> This phrase is strikingly illustrative of Nerval's activity a poet-translator, for the movement suggested by the verb "tourner" alludes to both verse and its translation.

The etymological origin of the verb "tourner" corresponds to the etymology of verse, "vers," which derives from the Latin "versus", participle of "vertere", "to turn." In the definition of verse found in *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694), the verb "tourner" and the noun "tour" occur in close succession: "[...] vers naturels, qui ont un beau tour, qui sont bien tournez, mal tournez..."; "...composer des vers, tourner bien des vers."<sup>354</sup> In the earlier *Thresor*

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<sup>352</sup> Richer, *Nerval, Expérience et création*, 33.

<sup>353</sup> Gérard de Nerval, "Notes et éclaircissements," *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, ed. Ferdinand Baldensperger, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1932), 534.

<sup>354</sup> See "vers," *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694), book 2.

*de la langue francoyse tant ancienne que moderne*, the verb “tourner” directly concerns the act of translation and is used to define “translater” and “traduire”:

*Tourner de Grec en Latin*, In Latinum Graeca vertere, Ex. Graeco in sermonem Latinum vertere, voyez Traduire, et Translater;

*Tourner de mot à mot*, est suyvre le fil de la tissure de l’oraison de l’autheur qu’on traduit, Verborum contextui versionem deucire, addicere;

*On tourne quelque chose d’un langage en autre*, Interpres.<sup>355</sup>

The verb “tourner,” finally, corresponds to the masculine form of the noun “tour.” While the feminine form of the noun denotes a tower, the masculine form is defined as “[...] un acte signalé et ingénieux, soit bon soit mauvais.”<sup>356</sup> In Nerval’s works, the verb “tourner” suggests several different kinds of circular movement: round dances, rotations of clock hands, voyages around the ocean, voices singing in a round, and finally, political and cosmic revolutions.<sup>357</sup>

### I. Translation and Oral Tradition : *Les Poésies allemandes*

Recomposons les souvenirs du temps. ...  
— Nerval, “Sylvie”

...la traduction a à conquérir sa *traditionnalité*.  
— Antoine Berman, *L’Âge de la traduction*

In 1830, Nerval published his first anthology of German poetry — *Poésies allemandes*, a collection of selected translations of poems by four influential and contemporaneous German lyric poets, Goethe, Schiller, Gottfried August Bürger, and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock — and continued to work on these translations over the course of his literary career.<sup>358</sup> In 1840, he published a second

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<sup>355</sup> See Jean Nicot, *Thresor de la langue francoyse tant ancienne que moderne* (Paris: Douceur, 1606).

<sup>356</sup> See “tour” in Nicot, *Thresor de la langue francoyse*.

<sup>357</sup> See *Encyclopédie du Dix-neuvième siècle. Répertoire universel des Sciences, des lettres et des arts, avec la biographie de tous les hommes célèbres* (Paris: Au bureau de l’encyclopédie du XIX siècle, 1846), 21:327: “**Révolution (astron)**. Lorsqu’un astre, **doué d’un mouvement de translation**, est revenu au **point** de sa course où on l’a primitivement observé, on dit que cet astre a accompli une révolution. [...] Si de l’observation de quelques étoiles on passe ensuite à l’observation de l’ensemble des **constellations**, on verra qu’elles obéissent à la même loi, que le ciel entier semble **doué d’un mouvement de translation général** dirigé de l’orient en occident, et que toutes les étoiles conservent entre elles leurs distances respectives.”

<sup>358</sup> The anthology *Poésies allemandes* (1830) includes thirteen prose translations of Goethe’s poems and ballads, of which the most famous are, perhaps, “Le Roi des aulnes” (“*Erlkönig*”), first composed in 1781, and “L’élève sorcier” (*Der Zauberlehrling*, 1797). Additionally, Nerval’s anthology includes the translations of eighteen poems, ballads, and lieder by Schiller, nine translations of Klopstock’s poems, and four translations of poems written by Bürger.

version of his anthology, *Choix de ballades et de poésies*, along with a revised preface. In addition to his two major anthologies, Nerval's translations were printed and reprinted in various French literary reviews (*La Pysché*, *Le Mercure de France*, and *L'Artiste*).<sup>359</sup> Through his translations of German ballads, Nerval endeavored to repopularize France's national sources and songs.<sup>360</sup> In the preface to his *Poésies allemandes*, Nerval explained that German literature corresponds to what he referred to as "cette vieille poésie du Nord"; it is an original and national literature that sounds out "un écho du chant des vieux bardes saxons."<sup>361</sup> Several of the poems illustrate the force of harmony and song. A bard describes her melodious voice in Goethe's poem *Der Sänger* (1782). Schiller's poem *Die Macht der Gesänge* (1795) accentuates the power of nature's harmony.

Inspired by the German lyric poets, Nerval sought to revive France's folkloric poetry and searched for a poetry that could express an original condition of humanity and a collective oral tradition. Since popular songs followed the voice's natural modulations, Nerval upheld that they could challenge the metrical regularity of classical poetry:

Pourquoi aussi notre poésie n'est-elle pas populaire comme celle des Allemands? C'est, je crois, qu'il faut distinguer toujours **ces deux styles et ces deux genres**, chevaleresque et gaulois, dans l'origine, qui, en perdant leurs noms, ont conservé leur division générale. On parle en ce moment d'une collection de chants nationaux recueillis et publiés à grands frais. Là, sans doute, nous pourrions **étudier les rythmes anciens conformes au génie primitif de la langue, et peut-être en sortira-t-il quelque moyen d'assouplir et de varier ces coupes belles mais monotones que nous devons à la réforme classique. La rime riche est une grâce, sans doute, mais elle ramène trop souvent les mêmes formules.** Elle rend le récit poétique ennuyeux et lourd le plus souvent, **et est un grand obstacle à la popularité des poèmes.**<sup>362</sup>

Nerval sought to rekindle the poetry of the French people, celebrating in his *Chansons et Légendes du Valois* the poetic beauties of the language spoken by herdsmen, mariners, and French soldiers, in which one hears "des tournures douteuses, des mots hasardés, des terminaisons et des liaisons

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<sup>359</sup> Nerval made unedited as well as published translations of a few German lyric poets who were not included in his anthology: Uhland, Körner, Tiedge, Schubart, Pfeffel, Jean Paul Richter.

<sup>360</sup> In 1830, the same year that he published his *Poésies allemandes*, Nerval also published an anthology entitled *Introduction aux choix de poésies de Ronsard*.

<sup>361</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 23.

<sup>362</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 467.

de fantaisie.”<sup>363</sup> In considering Nerval’s endeavor to revive and also preserve France’s oral tradition, it is important to remember that he attempted to do so through writing and the printed word. He feared that unprinted songs risked becoming lost: “[...] la plupart des couplets sont perdus, parce que personne n’a jamais osé les écrire ou les imprimer.”<sup>364</sup> Daniel Sangsue draws a parallel between this growing nostalgia of orality, the expansion of the press, and Walter Benjamin’s account of the lost experience of storytelling. “Que la mise en scène de l’oralité dans les contes et les nouvelles du XIXe siècle traduise le besoin d’une parole vive, d’un échange authentique à opposer à la littérature industrielle et à la consommation solitaire de l’imprimé.”<sup>365</sup>

In presenting his translation project, Nerval emphasized the challenge of such an endeavor, describing his translations as “des traductions de vif enthousiasme et de premier jet” but also qualifying them as “exactes et consciencieuses.”<sup>366</sup> He called attention to the complicated struggle to transform German verse into French prose: “[...] cependant les poèmes que j’en ai recueillis sont les moins connus, les plus difficiles à rendre en prose, et je ne sache pas qu’on ait jamais publié sur eux un travail bien complet.”<sup>367</sup> A particularly difficult challenge involved the translation of compound nouns in German. Nerval used periphrasis to translate these nouns. For example, he translated Goethe’s poem *Der Zauberlehrling* as “L’Élève sorcier.”

Several of Nerval’s translations vacillate between verse and prose, most notably his translations of Goethe’s poem “Le Roi de Thulé”, which he translated four different times (three in verse and one in prose), and Bürger’s popular gothic ballad “Lenore,” which he translated eight different times (four in verse and four in prose). In several regards, this movement between verse

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>365</sup> Daniel Sangsue, “Formes brèves. Le conte et la nouvelle au XIXe siècle.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 96.

<sup>366</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 24.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 27.

and prose helped Nerval become a “poète en prose.” Commenting on how Nerval’s translations motivated his prose, Gérard Macé has observed: “[...] traduire lui permet d’ébaucher une poétique, par personne interposée comme si souvent chez lui, une poétique hésitant entre le vers et la prose, entre ce qui nous est propre et ce qu’on emprunte.”<sup>368</sup>

## II. Nerval: *Poète en prose*

The conception of the idea of poetry as prose determines the whole Romantic philosophy of art.  
— Walter Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism”

In his essay *Sur les chansons populaires*, Nerval affirmed: “[i]l est difficile de devenir un bon prosateur si l’on n’a pas été poète.”<sup>369</sup> Due to Nerval’s tendency to mix different literary genres, his contemporary Jules Janin compared him to a bohemian roaming between verse and prose: “Cher et doux bohémien de la prose et des vers! admirable vagabond dans le royaume de la poésie! braconnier sur les terres d’autrui.”<sup>370</sup> In considering the term “braconnier” or poacher, it is worth noting that *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* traces the first appearance of twenty-five French words to Nerval’s writing, crediting him for introducing or “importing” words from many languages: German (e.g., “lorelei,” “kobold”), Arabic (“sidi,” “kharimatique”), Turkish (“khanoun,” “bakchich”), English (“saloon,” “magazine”), and Latin (“juvenilia”).

In addition to poaching words, Nerval moved between different literary forms. The hybrid structure of works such as *Petits châteaux de Bohême: Prose et Poésie* (1853) and *Les Filles du Feu* (1854) exemplify this roaming. In the introduction to his *Petits châteaux de Bohême: Prose et Poésie*, Nerval described himself as an obstinate and humble “prosateur”: “[...] j’ai été poète longtemps avant de devenir un humble prosateur.”<sup>371</sup> With regard to the work’s compositional

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<sup>368</sup> Préface de Gérard Macé, in *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>369</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 467.

<sup>370</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2: 737.

<sup>371</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 65.



structure, Nerval frequently incorporated song and verse into his prose. Between the “Premier Château” and the “Second Château”, Nerval included eleven odelettes modeled after the popular poetry written by Ronsard: “...c’est que les odelettes chantaient et devenaient même populaires.”<sup>372</sup> Nerval used a similar compositional structure in his *Les Filles du Feu*. The eight novellas comprising the work (“Angélique,” “Sylvie,” “Chansons et légendes du Valois,” “Jemmy,” “Octavie,” “Isis,” “Corilla,” and “Emilie”) mix song and verse and are followed by the poetic collection *Les Chimères*.

In his comprehensive study *Nerval: Le “rêveur en prose.” Imaginaire et écriture*, Jean-Nicolas Illouz has eloquently demonstrated that Nerval’s prose signals the emergence of poetic modernity:

Entre la prose et le poème, l’écriture nervalienne se déploie dans un espace intermédiaire, tantôt oscillant d’une forme à l’autre en les rassemblant l’une l’autre dans les “petites mémoires littéraires” que composent les derniers recueils, tantôt inventant une forme mixte dont la *prose en poème* de *Sylvie* réalise l’étonnante “chimère” – jusqu’à ce que la prose, moderne, se découvre “deshéritée” de la poésie même qui la hante: une poésie qui désigne “là” à l’origine toujours déjà perdue de l’écriture, et qui, revenue en particulier du lointain des chansons et légendes des Valois, “s’épanche,” en rêve, dans l’écriture du “rêveur en prose.”<sup>373</sup>

Due to its combination of different forms, Illouz refers to Nerval’s novella “Sylvie” as a “chimère.” Fittingly, then, Nerval alludes to the chimera on several different occasions in *Les Filles du Feu*. In “Sylvie”, for example, we hear a dream-like phrase evoking chimera that consists of three hemistichs: “Telles sont les chimères / qui charment et égarent / au matin de la vie.” The alliterative “chimère-charment” suggests a relationship between the chimera and song and, soon after this passage, we hear a hemistich that rhymes with “chimère” (“sa saveur est amère”), which gives Nerval’s prose a strong cadence.

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>373</sup> Jean-Nicolas Illouz, *Nerval: Le “rêveur en prose.” Imaginaire et écriture* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 8.

At the end of “Sylvie”, Nerval incorporated his earlier publication of national and popular ballads that had first appeared in *La Sylphide* in July 1842: “Les Vieilles Ballades françaises.” Nerval retitled the work *Chansons et légendes du Valois*. These ballads were inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder’s *Volkslieder* (1778-1779), a collection of folk songs from several different countries that “made a range of cultural expressions accessible to Europeans for the first time.”<sup>374</sup> Werler observes that Herder’s great discovery “bears on the complex interweave of cultural forms and values and on their irreducibly historical character.”<sup>375</sup> Since the German poets whom Nerval translated were inspired by Herder’s interest in folk songs, Nerval’s translations were therefore translations of translations. To give just two examples, Goethe translated his “Klaggesang von der elden Frauen des Asan Aga” (1774-1775) (translated by Nerval as “Complainte de la noble femme d’Azan-Aga”) from a poem in Serbian folklore and based his poem “Der Gott und die Bajadere” (“Le Dieu et la bayadère”) on an Indian story.

Folksongs figure prominently in Nerval’s epistolary novella “Angélique”. In his sixth letter, the narrator describes the emotionally moving experience of hearing young girls singing in the medieval town Senlis. Listening to these songs activated his memory and he began to reflect on his childhood: “Les souvenirs d’enfance se ravivent quand on a atteint la moitié de la vie.”<sup>376</sup> Each song awoke a different memory and this act of remembrance suggested that the past could be recuperated through song. Nerval explained that the young country girls were especially pleasant to hear, as they had innocent voices and made no attempt to imitate the musical conventions of Parisian operas: “La musique, dans cette contrée, n’a pas été gâtée par l’imitation

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<sup>374</sup> Hansjakob Werler. “The Universal and the Particular.” in David E Wellbery and Judith Ryan. *A New History of German Literature*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 414-415.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:65.

des opérais parisiens....”<sup>377</sup> In his seventh letter, Nerval compared one of the songs to the German poetry that he translated, for it, like German verse, followed the voice’s natural rhythm.

To support the memory of the singers, folksongs depend on rhythm, assonance, refrain, and repetition. Nerval took full advantage of these poetic devices. He came to regard folksongs as a sacred poetry, because they have the power to evoke distant memories. For Nerval, sacred poetry structured by folksong-type rhythm recuperates a wider traditional past. In “Sylvie”, the persistent prefixes *re-* and *ré-* stress these backward looking reflections, as in “reproduire” (“reproduit une image des galantes solennités d’autrefois”),<sup>378</sup> “résonner” (“[...] votre voix chère résonne sous ces voûtes et en chasse l’esprit qui me tourmente...”),<sup>379</sup> “répéter” (“Nous répétons ces strophes si simplement rythmées avec les hiatus et les assonances du temps”),<sup>380</sup> “reprendre” (“J’ai repris le chemin de Loisy”),<sup>381</sup> “revoir” (“J’allai à Montagny pour revoir la maison de mon oncle”; “[...] je sentis le besoin de revoir Sylvie”),<sup>382</sup> “retrouver” (“Je me retrouvai à Loisy...”; “[...] je me retrouvai près de Sylvie”; “Elle retrouva même dans sa mémoire les chants alternés”),<sup>383</sup> “se refléter” (“...et cette gracieuse *théorie* renouvelée des jours antiques se reflétait dans les eaux calmes de l’étang”),<sup>384</sup> and “retourner” (“[...] il était temps de retourner au village assez éloigné qu’habitaient ses parents”; “...puis je retournai à Montagny”).<sup>385</sup> Nerval’s depiction of this act of repetitive returning sheds light on Meschonnic’s conception of the rhythmic movement of the subject “je”: “Glissement du je, le rythme est un présent du passé, du présent, du futur. Il est et

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 260, 261.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 248, 249, 256.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 251.

n'est pas dans le présent. Il est toujours un retour.<sup>386</sup> Meschonnic explicates that this act of returning gives rise to both crisis and transformation: “[...] la poésie appartient à l'enfance des peuples, la prose à leur âge mur, et la résurrection de la poésie peut sembler le retour de l'enfance. Cependant cela peut n'être qu'une crise, une transformation.”<sup>387</sup>

The verbs in which one hears the prefix *re-* and *ré-* pair with numerous expressions using the adverb “encore”, meaning “again”, “now”, or “still”:

N'était-ce pas une illusion encore, une faute d'impression railleuse?;<sup>388</sup>

Elle m'attend encore;<sup>389</sup>

Il est temps encore;<sup>390</sup>

Le tintement de la cloche du matin était encore dans mon oreille...;<sup>391</sup>

[...] cette heure mélancolique et douce encore...;<sup>392</sup>

Je voulais voir Sylvie, est-elle encore au bal?;<sup>393</sup>

Châalis, encore un souvenir;<sup>394</sup>

[...] se découpe encore sur les étangs...;<sup>395</sup>

[...] ses usages ont encore quelque chose de galant et de poétique;<sup>396</sup>

[...] seule figure vivante et jeune encore;<sup>397</sup>

[...] j'arrivai au rond-point de la danse, où subsiste encore le banc des vieillards;<sup>398</sup>

[...] vous en savez encore ces vieilles chansons;<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 87.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:244.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 266.

Ermenonville! pays où fleurissaient encore l'idylle antique.<sup>400</sup>

The adverb “encore” acts like the novella’s refrain. Each time it rings out, we hear echoes of the horn or “cor” and the distinction between past and present is obscured. In “Nuit Perdue”, the novella’s first section, the narrator reads a newspaper announcement that prompts his aural memory: “Mon regard parcourait vaguement le journal que je tenais encore et j’y lus ces deux lignes: ‘*Fête du Bouquet provincial.*’”<sup>401</sup> Reading these words in print gives rise to a faraway echo and the narrator recalls the sights and sounds of his youthful celebrations: “Le **cor** et le tambour résonnaient au loin dans les hameaux et dans les bois [...] enfants de ces contrées, nous formions le **cortège** avec nos arcs et nos flèches, nous **décorant** du titre de chevalier...”<sup>402</sup> The multiple repetitions of the adverb “encore” prepare the reader’s ear for a significant passage in the novella’s final section entitled “XIV. Dernier Feuillet.” As the novella comes to a close, the echoes of the horn no longer sound. The “encore” generates a *ne...plus*: “Il n’est plus, le temps où les chasses de Condé passaient avec leurs amazones fières, où les **cors** se répondaient de loin, multipliés par les échos!...”<sup>403</sup>

In his “Essai sur la poétique de Nerval,” Meschonnic explains that, as a signifier in Nerval’s verse, rhythm creates a sacred poetry in which the repetitive movement of certain phonemes arouses memory. Through this verbal resonance, Nerval composes what Meschonnic refers to as a verse that sings.<sup>404</sup> In Nerval’s poetry, readers are struck by the symmetry of consonants and vowels, such as the repetitive /i/ in the fourth sonnet of “Christ aux Oliviers” (“Qu’il lisait ses noirceurs **sur** tous les **murs** écrites”) and the mirroring rhymes in lines 12-13 of “Horus” (“La

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>404</sup> Henri Meschonnic, “Essai sur la poétique de Nerval”, *Pour la poétique: III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 31.

déesse avait fui sa conque **dorée**, / La mer nous renvoyait son image **adorée**...”).<sup>405</sup> As Meschonnic writes: “Dans *Horus*, les deux rimes en écho jouent des variations sur un même mot, comme la légère déformation d’une image dans un miroir.”<sup>406</sup> These lines resonate with Nerval’s prose translation of Heine’s poem “Salut du matin,” which evokes an eternal ocean (“mer éternelle”) with golden pearls and seashells (“des perles et des coquillages **dorés**”).<sup>407</sup> In Nerval’s dedicatory preface to his *Petits Châteaux de Bohême: Prose et Poésie*, we hear a prolonged echo between “paroles dorées” and “traits adorés”:

La Muse est entrée dans mon cœur comme une déesse aux paroles **dorées** ; elle s’en est échappée comme une pythie en jetant des cris de douleur. Seulement, ses derniers accents se sont adoucis à mesure qu’elle s’éloignait. Elle s’est détournée un instant, et j’ai revu comme en un mirage les traits **adorés** d’autrefois !<sup>408</sup>

Through its prosody, this passage reflects the experience described by Nerval: his illusory vision of a lost Muse. On an aural level, the distance between “paroles dorées” and “traits adorés” seems to give voice to the Muse’s golden words. On a visual level, the rhyme creates a textual “mirage” of sorts, and it does so by way of spatial variation.

### III. L’épreuve de l’étranger

#### *i. Travels Abroad and Foreign-Language Studies*

Traduire encourage à vivre poétiquement le rapport à sa propre langue.  
Yves Bonnefoy, interview with Jiri Pelan (2005)

In his study *Névrosés*, Arvède Barine details Nerval’s love of Germany and the German language:

Nul, en France, n’a plus aimé l’Allemagne, à une époque où les sympathies étaient pourtant nombreuses et vives, parmi nos écrivains et nos lettrés, pour la pensée et la littérature germanique, et aussi pour l’âme germanique, qui n’avait encore découvert à nos yeux que sa face mystique et attendrie.<sup>409</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries, Nerval traveled to Germany several times, and over the course of his literary career, he made a sustained effort to improve his knowledge of the language. Despite

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 33-39.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>407</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 243.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>409</sup> Arvède Barine, “Nerval,” *Névrosés: Hoffmann, Quincey, Edgar Poe, Nerval* (Paris: Hachette, 1898), 315.

Nerval's persistent efforts to achieve proficiency in German, his command of the language remains uncertain. These doubts raise questions concerning Nerval's writing strategies as a translator, specifically with respect to his earlier works. What did the act of translation entail? How did Nerval successfully translate *Faust* and *Les Poésies allemandes* if his German was insufficient? Some have accused Nerval of plagiarism, suggesting that his 1827 translation of *Faust* relied heavily on Albert Stapfer's translation, which appeared in 1823, but, even so, the literary value of Nerval's translation was deemed superior by many. This case therefore illustrates that the translation of poetry requires more than linguistic competence; it demands literary sensibility as well. Raymond Bouyer described Nerval as "le traducteur qui savait à peine l'allemand, mais qui le comprenait mieux que tous les pédants."<sup>410</sup>

In several of his letters from abroad, Nerval described his progress learning the language and expressed his aspirations as a translator. In an 1838 letter to his father, Nerval admitted that German was difficult to comprehend and explained that his goal for the following year was to study the language diligently: "[...] en admettant qu'aujourd'hui encore j'éprouve quelques difficulté à traduire ou comprendre certaines choses, il est clair que l'an prochain en ayant ce but devant les yeux, je pourrai me mettre en état de l'accomplir."<sup>411</sup> In the same letter, Nerval mentioned that strengthening his German abilities would also help him hone his literary skills:

Mais une mission momentanée me servirait à acquérir des relations excellentes et répondrait fort bien au besoin que j'ai de me fortifier dans l'allemand, puisque déjà j'en sais un peu, et qu'avec un peu de travail encore, je puis m'en faire un accessoire littéraire fort utile assurément.<sup>412</sup>

The following year Nerval noted that, although he had improved his vocabulary, he still had not achieved proficiency.<sup>413</sup> He told his father that he wanted to hire a "maître allemand," because

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<sup>410</sup> Raymond Bouyer, *Le Ménestrel. Journal de Musique*, 197 (21 June 1903). The article was entitled "De l'Intermezzo de Henri Heine à la *Dichterliebe* de Robert Schumann."

<sup>411</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:816.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 817.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, 836.

German pronunciation continued to present challenges: “[...] je ne sais pas encore autant l’allemand que l’on croit et qu’en outre la prononciation me crée des difficultés très grandes.”<sup>414</sup>

While Nerval was admittedly not a fluent conversationalist, he nevertheless had studied the language using a scientific approach:

J’ai appris cette langue, comme on étudie une langue savante, en commençant par les racines, par le haut allemand et le vieux dialecte souabe. De sorte que je ressemble à ces professeurs de chinois ou de tibétain que l’on a la malice de mettre en rapport avec des naturels de ce pays. Peut-être pourrais-je prouver à tel Allemand que je sais la langue mieux que lui, mais rien ne serait plus difficile que de le lui démontrer dans sa langue.<sup>415</sup>

Although it is difficult to determine Nerval’s exact level of linguistic competency in German, it is important to recognize that his knowledge of German altered his relationship to his maternal tongue, affording him a critical distance from the French language.

In addition to German, Nerval studied Arabic, Greek, and Italian, which also extended his critical distance from his maternal tongue. In a letter written to his father from Cairo on May 2, 1843, Nerval detailed his progress with his studies. He attributed his improvement to his travels, which occasionally necessitated basic communication in a foreign tongue:

Je possède assez d’italien, d’arabe et de grec déjà pour parler ce qu’on appelle la langue franque qui se compose arbitrairement des mots de ces trois langues. On finit par se faire comprendre à force d’accumuler des mots et d’essayer des intonations de la gorge; j’ai deux dictionnaires et une grammaire, mais j’apprends bien plus par la nécessité de demander les choses; seulement, je vérifie après avoir entendu les mots, ou je les prononce de plusieurs manières jusqu’à ce qu’on m’ait compris.<sup>416</sup>

Similarly, in a letter written to his father from Constantinople on August 19, 1845, Nerval noted that he could read Greek fluently, that he had improved his Italian, and that he knew Arabic, although he could not write it.<sup>417</sup> Nerval’s written works, especially his travel journals, serve as evidence of this progress.

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 833.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 1451. Nerval’s scholarly knowledge of German was in large part due to his father, who had taught him the language from an early age. Nerval thus told his father that he too deserved credit for his translations. See *OC*, 2:1140: “C’est toi qui m’avais appris cette langue; je te dois le peu de gloire que j’ai retiré de mes traductions.”

<sup>416</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1 :931.

<sup>417</sup> In an 1843 letter to his father, *ibid.*, 1:955, Nerval noted: “Depuis un an, j’ai appris plus l’italien que d’autres langues, car les relations dans tout le Levant ont lieu dans cette langue, avec un mélange de mots arabes quelquefois...”



Shaped by his travels and experiences with foreign languages, Nerval incorporated foreign words in several of his works, using italics or parentheses to highlight the inclusion of a foreign term. The typographical details of his works therefore signal the act of borrowing or exchange, indicating the movement between two different languages and calling attention to an implicit or explicit act of translation. In an 1840 letter to Henri Heine, whom he was translating in a collaborative project, Nerval considers the power of foreign words:

J'éprouve parfois de grandes difficultés, moins pour comprendre que pour rendre et j'ai laissé plusieurs *sens* douteux afin de vous les soumettre. [...] l'admirable richesse de certains détails me laisse parfois dans l'incertitude si je dois germaniser la phrase ou rendre par un équivalent français...<sup>418</sup>

In his translation of Heine's poem *Im Hafen*, "Le Port", Nerval kept the German words "römer" and "Rathskeller", conveying the untranslatability of the local through italicized foreign terms. The poem depicts the Bremen Rathskeller, an old wine cellar in Germany ("...dans la bonne taverne le *Rathskeller* de Brême") and presents a "römer", a German wineglass, reflecting the world through its green crystal: "Comme le monde se réfléchit fidèlement et délicieusement dans un *ræmer* de vert crystal, et comme ce microcosme mouvant descend splendidement dans le cœur altéré."<sup>419</sup> In her remarks on Nerval's translations of Heine, Aristide Marie affirms that "[c]e fut pour Heine un bienfait des dieux que la rencontre d'un traducteur tel que Gérard. Nul, en effet n'eût pu rendre, avec une langue plus souple et plus nuancée, les subtiles valeurs de la *Nordsee* et *Buch es Lieder*."<sup>420</sup>

In his travel journal, Nerval used italics to designate the names of ports and train stations, suggesting movement from one location to another: "la station *d'Aachen*, que nous appelons Aix-

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<sup>418</sup> Nerval to Henri Heine, 6 November 1840, *OC*, 1:880.

<sup>419</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 249.

<sup>420</sup> Aristide Marie, *Gérard de Nerval. Le Poète et l'Homme d'après des Manuscrits et des Documents inédits*, (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1955), 235." Encore que littérale et exempte de paraphrase, cette traduction semble avoir transposé d'une forme si adéquate la suprême grâce de l'original, que nous sentons que c'est bien là l'expression, le verbe, dont le choix miraculeux ne peut souffrir d'équivalents."

la-Chapelle”<sup>421</sup>; “les salles du port, vulgairement nommées *riddecks*”<sup>422</sup>; “De la station de La Haye, que les gens du pays appellent *S’Gravenhage*”<sup>423</sup>; “Je m’étais endormi sur le *south western railway*.”<sup>424</sup> At other times, Nerval used parentheses to show the act of translation directly: “*gasthaus* (cabaret),”<sup>425</sup> “l’*Eisenbahn* (chemin de fer),”<sup>426</sup> “*minnesængers* (ménéstrels),”<sup>427</sup> *Hulde van het nagelslacht* (hommage de la postérité).”<sup>428</sup>

Like Nerval, Heine played the role of a “cultural intermediary between the two sides of the Rhine” after he moved to Paris in 1831.<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, in a similar vein to Nerval, Heine’s poetry is structured by a logic of borrowing and exchange. Commenting on the frequent borrowing that Heine used in his *The Harz Journey*, Bernstein explains that Heine’s work is “historical in the sense of what might be called a cut-and-paste job, meaning a compilation of hearsay and excerpts from different authors.”<sup>430</sup> Bernstein asserts that Heine develops a “transitional metaphor of exchange” in his *The Harz Journey* and explains that the narrator draws a parallel between language and a “ceaseless system” of monetary exchange.

*The Harz Journey* juxtaposes two models of value: one opposing gold and paper money, inherent and exchange value; the other showing that all value is gained through endless, uncontrollable exchange. The relation between Heine’s romanticism and his journalism can also be understood as an allegory of the instability of value thanks to which no ‘I’ is finally identifiable.<sup>431</sup>

Nerval develops a similar reflection in his travel journals. Several of Nerval’s translations specify an exchange between different currencies: “3 kreutzers (2 sous),”<sup>432</sup> “2 florins (près de 2

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<sup>421</sup> Nerval, *OC*, vol. II, 806. From *Lorely*: “II. De Cologne à Liège” in “Du Rhin et Flandre.”

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 827. From *Lorely*: “II. D’Anvers à Rotterdam” in “Les Fêtes de Hollande.”

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 830. From *Lorely*: “III. La Kermesse de la Haye” in “Les Fêtes de Hollande.”

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 859. From *Notes du Voyage*: “II. Une Nuit à Londres” in “Un Tour dans le Nord.”

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 757.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 786.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 787.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 840. From *Lorely*: “V: Het Rembradts Fest” in “Les Fêtes de Hollande.”

<sup>429</sup> Susan Bernstein. “Heine’s Versatility.” in *A New History of German Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 526.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 530-531.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, 756. From *Lorely*: “III. Les Voyages à Pied” in “Du Rhin au Mein.”

francs 50 centimes),”<sup>433</sup> “*six pence* (soixante centimes),”<sup>434</sup> “[...] moyonnant une piastre turque (25 centimes),”<sup>435</sup> “un *irmelikalen* (pièce d’or de un franc et vingt-cinq centimes),”<sup>436</sup> “moyonnant dix paras (cinq centimes).”<sup>437</sup> Questions of translation complicate these exchanges, for example, when Nerval provided two different pronunciations of the same monetary unit. In *Lorely*, Nerval’s parenthetical statement explained that the “kreutzer”, a silver coin used in the southern German states, should be pronounced as “kritch”: “deux kreutzers (prononcez kritch).”<sup>438</sup> In his novella “Angélique”, however, Nerval offered a different pronunciation of “kreutzer”: “Le libraire m’en demanda un florin et six kreutzers (on prononce *cruches*).”<sup>439</sup> Travelling raised Nerval’s awareness of the transfer of monetary units from one system to another, thus helping him to gain a deeper understanding of the instability of value and currency as well as of discourse. As Meschonnic affirms in his *Critique du rythme*: “Seule transformatrice et transformée, la valeur fait ce qu’un discours a de trans-subjectif, de trans-historique.”<sup>440</sup>

## ii. *Crossing the Rhine River*

Il y a l’Allemagne! la terre de Goethe et de Schiller,  
le pays d’Hoffmann; la vieille Allemagne, notre mère à tous!  
Nerval, *Lorely, souvenirs d’Allemagne*

Frequent travels to Germany and the Orient distanced Nerval from his day-to-day life, from his country and its literary practices, and from his former perception of self. In a letter written to Nerval from Paris in December 1839, Gautier described voyages as a productive means of self-escape, as they break one away from monotonous routines: “C’est diablement embêtant d’être soi,

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 757.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 861. From *Notes du Voyages*: “II. Une nuit à Londres” in “Un Tour dans le Nord.”

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 490. From *Voyage en Orient*: “IV. Les Buveurs d’Eau” in “Les Nuits du Ramazan.”

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 477. From *Voyage en Orient*: “III. Caraguez” in “Les Nuits du Ramazan.”

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 472. From *Voyage en Orient*: “I: Ildiz-Khan” in “Les Nuits du Ramazan.”

<sup>438</sup> See “I: Strasbourg”, “Du Rhin au Mein”, *Lorely*, in *ibid.*, 745.

<sup>439</sup> See “Angélique,” *Les Filles du Feu*, in *ibid.*, OC, 1:161.

<sup>440</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 29.

toujours soi, rien que soi: ô Gérard, ô mon ami, que tu es heureux d'être là-bas séparé de tous les gens que tu connais, ne couchant pas deux fois dans le même lit."<sup>441</sup> Gautier's letter underscores that traveling to another country opens questions concerning the nature of self. In Nerval's case, the act of crossing linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries perpetually altered his sense of identity. In her *De l'Allemagne* (1813), Madame de Staël described the effects of border-crossing and provided somewhat of a warning for French citizens traveling to Germany. In her thirteenth chapter, "De l'Allemagne du Nord", she focused on the key geographical symbol of this venture into foreign territory, the Rhine. Madame de Staël explained that after crossing the river, it is almost as if one becomes a foreigner to oneself:

Cette frontière du Rhin est solennelle; on craint, en la passant de s'entendre prononcer ce mot terrible: **Vous êtes hors de la France**. C'est en vain que l'esprit juge avec impartialité le pays qui nous a vus naître, nos affections ne s'en détachent jamais; et quand on est contraint à le quitter, **l'existence semble déracinée, on se devient comme étranger à soi-même.**<sup>442</sup>

In his letters from abroad, Nerval described a similar experience of deracination, writing to his father from Vienna in November 1839 that separation from his home country stimulated in him profound reflection: "[...] dans un grand isolement que celui qui existe à l'étranger, on est porté toujours à jeter sur sa vie un regard d'ensemble et à soulever de grandes réflexions à propos de tout."<sup>443</sup> Claude Pichois and Michel Brix have observed that Nerval's interest in Germany and German literature led to a tension between "le mysticisme germanique et la rationalité française."<sup>444</sup>

Nerval's movement to new territories also fueled his fascination with music and often inspired song. After traversing the Rhine, Nerval explained that he would hum to himself, much like Heine would when he travelled to Italy: "Dès que je prends pied de l'autre côté du Rhin, je

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 842.

<sup>442</sup> De Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, 115.

<sup>443</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:835.

<sup>444</sup> Claude Pichois and Michel Brix, eds., *Dictionnaire Nerval* (Tusson, Charente: Du Lérot, 2006), 20.

fredonne aussitôt le tirily joyeux que chantait Henri Heine en voyant Italie...<sup>445</sup> Setting foot into a different country catalyzed new imaginative possibilities as his eyes and ears were exposed to new sights (new cities, monuments, panoramas, plants, landscapes) and sounds (foreign tongues, different sonorous backgrounds). Nerval believed that his travel to the “Outre-Rhin” helped him develop his own poetic voice: “En touchant les bords du Rhin, j’ai retrouvé ma voix et mes *moyens*! Hier soir, j’ai écrit un sonnet dans le trajet de Bade à Strasbourg...<sup>446</sup>

For Nerval, the Rhine was invested with symbolic value. Like the Styx, separating earth from the underworld in Greek mythology, the Rhine for Nerval marked a boundary between the conscious and the unconscious. In a letter written to George Bell on May, 31, 1854, Nerval drew an implicit comparison between the two rivers, explaining that, after crossing the Rhine bridge a second time (“je traverse une seconde fois le pont du Rhin”), he began to quote two verses from the lyrical tragedy *Alceste* by the German composer Christoph Willibald Gluck. The verses allude to the divinities of the Styx: “*Divinités du Styx, soyez-moi favorable! Pâles, divinités.*”<sup>447</sup> All of these experiences indicate that when Nerval traveled across the Rhine, he experienced shifts in his personal, cultural, and linguistic identities. Nerval told Dumas that his travels had even led to a few lapses in linguistic memory: “j’oublie un peu le français, bien que je ne sache pas beaucoup l’allemand.”<sup>448</sup> In his remarks on Nerval’s travels to Germany, Richard Sieburth explains that both the Rhine and the Styx came to symbolize Nerval’s deceased mother and he suggests that Nerval perhaps visited his mother’s tomb.

While in Leipzig, he may have secretly visited his mother’s grave in nearby Gross Glogau, for, as he hinted in a letter to Liszt, she was the phantom Lorelei who had lured him back across the Rhine — the Styx — to his ‘second homeland.’<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:1451.

<sup>446</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:1141.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, 1144.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 1451.

<sup>449</sup> Gerard de Nerval, *Selected Writings*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin Books, 1999), xix.

### iii. Transport

Nerval was hospitalized a number of times; his first mental crisis in 1841 and his second major crisis in 1853. Nerval's manic depressive attacks would ultimately lead to his suicide in 1855. To describe both his hospitalization and his voyage across the Rhine, Nerval used the verb "transporter," the same verb he used to characterize the imaginative faculty of the German lyrics: "[...] le talent admirable des Allemands pour se transporter dans des siècles, dans les pays, dans les caractères les plus différents du leur..."<sup>450</sup> In his *Aurélia*, Nerval developed a complex interplay between translation, transport, and transfiguration. The prefix *trans-* in the verb "transporter" conveys movement from one place to another while also suggesting the idea of being carried away by an intense emotion. The verb "transfigurer" suggests a changing of figures or forms and also alludes to material or spiritual transformation: "Je fus transporté dans une maison de santé. Beaucoup de parents et d'amis me visitèrent sans que j'en eusse la connaissance. La seule différence pour moi de la veille au sommeil était que, dans la première, tout se transfigurait à mes yeux."<sup>451</sup> Following his transportation to the hospital, Nerval explained that he was unable to recognize the family members who had come to visit him, suggesting that his mental illness brought about a failure to perceive the transmission of heritage. This failure ultimately led to the transfiguration of the world around him.

Following Nerval's first nervous breakdown on March 1, 1841, Jules Janin remarked in his feuilleton *Journal des Débats* that Nerval's madness was intimately related to his fascination for German literature. According to Janin, German literature was a dangerous seduction for Nerval, especially since it encouraged his vagabonding between reality and imagination. Janin argued that Nerval's 1841 crisis was the result of his travels to Germany and of his translation of Goethe's

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<sup>450</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 29.

<sup>451</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 365.

*Second Faust*, published one year before his first hospitalization. Janin's remarks support Madame de Staël's observation that *Faust* should not be used as a literary model. "La pièce de Faust [...] n'est certes pas un bon modèle. Soit qu'elle puisse être considérée comme l'œuvre du délire de l'esprit ou de la satiété de la raison, il est à désirer que de telles productions ne se renouvellent pas."<sup>452</sup>

Following this hospitalization, Nerval grew increasingly cautious of his connection to German literature.<sup>453</sup> He expressed this wariness in *Lorely: souvenirs l'Allemagne*, the preface to which tells the story of a voyager who resisted the siren song of Lorely, the water fairy of the Rhine. Nerval strategically dedicated this work to Janin, a tactic which allowed him to counter the critic's harsh claims. In the preface of his work, Nerval cleverly shifted the spelling of the fairy's name to illustrate his cautiousness: "Vous la connaissez comme moi, mon ami, cette Lorely ou *Lorelei*, — la fée du Rhin..."<sup>454</sup> Italics indicate an implicit act of translation and serve as proof of Nerval's critical distance. Although the fairy's name charms him, he knows that it is a lie: "[...] Je devrais me méfier pourtant de sa grâce trompeuse, — car son nom même signifie en même temps charme et mensonge..."<sup>455</sup>

Nerval responded to Janin's criticism in a series of letters, opening his first with an irritated tone: "Pardon de vous écrire avec quelque amertume, amis comprenez donc que voici sept mois que je passe pour *fou*, grâce à votre article nécrologique du [premier] mars."<sup>456</sup> Nerval explained that his public image had been damaged: "[...] l'on s'était accordé à faire de moi une sorte de prophète, d'illuminé, dont la raison était perdue en Allemagne..."<sup>457</sup> In addition to his letters,

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<sup>452</sup> De Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, 367.

<sup>453</sup> See Pichois and Brix, *Dictionnaire Nerval*, 23: "Les récits nervaliens sont ainsi caractérisés par une progression hésitante vis-à-vis de tout ce qui évoque l'Allemagne."

<sup>454</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2:733.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1 :910.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*

Nerval publicly addressed Janin's criticism in the preface to *Lorely*, including excerpts of Janin's 1841 article in his preface. Following these insertions, Nerval attempted to disprove Janin's claims, one of which mockingly detailed Nerval's translations of *Faust*. Janin had described Nerval's attentive ear and condescendingly noted how he attentively listened to the noises of the "Outre-Rhin":

[...] il a traduit les deux Faust, il les a commentés, il les a expliqués à sa manière; il voulait en faire un livre classique, disait-il. Souvent il s'arrêtait en pleine campagne, prêtant l'oreille, et dans ces lointains lumineux que lui seul il pouvait découvrir, vous eussiez dit qu'il allait dominer tous les bruits, tous les murmures, toutes les imprécations, toutes les prières venues à travers les bouillonnements du fleuve et de l'autre côté du Rhin.<sup>458</sup>

Nerval called attention to the main consequences of Janin's unfair criticism: for seven months, he had been thought insane or even dead by the majority of his contemporaries. Nerval forcefully accentuated that he was still alive but nonetheless referred to himself as a living tomb of his former self: "De sorte, mon cher Janin, je suis le tombeau vivant du Gérard de Nerval..."<sup>459</sup> With this self-portrait as a living tomb, Nerval depicted himself as a bridge between life and death. This bridge corresponds to the translation of Nerval's paternal name "Labrunie", which, as we saw earlier, means "bridge" in Old German: "Bruck en gothique-allemand signifie *pont*."<sup>460</sup> Nerval's self-portrait strengthens the association between the Rhine and the Styx. In line 12 of his sonnet "El Desdichado", Nerval extends the parallel between the Rhine and the Styx to the Acheron, one of the four rivers that converge to form the Styx: "Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l'Achéron." Before turning to our reading of "El Desdichado", let us consider the relationship between language and the transmission of heritage. How does language carry on echoes from the past? And why does Nerval give such a strong importance to sound and listening?

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<sup>458</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2:736.

<sup>459</sup> Nerval to Jules Janin, 24 August 1841, *OC*, 1:912.

<sup>460</sup> Richer, *Nerval: Expérience et création*, 33.



*iv. Transmitting Heritage: Towers and Turns of Phrase*

(Turn and face the strange)  
— David Bowie, “Changes,” *Hunky Dory*

In his critique of Nerval’s madness, Janin had called attention to Nerval’s extremely attentive ear, describing Nerval’s tendencies as a listener with the verb “dominer” and thus drawing a parallel between Nerval’s observant ears and power: “[...] vous eussiez dit qu’il allait dominer tous les bruits, tous les murmures, toutes les imprécations, toutes les prières venues à travers les bouillonnements du fleuve et de l’autre côté du Rhin.”<sup>461</sup> By coupling the verb “dominer” with the adjective “tous”, which he repeats four different times, Janin stressed that Nerval gave full attention to his sonorous surroundings. Janin further insinuated that Nerval exercised power over his environment through complete absorption in sound: “[...] vous eussiez dit qu’il allait dominer...”<sup>462</sup> Through his use of “dominer”, Janin implicitly suggested that Nerval’s nervous breakdown was symptomatic of issues relating to power dynamics. The content of “El Desdichado” reinforces this suggestion. In line 12, the lyrical subject not only announces that he has crossed the Acheron two different times, he also proclaims that he is a victor (“vainqueur”). The act of traversing the Acheron (i.e., the Rhine/Styx) signifies an escape from the underworld and points to a new life or sense of self.

It is through the act of comparison that one perceives this regenerative movement between lives. By comparing the figures and forms used to signify a past life (or lives) to those used to signify a present or future life (or lives), one observes a movement of self-reflective interchange, a passage reflecting on passages. Crossing the Acheron (i.e., the Rhine/Styx) exemplifies this self-reflective act, which entails metaphorical transfer. Nerval extends the Rhine to the Seine through

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<sup>461</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 736.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*

the conjunction “comme”: “[...] quand on a traversé un premier bras du Rhin, large comme la Seine.”<sup>463</sup> For Nerval, this extension of meaning relates to transport and his experience as a foreigner:

L'étranger se trouve pris par tous les sens à la fois; les passions personnifiées par la mythologie antique, s'attachent à lui comme à leur proie; le plaisir lui sourit sur les joues fardées des danseuses; la joie l'appelle du fond des bouteilles de porto, de xérès, de champagne. — Transporté, hors de lui, il ne tarde pas à se joindre au groupe des danseurs, et disparaît dans les évolutions de la polka ou de la valse à deux temps.<sup>464</sup>

The parallel that Nerval draws between the Rhine and the Styx is an excellent example of how he applied the mythology of antiquity to his own experiences as a foreigner. Crossing the Rhine was a movement that altered the power dynamics between languages, nations, epochs, heritage, and poets, significantly transforming his perception of the world.

Following his introductory preface to *Lorely*, Nerval entitled the first section of his work “Du Rhin au Mein.” In this section, Nerval described an expedition to the village *Dornshausen*, which he compared to a fictional adventure much like the “romanesques voyages” portrayed by Goethe in his *Wilhelm Meister*. The village *Dornshausen* was an especially fascinating discovery for Nerval, for it blurred the distinction between linguistic and geographical borders. Although *Dornshausen* lies in Germany, and thus beyond French borders, Nerval noted that its inhabitants speak French, having descended from Protestant families exiled from France in 1685, the year Louis XIV revoked the edict of Nantes. In the description of his trip, Nerval noted the German pronunciation of the village is *Tournesauce*:

Le but de l'expédition était d'aller à *Dornshausen*, mot qui, dans la prononciation allemande, se dit à peu près *Tournesauce*, Or, savez-vous ce que c'est ce lieu, dont le nom est si franchement allemand et si bizarrement français à la fois? C'est un village où l'on parle que notre langue, bien que l'allemand règne à cinquante lieues à la ronde, même en dépassant beaucoup la frontière française.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2: 743.

<sup>464</sup> *Notes du Voyage*, “II. Une Nuit à Londres” in “Un Tour dans le Nord,” in *ibid.*, 866.

<sup>465</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2: 767.

Following these remarks, Nerval expressed his surprise upon hearing the villagers speak such a pure language. Nerval was especially captivated by a group of children playing who unknowingly used outdated expressions from the seventeenth-century: “[les enfants] se servaient sans le savoir des tours surannés du grand siècle.”<sup>466</sup> To hear the children more closely, Nerval bought cake to share with them. The merchant from whom he purchased the cake also captured his attention. Nerval used italics to highlight the foreign elements of her speech:

...la marchande nous dit. “Vous leur avez *fait tant de joye* que les voilà qui courent *présentement* comme des *harlequins*.” Il faut remarquer que le nom d’Arlequin s’écrivait ainsi du temps de Louis XIV, avec un *h* aspiré, comme on peut le voir notamment dans la comédie des *Comédiens* de Scudéri.<sup>467</sup>

Nerval noted that the merchant’s pronunciation corresponded to an archaic French no longer operational in France.<sup>468</sup> Although Nerval was mesmerized by the villagers’ pure language, he recognized that this linguistic purity came with risks, namely, an uncomplimentary physical appearance: he explained that the villagers were hunchbacked since they only procreated with one another.

In a section of his *Notes du Voyages* entitled “Un Tour dans le Nord”, Nerval called attention to additional differences in pronunciation. While the “tour” in the section’s title refers to a journey or visit (“Un Tour dans le Nord”), the section’s content matter focuses on towers (“tours”) and on different turns of phrases (also “tours”). In “I. Angleterre et Flandre”, the first part of “Un Tour dans le Nord,” Nerval described the towers in Southampton: “[...] j’ai aperçu les clochers et les tours de Southhampton — qu’il s’agit désormais de prononcer Souzampton, en appuyant la langue contre les incisives pour la formation de ce terrible *th* anglais, le shibboleth des

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 768.

<sup>468</sup> In his *Chansons et légendes du Valois*, OC, 2:274, Nerval asks, “[...] pourquoi aussi la langue a-t-elle repoussée ce z si commode, si séduisant qui faisait tout le charme du langage de l’ancien Arlequin...”

commençants.”<sup>469</sup> In the fifth section of “Un Tour dans le Nord,” entitled “Anvers,” Nerval noted that two different linguistic groups live in Belgium: the French-speaking community and the Dutch-speaking community. “Pour l’étranger, la difficulté se complique des noms de villes prononcées tantôt en français, tantôt en flamand: Gand s’appelle *Gent*; Anvers, *Antwerpen*; Liège, *Luttich*, ainsi de suite.”<sup>470</sup>

In the preface to his *Poésies allemandes*, Nerval explained that German poets are more attuned to nature than the French. The sounds of the environment activate the German imagination, often inspiring spontaneous poetry. Frequent use of onomatopoeia illustrates this acute sense of hearing:

... il ne voit pas seulement, mais il entend; il entend, et cependant, qu’on tire le canon à ses oreilles, et l’on n’éveillera pas son attention... Il entend la voix murmurante du Roi des aulnes qui veut séduire un jeune enfant; le *kling-kling* d’une cloche dans la campagne, le *hop ! hop ! hop !* d’un cheval au galop, le *cric-crac* d’une porte en fer qui se brise... Et puis, s’il a une plume, il jette tout cela sur le papier, comme il l’a vu, comme il l’a entendu...<sup>471</sup>

The repetition of the verb “entendre” emphasizes the ear. It was precisely this heightened sense of hearing that Janin would ridicule in his 1841 article (“Souvent il s’arrêtait en pleine campagne, prêtant l’oreille...”). In several respects, then, Janin’s attack reflected the difference between the two different languages and poetic traditions. As a translator of the German lyric poets, Nerval familiarized himself with the literary traditions and songs of several different nations and came to hear several different pronunciations but, in France, his ability to convey “la couleur des contrées étrangères” and to identify with his varied subject materials was seen as proof of his madness. In

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<sup>469</sup> Nerval, “I. Angleterre et Flandre,” in “Un Tour dans le Nord,” *Notes du Voyages*, in *OC*, vol. II, 857. In the section of *Lorely* entitled “Rhin et Flandre”, *ibid.*, 804, Nerval also describes the six towers along the Rhine, using the expression *tour à tour*: “...lorsqu’on voit décroître et plonger **les six tours derrière** les bois et les montagnes que travers le Necker, qui vient apporter ses eaux paisibles du grand fleuve ; lorsqu’on a vu l’immense dôme, et tout ce bel édifice en pierre rouge disparaître sous les derniers versants du Taunus, — on s’engage dans une rue obscure que bordent, comme de gigantesques maisons, **les vieux châteaux qu’ont détruits tour à tour Barberousse et Turenne**. Goetz de Berlichingen fut le Don Quichotte de cette chevalerie, abritée dans **les tours rougeâtres** et dans l’ombre des forêts de pins toujours vertes qui montent jusqu’au pied des murs.”

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 877.

<sup>471</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 25.

his own account of his madness in *Aurélia*, Nerval described his experience as a combination of reality and dreams. In the opening sentence of his fourth section, he used the verb “transporter”:  
“Un soir, je crus avec certitude être transporté sur les bords du Rhin.”<sup>472</sup>

v. *A Dream of Translation*

mes plaisirs et mes peines de touriste...  
— Nerval, *Lettres d'Allemagne*

An encounter with different languages while travelling across the Rhine River corresponded to a dream that Nerval described in *Aurélia*, one in which he used his knowledge of foreign languages to write a history of the world:

On me donna du papier, et pendant longtemps je m'appliquai à représenter, par mille figures accompagnées de récits, de vers et d'inscriptions en toutes les langues connues, une sorte d'histoire du monde mêlée de souvenirs d'études et de fragments de songes que ma préoccupation rendait plus sensible...<sup>473</sup>

In considering Nerval's dream, it is important to remember that Nerval characterized *Les Filles du Feu* as a translation of his dreams and emotions: “Une fois persuadé que j'écrivais ma propre histoire, je me suis mis à traduire tous mes rêves, toutes mes émotions...”<sup>474</sup> Much like *Les Filles du Feu*, the dream in *Aurélia* can be compared to a translation. It is thus the means by which he attempted to communicate his personal vision of the world with others. Accordingly, then, the completed *Aurélia* is much like the project that Nerval sees himself crafting in his dream scene. In his dream, Nerval understood every existing language, but, in reality, he knew this knowledge was ultimately unattainable. Nerval recognized that he was still learning and frequently called attention to his challenges as a learner. During his state of madness, Nerval imagined a means by which he could overcome these challenges. He envisaged a connection between all languages through the discovery of a magical alphabet.

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<sup>472</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 366.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

L'alphabet magique, l'hiéroglyphe mystérieux ne nous arrivent qu'incomplets et faussés soit par le temps, soit par ceux-là mêmes qui ont intérêt à notre ignorance; retrouvons la lettre perdue ou le signe effacé, recomposons la gamme dissonante, et nous prendrons force dans le monde des esprits.<sup>475</sup>

#### IV. Translating the Proper Name

In his novella “Angélique”, the narrator describes his research on the historical figure known as “l’abbé de Bucquoy”, a name that calls forth childhood memories: “[...] les Bucquoy dont le nom a toujours résonné dans mon esprit comme un souvenir d’enfance.”<sup>476</sup> The narrator discovered the “abbé du Bucquoy” while leafing through the pages of a book found in the shop of a second-hand book-seller (“bouquiniste”) in Germany. The name “Bucquoy” echoes with the French term “bouquiniste”: “Il est impossible, pour un Parisien, de résister au désir de feuilleter de vieux ouvrages étalés par un bouquiniste.”<sup>477</sup> Upon returning to France, the narrator attempted to find the same book in the library but encountered much confusion concerning the abbot’s name and a possible translation error involving the book’s title. An employee at the Bibliothèque Nationale later explained that in the past the name “de Bucquoy” might have been spelled Dubucquoy and, accordingly, advised Nerval to begin his search with the letter *D*, not *B*. The focus on the name Bucquoy prepares the attention given to the “*Fête du Bouquet provincial*” in the subsequent novella of *Les Filles du Feu*, “Sylvie”. The Fête du Bouquet echoes with the name de Bucquoy and awakens echoes and memories much like the abbot’s name:

— Demain, les archers de Senlis doivent rendre le bouquet à ceux de Loisy.’ Ces mots, fort simples, réveillèrent en moi toute une nouvelle série d’impressions: c’était un souvenir de la province depuis longtemps oubliée, un écho lointain des fêtes naïves de la jeunesse.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 244.

In several of his works, Nerval forms meaningful connections between proper and common nouns; the proper noun “de Bucquoy” here evokes the common nouns “bouquiniste” and “bouquet.” By altering these nouns, Nerval attempted to translate and compose a Proper name.

*i. Revising “El Desdichado”*

The twelve sonnets comprising *Les Chimères* illuminate the supernatural nature of dreams. The sonnets move against the domain of reason, exploring the profound dimensions of an interior cosmos. The sonnets raise several questions with regard to the critical reception of Nerval’s poetry. Prior to the appearance of the collection in *Les Filles du Feu* in 1854, Nerval worked on and published earlier versions of the sonnets. In his *Châteaux de Bohême*, for example, seven versions of the sonnets appeared in a collection entitled *Mysticisme*. Other versions of the sonnets, many of which are unedited, can be found in three different manuscripts, the Éluard, the Lombard and the Dumesnil de Gramont manuscript, which was discovered in 1924, nearly seventy years after Nerval’s death. These different manuscripts reveal that Nerval remodeled the sonnets several different times, changing and exchanging titles and whole stanzas. Varying punctuation, capitalization, and italics alter the sonnets’ rhythms. These modifications were intimately related to Nerval’s creative process, one of dynamic movement and perpetual change. In this regard, the sonnets comprising *Les Chimères* reflect their title. Much like the chimera, a monster of Greek mythology composed of three different parts (a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a serpent’s tale), the sonnets rely on a logic of combination. The chimera, moreover, evokes a fanciful and unrealistic dream.

The title of the first sonnet “El Desdichado” was inspired by Walter Scott’s novel *Ivanhoe* (1820), set in twelfth-century England. *Ivanhoe* was the most translated novel in nineteenth-century France and, as early as May 8, 1820, the *Journal des Débats* named Scott the most popular

author: “[il] est décidément l’auteur à la mode. La traduction de son premier roman, *Ivanhoé*, à peine publiée est déjà presque vendue.”<sup>479</sup> The general signification of the Spanish term “Desdichado” is “unfortunate one” but in the context of Scott’s novel the term specifically designates the “disinherited”: Desdichado is the name of a masked knight who wins a jousting tournament. Through the title “El Desdichado,” Nerval thus indulged his fascination with the medieval period while also suggesting the sorrowful experience of one who has been dispossessed.

Several studies have called attention to the complexity of the lyrical subject in “El Desdichado.” Henri Meschonnic maintains that the sonnet is a prime example of a plurality of logics shaping the movement of rhythm. By emphasizing the sonnet’s “production d’une forme”, Meschonnic’s observations reinforce the parallel between the Romantic concept *Bildung* and Nerval’s creative activity.<sup>480</sup> Catherine Talley has called attention to the sonnet’s theatrical elements, showing how it stages different “identifications”: “The names the [sonnet] gives to its subject are not straightforward assertions of identity, but roles the lyric subject plays.”<sup>481</sup> Our study uses a comparative approach to look at the sonnet’s changing form. We compare this changing form or *Bildung* to certain passages of Nerval’s translations — and retranslations — of *Faust* and *Second Faust*.

Before this comparison, let us first look at three different versions of “El Desdichado,” entitled “Le Destin” in the Éluard manuscript:

#### **El Desdichado**

Je suis le Ténébreux, — le Veuf, — l’Inconsolé,  
Le Prince d’Aquitaine à la tour abolie:

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<sup>479</sup> Cited in Yves Chevrel, Lieven D’hulst, and Christine Lombez, *Histoire des traductions en langue française: XIXe Siècle, 1815-1914* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2012), 547.

<sup>480</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 83.

<sup>481</sup> Catherine Talley, “From Identity to Identifications. Depersonalizing the Subject of the Nervalien Chimère,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 43.1-2 (2014): 5.



Ma seule *étoile* est morte, —et mon luth constellé  
Porte le *Soleil noir* de la *Mélancolie*.

Dans la nuit du tombeau, Toi qui m'a consolé,  
Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie,  
La *fleur* qui plaisait tant à mon cœur désolé,  
Et la treille où le pampre à la rose s'allie.

Suis-je Amour ou Phébus...Lusignan ou Biron?  
Mon front est rouge encor du baiser de la reine ;  
J'ai rêvé dans la grotte où nage la syrène...

Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l'Achéron:  
Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d'Orphée  
Les soupirs de la sainte et les cris de la Fée.

### **El Desdichado: Lombard Manuscript**

Je suis le Ténébreux, le Veuf, l'Inconsolé :  
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie  
Ma seule Étoile est morte : et mon luth constellé  
Porte le Soleil noir de la Mélancolie.

Dans la Nuit du Tombeau toi qui m'a consolé  
Rends moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie  
La Fleur qui plaisait tant à mon cœur désolé  
Et la Treille où le Pampre à la Vigne s'allie.

Suis-je Amour ou Phœbus, — Lusignan ou Biron?  
Mon front est rouge encor du baiser de la Reine,  
J'ai dormi dans la Grotte où verdit la syrène

Et j'ai deux fois, vivant, traversé l'Acheron  
Modulant et chantant sur la lyre d'Orphée  
Les soupirs de la Sainte — et les cris de la Fée.

### **Le Destin: Éluard Manuscript**

Je suis le Ténébreux, — le Veuf, — l'Inconsolé,  
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la Tour abolie:  
Ma Seule *Étoile* est morte, —et mon luth constellé  
Porte le *Soleil noir* de la *Mélancolie*.

Dans la nuit du Tombeau, Toi qui m'a consolé,  
Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie,  
La *fleur* qui plaisait tant à mon cœur désolé  
Et la Treille où le Pampre à la Rose s'allie

Suis-je Amour ou Phœbus?... Lusignan ou Biron?  
Mon front est rouge encor du baiser de la Reine  
J'ai rêvé dans la Grotte où nage la Syrène...

Et j'ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l'Achéron:  
Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d'Orphée  
Les soupirs de la Sainte et les cris de la Fée.

Following his second mental crisis in 1853, Nerval's former friend and literary partner Alexandre Dumas publicly turned against him, much as Janin had in 1841. Dumas declared that Nerval's madness stemmed from his overactive imagination and emphasized Nerval's tendency to identify with the people and epochs in his writings, most notably in his sonnet "El Desdichado." This phenomenon of identification closely resembled the imaginative faculty that Nerval appreciated in the German lyric poets. In response to Dumas's critique, Nerval compared his reception in France to his reception in Germany, asserting that he was not viewed as mad in Germany. "Ce que c'est que les choses sont déplacées! — On ne me trouve pas fou en Allemagne."<sup>482</sup>

The sonnet "El Desdichado" merits closer investigation on account of Dumas's accusation that Nerval identified too closely with the proper names it mentions. Indirectly evoking the confusion of the Tower of Babel, the sonnet stresses the difference between common nouns and proper nouns, yet also challenges the limits of this difference. Upon comparing the sonnets' different versions, the shift between italics, common nouns, proper nouns (or capitalized nouns) engenders a plural self. The "je" is no longer stable and the lyrical subject's attempt to compose or translate a Proper name accentuates the singularity of interiority. Through both capitalization and the definite article, the lyrical subject "je" identifies with three different capitalized nouns in the opening line ("Je suis le Ténébreux, — le Veuf, — l'Inconsolé"). Loss unifies these singular identities. Each capitalized noun designates absence: the first suggests an absence of light ("le Ténébreux"), the second calls attention to a departed loved one ("le Veuf"), and the third portrays someone deprived of comfort and consolation ("l'Inconsolé"). Line 3 depicts the death of a star and in line 4, the "*Soleil noir*" (or the "Soleil noir") symbolizes melancholic experience. In line 2, an apocalyptic extinction of a star prompts the act of mourning: "Ma seule étoile est morte"; "Ma

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<sup>482</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 433.

seule Étoile est morte”; “Ma Seule *Étoile* est morte.” The changing forms of the “star” in the sonnet’s different versions suggests that, perhaps, three stars have died.

Several shifts between nouns are found in the manuscripts.

- In the Éluard manuscript, the “Tour abolie” is a proper noun, but in the Lombard and the definitive version it is a common noun.
- In the definitive version, the star is an italicized common noun “seule *étoile*” but in the Lombard it is a non-italicized proper noun “seule Étoile” and in the Éluard it is an italicized proper noun “Seule *Étoile*.”
- In the definitive version and the Éluard version, the black sun and melancholy are italicized proper nouns (“*Soleil noir*” and “*Mélanchole*”) but in the Lombard manuscript the proper nouns are not italicized (“Soleil noir” and “Mélancolie”). Nerval also changes the spelling, creating different forms of melancholy: “*Mélanchole*” and “*Mélancolie*.”
- In the definitive version, the night of the tomb is a common noun (“la nuit du tombeau”) but in the Lombard they are proper nouns (“la Nuit du Tombeau”) and in the Éluard manuscript the night is a common noun and the tomb is a proper noun (“la nuit du Tombeau”).
- In the Lombard, the flower is a non-italicized common noun (“la Fleur”) but in the final and the Éluard versions it is an italicized common noun (“la *fleur*”). Line 8 of the Lombard gives three proper nouns, “la Treille,” “le Pampre,” and “la Vigne”; in the Éluard manuscript, the vine shifts to a rose (“la Treille,” “le Pampre,” “la Rose”) and in the definitive version these proper nouns become common nouns (“la treille,” “le pampre,” “la rose”).
- In the Lombard and Éluard, the queen is a proper noun (“la Reine”) but shifts to a common noun in the final version. In the definitive version, the grotto and the siren are common nouns (“la grotte,” “la syrène”) but in the Lombard the grotto is a proper noun and the siren is a common noun (“la Grotte,” “la syrène”) and in the Éluard the grotto and the siren are both proper nouns (“la Grotte,” “la Syrène”).

The shifts reveal between proper and common nouns reveal an unending exchange between self and Others. As Macé observes,

Nerval n’est jamais lui-même que dans les emprunts, qu’ils soient vrais ou supposés. Car une parole doit être déjà dite pour qu’il la reprenne à son compte, elle doit être un écho qui résonne dans sa mémoire, et se répercute dans la profondeur du temps; elle doit venir de sa propre vie, mais aussi de toutes celle qui lui ressemblent dans le passé, ce qui est la seule forme de la vie éternelle à la portée d’un poète.<sup>483</sup>

It could be said that the revisions of “El Desdichado” point toward Nerval’s attempts to translate his Proper name. However, this act of translation leads to confusion. In the sonnet, different epochs and geographical locations coalesce, challenging the limits of space and time. The medieval imaginary penetrates the present. Through his identification with the “prince d’Acquitaine”, Edward of Woodstock, Nerval subtly alludes to linguistic difference: Edward, the Black Prince of Aquitaine from 1362 to 1372, fought as commander in the Hundred Years War and spoke Occitan,

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<sup>483</sup> See Gérard Macé’s preface in Nerval, *Lénore*, 13.

the primary language of the medieval troubadours.<sup>484</sup> The lyrical subject's identification with the "prince d'Acquitaine" reinforces the sonnet's logic of translation on two different levels. First, if one "translates" the "prince d'Acquitaine" with his sobriquet, "le prince noir", his nickname accentuates the sonnet's depiction of darkness as in "le Ténébreux" and "*le Soleil noir*." Secondly, the prince of Aquitaine reinforces Nerval's interest in different dialects since he speaks the "langue d'oc."

In addition to modifying his lexical choices, Nerval altered his punctuation, changing italics, dashes, periods, colons, ellipses, and semicolons. In his "Essai sur la poétique de Nerval," Meschonnic suggests that Nerval's innovative use of punctuation creates a "vision orale."<sup>485</sup> For Meschonnic, these visual dashes indicate estrangement but also connections and contribute to the poem's musicality: "Nerval a chargé jusqu'à l'inexprimable sa ponctuation et sa typographie, à mesure que les mots devenaient pour lui choses musicales."<sup>486</sup> By way of the dash, the sonnet unites visibility and readability. The first line is a prime example of such oral vision; the dash both separates and links the subject's three identities: "Je suis le Veuf — le Ténébreux — l'Inconsolé."

## *ii. Fictional genealogy*

Deuxième Chorétide:  
Maint et maint monstre s'élève dans ton arbre généalogique!  
— Nerval, *Second Faust*

During his first psychological crisis in 1841, Nerval's own feeling of disinheritance led him to create a fictional genealogical chart. The chart focuses on three different lineages: his father's family name (Labrunie), his mother's family name (Laurent), and his literary pseudonym (Nerval), which is "the anagram of his mother's maiden name (LAVREnt), a partial anagram of his father's

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<sup>484</sup> See in "Edward The Black Prince," in *Britannica Academic, Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed 1 Nov. 2017.

<sup>485</sup> See Meschonnic, *Pour la poétique: III*, "Essai sur la poétique de Nerval," 37. Meschonnic specifically notes the creativity of the poet's "usage absolument neuf de la ponctuation et des signaux typographiques, en particulier des tirets."

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

name (LABRVNIE), and also the name of his maternal uncle's property: *le clos de Nerval*.<sup>487</sup> To create this chart, Nerval undertook an etymological research project and his discovery of certain roots and derivatives relating to his family names helped him form an imaginary sense of self. Patrick Bray has closely studied the physical layout of Nerval's genealogical manuscript and upholds that the creases and folds of the document's pages reflect the unclear boundaries between inside and outside, self and other. For Bray, Nerval's genealogy "graphically illustrates" how "enfolded spaces proliferate connections and possibilities, upset borders, and deliver to the subject an almost limitless power to redefine itself in time and language."<sup>488</sup>

On March 31, 1841, Nerval wrote to August Cavé, the Directeur des Beaux-Arts au Ministère de l'Intérieur, describing his desire to pursue an artistic and archeological mission intimately related to his genealogical quest. Nerval explained that he wanted to travel to the "Mont d'or," which he traced to his paternal name Labrunie: "Je serais bien aise aussi de pouvoir prendre les eaux du Mont d'or, ce qui m'arrêterait en Auvergne pendant un mois."<sup>489</sup> The letter details the primary objectives of his proposed research project: the study of "deux races gothiques ou visigothiques ou austro-gothiques." Nerval suggested that this study could reveal a linguistic relationship between France, Germany, Russia, the Orient, and above all Spain and Africa. To provide evidence of his qualifications, Nerval referred to his knowledge of different languages and literary histories. Nerval's research project was therefore a study in comparative linguistics.

C'est comme je vous l'ai dit l'histoire des deux races gothiques ou visigothiques et austro-gothiques que j'espère poursuivre complètement dans ces diverses provinces; c'est l'antique *croix de Lorraine* tracée à

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<sup>487</sup> Patrick M. Bray, "Lost in the Fold: Space and Subjective in Gérard de Nerval's 'Généalogie' and Sylvie," *French Forum* 31.2 (Spring 2006): 36.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>489</sup> Nerval, *OC*, vol. I, 1 : 904. The genealogy recorded by Jean Richer, *Nerval, Expérience et création* (Paris: Hachette, 1963), 33, reads: "2. De la Brunière, capitaine à Paris au XV siècle / Labrunaye Chastelain (nobiliarum) [barré: Bruni: baron]. / It[alie] Labruna-i. En France le baron Bruni. / La Brücker ou Brouckeri. / Browning ou Brownie en Irlande. Irlande: La Brownie, esprit de la tour et des ponts. / Brunhild, Brunchild, Braunhilda, etc. goth[ique]. / Bruniquel en Auvergne – Château et ville. / Dordogne, D'or d'wina, **rivière au Mont d'or** / Brouvg – Brougham. / Brouck – Brouckère."

travers la France par le fils de Charlemagne, et **qui peut nous servir à reconnaître nos frères d'origine en Allemagne, en Russie, en Orient et surtout encore dans l'Espagne et dans l'Afrique**; puisque là sont nos intérêts immédiats. **L'étude que j'ai faite depuis quinze ans des histoires et des littératures orientales, m'aidera à démontrer les patois mêmes de nos provinces celtiques des affinités extraordinaires avec les langues portugaises, arabes (de Constantine), franques, slaves et même avec le Persan et l'Hindoustani.**<sup>490</sup>

iii. *The Ruined Tower*

La suite des ruines amenait encore une tour et une chapelle.  
Nous montâmes à la tour.  
— Nerval, “Angélique”

The figure of the tower (“tour”) assumed a special meaning in Nerval’s genealogical chart (“Bruck en gothique-allemand signifie *pont*. *Brown* ou *Brunn* signifie tour ou touraille”).<sup>491</sup> The tower illumines Nerval’s research aspirations and his longing to visit the river of the Mont d’or, along which there were three castles linked to his paternal name: “les trois châteaux des Labrunie”:

*Pour la France = Trois Labrunie ou Brunyer de la Brunie chevaliers d’Othon empereur d’Allemagne seraient devenus les chefs de trois familles établies dans le Poitou, dans le Périgord ou le Quercy et dans les environs des mêmes. Les Labrunerie issus de l’Auvergne paraissent s’être fixés en Provence au retour des croisades. Labrunerie, prononciation locale: “Moussou de La Brunerie.” Les Labrunerie, Labrunière, peut-être Labrugnière, sont du Poitou ou de l’Angoumois. En Périgord, à peu de distance sur les deux bords de la Dordogne sont les trois anciens tours de Labrunie. Il n’en existe aucune autre dans la province.*<sup>492</sup>

As we mentioned earlier, the tower appears as a proper noun in Nerval’s genealogy, but the definitive version of “El Desdichado” transforms it into a common noun, shifting the “Tour abolie” in the Lombard manuscript to a “tour abolie.”<sup>493</sup> Derrida’s understanding of the relationship between the common name and the Proper name sheds light on the importance of this shift: “[t]o lose one’s name by transforming it into a common name or pieces of a common name is also to

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid, 905. In the entry “Celtés” in the *Dictionnaire de Nerval*, 94, Pichois and Brix note that Nerval was familiar with the studies of the Académie celtique, founded in 1807: “Leur doctrine reposait sur quelques postulats simples, voire simplistes: les Celtes ou Galates, descendants de Noé par Japhet et Gomer, autrefois dénommés Scythes ou Hyperboréens, étaient les habitants primitifs de la France, à partir de laquelle ils conquièrent une partie de la planète: adorateur d’Isis, vénérant également Ésus et Cernunnos, **les Celtes parlaient (en vers) une langue qui n’était autre que la langue primitive de l’humanité, celles que les poètes érudits et modernes s’ingéniaient en vain à retrouver. À grand renfort d’étymologies (la langue primitive n’était-elle pas celle où les mots correspondaient aux choses ?)**, les Celtomanes – le mot entre dans les dictionnaires au XIX siècle – ont construit une doctrine à laquelle Nerval adhère d’autant plus qu’elle comble son propre nationalisme (ou régionalisme) ...”

<sup>491</sup> Richer, *Nerval, Expérience et création*, 33.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>493</sup> Illouz, *Nerval: le “rêveur en prose”*, 13.

celebrate it.”<sup>494</sup> According to Illouz, Nerval’s paternal name reveals the symbolic chain of the poet’s unconscious and, thus, the inability of the proper name to fix itself:

le signifiant LABRUNIE ‘s’étoile’ sur la page et s’associe à d’autres signifiants, qui eux-mêmes vont relancer à leur tour le travail de l’inconscient, sans qu’aucun nom propre puisse atteindre jamais à un sens propre, ‘fixer’ une identité, et arrêter quelque part l’errance métonymique du désir et de l’écriture.<sup>495</sup>

Towers figure prominently in several of Nerval’s works, for example, calling forth the medieval imagination of the German lyrics. Describing Heine’s poetic genius, Nerval writes: “[...] il comprend à merveille ces légendes de la Baltique, ces tours où sont enfermées des filles de rois...”<sup>496</sup> In “Angélique” and “Sylvie,” Nerval depicts several towers or ruins of towers:

[...] j’ai pu admirer, sous un rayon de soleil couchant, les vieilles tours des fortifications romaines, à demi démolies et revêtues de lierre;<sup>497</sup>

[...] des châteaux lointains élèvent encore leurs tours...;<sup>498</sup>

[...] la vue, à gauche, est dominée par la tour dite de Gabrielle;<sup>499</sup>

J’ai eu le plaisir d’admirer, par une belle matinée, l’horizon de dix lieues qui s’étend autour du château, si redoutable d’autrefois et dominant toute la contrée. Les hautes tours sont démolies, mais l’emplacement se dessine encore sur ce point élevé...;<sup>500</sup>

[...] l’on découvrirait parfaitement les tours dentelées de la ville...;<sup>501</sup>

[...] la tour de Gabrielle se reflète.<sup>502</sup>

In the seventh letter of “Angélique,” Nerval described the song “Roi Löys” that he heard in the “vieux pays de l’Ile de France.” The song rhymes the tower, “tour”, with love, “amour”:

— Ma fille, il faut changer d’amour,  
Ou vous entrez dans la tour...  
— J’aime mieux rester dans la tour,  
Mon père! que de changer d’amour!<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 77.

<sup>495</sup> Illouz, *Nerval: le “rêveur en prose”*, 13, is referring to the “signifiant paternal” BUCQUOY which figures in the “récit” *Faux Saulniers*.

<sup>496</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 230.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>498</sup> Nerval, *OC*, vol. I, 219.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

This song finds echoes in “Sylvie”, the subsequent novella of *Les Filles du Feu*. In “II. Adrienne”, Nerval recounts a childhood memory of dancing in a round. The turning movement intensifies as Nerval met Adrienne in the circle: “[...] Adrienne se trouva placée seule avec moi au milieu du cercle. Nos tailles étaient pareilles. On nous dit de nous embrasser, et la danse et le chœur tournaient plus vivement que jamais.”<sup>504</sup> Nerval then described the moment when Adrienne sang in order to join the dance. His description can be read as a prose translation of the song “Roi Löys”:

On s’assit autour d’elle, et aussitôt, d’une voix fraîche et pénétrante, légèrement voilée, comme celle des filles de ce pays brumeux, elle chanta une de ces anciennes romances pleines de mélancolie et d’amour, qui racontent toujours les malheurs d’une princesse enfermée dans sa tour par la volonté d’un père qui la punit d’avoir aimé.<sup>505</sup>

In “Sylvie,” Nerval also expressed his need to take refuge from the masses in an ivory tower: “Il ne nous restait pour asile que cette tour d’ivoire des poètes, où nous montions toujours plus haut pour nous isoler de la foule.”<sup>506</sup> Similarly, in the final chapter of *Aurélia*, Nerval recounted a dream in which he found himself in a tower: “J’étais dans une tour, si profonde du côté de la terre et si haute du côté du ciel que toute mon existence semblait devoir se consumer à monter et à descendre.”<sup>507</sup> Descent symbolizes a movement into the world of dreams and ascent symbolizes a movement toward consciousness and expression. To translate his dreams and his madness, Nerval perpetually moved between the subterranean world of the unconscious and the waking world of reality; he repeatedly climbed and descended a tower: he *is* the tower (or towers).

Prior to evoking his dream of the tower, Nerval compared his book collection to a tower of Babel, which he in turn compares to Doctor Faust’s study. “C’est un capharnaüm comme celui du docteur Faust.”<sup>508</sup> Nerval’s books are an untranslatable literary tower of confusion: “Mes livres,

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Nerval, *Les Filles du feu*, 145.

<sup>507</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 408.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 405.



amas bizarres de la science de tous les temps, histoires, voyages, religions, cabale, astrologie, à réjouir les ombres de Pic de la Mirandole, du sage Meursius et Nicolas de Cusa, - la tour de Babel en deux cents volumes....”<sup>509</sup> Upon considering this description, it is worth noting that Gautier compared the interworking of Nerval’s mind to the spirals of an internal Babel: “une cervelle humaine gravissant les spirales de quelque Babel intérieure.”<sup>510</sup> Nerval’s bibliophilic nature invigorated his inner Babel: he was an avid reader and paid close attention to textual details, noting changes in handwriting and orthography and analyzing marginalia. Researching fictional and historical figures was a means by which Nerval composed his *Bildung*. Significantly then, Nerval’s readerly activity echoes with the “tour de Babel en deux cents volumes.” Turning pages generates this confusion. Describing his research of the abbé de Bucquoy, Nerval explained how it deeply moved him: “— j’ai frêmi en tournant les pages [...]”<sup>511</sup>

#### iv. *Tour à tour*

To everything (turn, turn, turn)  
— The Byrds, “Turn! Turn! Turn!”, *Turn! Turn! Turn!*

In the final version of “El Desdichado”, the “tower” acquires a heightened semantic value, because Nerval added the repetitious homonym “tour à tour.” In the first version of the sonnet published in *Le Mousquetaire*, line 13 reads: “Modulant et chantant sur la lyre d’Orphée.”<sup>512</sup> In the final version of the poem, however, Nerval revised the line, from “Modulant et chantant sur la lyre d’Orphée” to “Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d’Orphée.” This modification creates an echo-effect through

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid., 406. See also David Martin, “Melancholy of Being, or ‘I Have Sought the ‘I’ of God’: Genre, Gender, and Genesis in Nerval’s ‘El Desdichado,’” *French Forum* 15.1 (1990): 25–36, 28, who presents readings of the *tour* as the Arcane XVI of the Tarot, “la Maison de Dieu”: “and so the ‘prince d’Aquitaine’ may be read as the Son who has failed to come into possession of the site and the Kingdom of God, which would be realized by a discourse which would be an incarnation of the Father: he is ‘le destitué.’ Instead his discourse re-enacts the destiny of the Tower of Babel, also evoked by ‘tour abolie,’ in which man’s aspirations to possess the unitary name of God are the paradoxical cause of the very dispersion of the Name, and the foreignness of man and language”.

<sup>510</sup> Gautier, “Histoire du Romantisme” (1868), in *L’Hirondelle & Le Corbeau*, 204.

<sup>511</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:170.

<sup>512</sup> See the notes written by the editor in *ibid.*, 422.

repetition: “tour” in line 2 rhymes with “tour à tour” in 13. Nerval’s revised version thus acts as a modulation, which in turn adds a metatextual layer to the shift from “Modulant et chantant sur la lyre d’Orphée” to “Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d’Orphée.” The expression “tour à tour” signifies “succession,” “alternately,” “successively,” “one after the other,” “in turn” or “by turns,” and therefore calls to mind the cyclical turns of celestial figures: “[...] le temple de l’Amour et son soleil tournant qui rayonne de feux magiques.”<sup>513</sup>

While revising his 1827 translation of *Faust*, Nerval made a modulation similar to that in “El Desdichado”: he added the expression “tour à tour” to his prose translation of the “Prologue in the Heavens.” While the phoneme /tur/ occurs only once in the verse translation, it occurs three different times in his prose translation. The passage depicts the earth’s rotation and the rise of day:

***Faust: Prologue in the Heavens (1827)***

Gabriel:  
 Dans son cours incompréhensible,  
 La terre, roulant à l’**entour**,  
 Voit le jour fuir la nuit paisible,  
 Et la nuit fuir l’éclat du jour ;<sup>515</sup>

***Faust: Prologue in the Heavens (1835)***

Gabriel:  
 La terre parée **tourne** sur elle-même avec une  
 incroyable vitesse. Elle passe **tour à tour** du jour  
 pur de l’Éden aux ténèbres effrayantes de la nuit.<sup>514</sup>

In his 1827 verse translation, Nerval used the phoneme /tur/ in the locational preposition “à l’entour” and, in his 1835 prose translation, Nerval used the phoneme in the verb “tourner” and the expression “tour à tour”, which he rhymed with “jour”. Through this close rhyming chain, the rhythm of Nerval’s prose stresses the “incroyable vitesse” of the earth’s rotations: “Elle passe tour à tour du jour...” The repeated “tour à tour” conveys the German adjective “schnell”, meaning rapid or quick, which both opens and closes Gabriel’s opening remark.<sup>516</sup>

<sup>513</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:255.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>515</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, *OC*, 20.

<sup>516</sup> **Gabriel**

Und schnell und unbegreiflich schnelle  
 Dreht sich umher der Erde Pracht;  
 Es wechselt Paradieseshelle  
 Mit tiefer, schauervoller Nacht.

Similarly, while revising his 1827 and 1835 translations of the soldiers' unified voices in *Faust*, Nerval also added the phoneme /tur/:

<i>Faust</i> (1827)	<i>Faust</i> (1835)
Des Soldats:	Des Soldats:
Villes <b>entourées</b> De murs et remparts; Fillettes sucrées Aux malins regards;	Villes <b>entourées</b> De murs et de <b>tours</b> ; Fillettes parées D'attraits et d' <b>atours</b> !... <sup>517</sup>

The revisions will echo in Faust's subsequent remark to Wagner: "Détournons-nous donc de ces collines pour retourner à ville."<sup>518</sup>

We find a similar shift in Nerval's different translation of "The King of Thule." In *After Babel*, George Steiner calls attention to Margarethe's vocalization of Goethe's ballad,<sup>519</sup> the enchanting and evocative quatrains of which cause Steiner to comment on Nerval's translations: "[o]f innumerable attempts at translation only Nerval's comes within range...<sup>520</sup>" Despite this complimentary remark, Steiner critiques Nerval's prosody: "... and even here the rhyme-scheme saps the original." The ballad depicts the mythical realm of Thule, which in literature referred to "the furthest possible place in the world" and "the northernmost part of the habitable ancient world."<sup>521</sup> The different translations of the ballad reveal Nerval's musical imagination, showing how resonant melodies motivated poetic creation.<sup>522</sup> In the fourth stanza of his 1827 translation,

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Goethe. *Goethes Werke. Faust I. Theil*, 19.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 46 and 268.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 47, 269.

<sup>519</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 373.

<sup>520</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 419.

<sup>521</sup> See the entry "Thule" in *Britannica Academic, Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed 1 Nov. 2017.

<sup>522</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 418-419, measures the musical differences between Goethe's original ballad and Nerval's translation, commenting on the ballad's musicality and comparing the ballad's different musical settings. While those by Zelter, Schumann, and Liszt used the original text, Steiner notes that Gounod and Berlioz used the French version. He explains that musical compositions involve a movement from a "verbal sign system" to the "non-verbal sign system" of "musical language" (419) and eloquently asserts that the "musical setting of a poem generates a construct in which the original and its 'translation' (possibly a twofold translation) coexist in active simultaneity." Steiner offers a detailed analysis of Liszt's "intensely pictorial and romantic" musical setting, which he compares to a "vocal and instrumental translation" (420). Although Steiner explains that Liszt's setting is similar to those by Berlioz and

Nerval used an alternating ABAB rhyme scheme, in Stanza 4 (A: “royale” and “salle”; B: “pairs” and “les mers”). In his 1835 translation, he used an enclosed ABBA rhyme (A: “royale” and “loyale”; B: “tours” and “à l’entour”):

**Le Roi de Thulé  
(1827 Translation of *Faust*)**

Il fait à sa table royale  
Asseoir ses barons et ses pairs  
Au milieu de l’antique salle  
D’un château que baignaient **les mers**.<sup>523</sup>

**Le Roi de Thulé  
(1835 Translation of *Faust*)**

Il fit à sa table royale  
Asseoir les barons dans sa **tour** ;  
Debout et rangée à l’**entour**  
Brillait sa noblesse loyale.<sup>524</sup>

Nerval’s writerly practice suggests a resistance to fixity. In the ballad’s final stanza, he shifts the verb “tourner,” exposing what Henri Meschonnic has referred to as the myth of the “sign.” The final version of the poem changes the signification of the pronoun “il.” In the 1827 translation, the pronoun “il” designated the falling vase (“il tombe, il tourne, l’eau bouillonne”). In the 1835 translation, Nerval directly referred to the vase as opposed to using the pronoun “il”: (“Le vase **tourne**, l’eau bouillonne”). In his 1840 translation, the subject pronoun “il” refers to the king who watches as the “coupe d’or” falls into the waves (“il la vit **tourner** dans l’eau noire.”)

**Le Roi de Thulé (1827)**

Le buveur se lève et s’avance  
Auprès d’un vieux balcon doré ;  
Il boit, et soudain sa main lance  
Dans les flots, le vase sacré.

Il tombe, il **tourne**, l’eau bouillonne,  
Puis se calme bientôt après;  
Le vieillard pâlit et frissonne...  
Il ne boira plus désormais.

**Le Roi de Thulé (1835)**

Alors le vieux buveur s’avance  
Auprès d’un vieux balcon doré ;  
Il boit lentement, et puis lance  
Dans les flots le vase sacré.

Le vase **tourne**, l’eau bouillonne,  
Les flots repassent par-dessus ;  
Le vieillard pâlit et frissonne...  
Désormais il ne boira plus.

**Le Roi de Thulé (1840)**

Sous le balcon grondait la **mer** :  
Le vieux roi se lève en silence,  
Il boit, et soudain sa main lance  
La coupe d’or au flot **amer**.

Il la vit **tourner** dans l’eau noire,  
La vague en s’ouvrant fit un pli,  
Le roi pencha son front pâli...  
Jamais on ne le vit plus boire!<sup>525</sup>

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Gounod, he nevertheless stresses a key difference between these settings, which directly relates to language (i.e., German vs. French), and contends that the musical settings composed by Berlioz and Gounod involve a “dual motion of translation: from German into French, from German into music” (421). This dual motion reinforces Steiner’s main assertion that “music *is* a language” or, rather, a “metalanguage” (423). Steiner eloquently asserts that “the contrastive tonalities, the differing idiomatic habits, the distinct associative contexts which generate resistance and affinity between two different languages are intensified and complicated in the interpretation of language with music” (423).

<sup>523</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 195.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 196, 197, 199.

v. *The Black Sun and Délire*

Tournons nos yeux vers le soleil.  
Nerval, "Sylvie"

The *Soleil noir* that one hears in the first quatrain of "El Desdichado" suggests a passing of the day into darkness and echoes visually and aurally with "inconsolé: "Porte le *Soleil noir* de la *Mélancolie*." The repetitive turn relating to the black sun ("Soleil noir", "l'inconsolé", "Toi qui m'a consolé", "mon cœur désolé") is reminiscent of a childhood memory, recounted in *Aurélia*, of his uncle declaring that God is the sun: "je demandai un jour à mon oncle ce que c'était que Dieu. 'Dieu, c'est le soleil,' me dit-il."<sup>526</sup> Elsewhere in *Aurélia* the narrator perceives a "Soleil noir": "Je croyais voir un soleil noir dans le ciel désert et un globe rouge de sans au-dessus des Tuileries."<sup>527</sup> Commenting on these poetic effects, Meschonnic remarks: "En isolant chaque mot pour le rendre tout-puissant, en faisant de l'allitération et de l'assonance un rite, Nerval a renouvelé le langage, traversé la rhétorique pour s'y inscrire."<sup>528</sup> In the tomb, the proper noun "Toi" consoles the poet: "Dans la nuit du Tombeau, Toi qui m'as consolé." Derrida's understanding of the crypt sheds light on this movement into the tomb:

[the] dead object remains like a living dead abscessed in a specific spot in the ego. It has its place, just like a crypt in a cemetery or temple [...]. The dead object is incorporated in this crypt — the term 'incorporated' signaling precisely that one had failed to digest or assimilate it totally, so that it remains there, forming a pocket in the living body.<sup>529</sup>

Extending Derrida's insight to Nerval's work, we might say that Nerval's departed loved ones come to occupy a place inside him; his deceased mother and Jenny Colon, his former object of affection, live in the crypt that he carries within himself.

The noun "sun" is masculine in French ("le soleil") but feminine in German ("die Sonne").

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 397. Further on, he describes the movement of the stars, using the expression "tour à tour": "Je pensais que la terre était sortie de son orbite et qu'elle errait dans le firmament comme un vaisseau démanté, se rapprochant ou s'éloignant des étoiles qui grandissaient ou diminuaient **tour à tour**."

<sup>528</sup> Meschonnic, "Essai sur la poétique de Nerval", 39.

<sup>529</sup> Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 57.

Due to this difference in grammatical gender, we will suggest that Nerval imagined an alternative personified reverie. In his *La poétique de la rêverie*, Gaston Bachelard draws a significant comparison between cosmic texts in French and German, noting that the difference between a masculine and a feminine noun has the power to challenge one’s dreams and thus to shift or even disrupt the imagination: “De nombreux textes cosmiques où interviennent en allemand le soleil et la lune, me semblent personnellement impossible à rêver en raison de l’extraordinaire inversion qui donne au soleil le genre féminin et à la lune le genre masculin”.<sup>530</sup> To expand on Bachelard’s comments on different “cosmic texts”, it is noteworthy to suggest that perhaps Nerval saw the French verb sound (“sonner”) in the German sun (“die Sonne”). Furthermore, the German capitalization of the noun seems to transform the conjugated forms of the French verb into a proper noun, thus mixing the distinction between the pronouns “je” and “il.”

Nerval’s translations of the “Prologue in the Heavens” strengthens this hypothesis. In the opening of the prologue, the Archangel Raphael uses the German verb “tönen” (“to sound” or “to ring”) to describe the rising sun. While Nerval’s 1827 verse translation used the French verb “répandre”, meaning to spread, his 1835 prose translation rendered “tönen” as “résonner”, a verb in which the German noun “Die Sonne” visually repeats.

**Raphael**

Die Sonne tönt, nach alter Weise,  
In Brudersphären Wettgesang,<sup>531</sup>

**Raphael**

**(1827 verse translation of *Faust*)**

Le soleil répand sa lumière  
En chantant le Dieu qu’il chérit<sup>532</sup>

**Raphael**

**(1835 prose translation of *Faust*)**

Le soleil résonne sur le mode antique dans le chœur  
harmonieux des sphères<sup>533</sup>

One will also note that in the 1835 prose translation, Nerval incorporated the word “sphères”,

<sup>530</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de la rêverie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 28.

<sup>531</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Goethes Werke. Faust I. Theil* (Weimar: H. Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1999), 19.

<sup>532</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, OC, 20.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

which more closely corresponds to the German “Bruderspharën.”

vi. *Lusignan or Biron*

In the opening scene of the Second Part of *Faust*, Ariel, the airy spirit from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, announces the sunrise: “Écoutez, écoutez. La tempête des Heures / Résonne déjà pour les oreilles des esprits; Déjà le nouveau jour est né.”<sup>534</sup> Noises of all kinds accompany the rising of light and day. Rocky portals rumble (“les portes du rocher grincent en ronflant”), Phœbus’s wheels clatter (“Les roues de Phébus craquent en roulant”), trumpets blaze, drums beat:

Quel bruissement la lumière apporte!  
C’est le bruit du tambour, le son de la trompette;  
L’œil sourcille et l’oreille s’étonne;  
On ne peut ouïr l’inouï.<sup>535</sup>

The sounds of Phœbus’ wheels resonate with a question asked by the lyric subject “je” in the ninth line of “El Desdichado”: “Suis-je Amour ou Phébus?... Lusignan ou Biron?”

If one considers the Biron/Byron play, the question in “El Desdichado” is reminiscent of Nerval’s earliest poems on Napoleonic glory and nostalgia, composed between 1824 and 1825, when he was also translating two poems by Lord Byron: in his *Poésies diverses* (1824), he translated “Napoleon’s farewell” (1816) and “On the star ‘Legion of honour’” (1816). Jean Richer has emphasized that these early translations of Byron were essentially adaptations, as Nerval then did not know English.<sup>536</sup> He nonetheless refers to Byron in several of his works. In “Le Lac de Constance,” the fourth part of his introduction to *Voyage en Orient*, Nerval cites Byron: “La liberté sur les mers! comme dit Byron.”<sup>537</sup> Even more significantly, in his *Les Poésies de Henri Heine*, Nerval compared Heine to a Byron of Germany. Following this comparison, Nerval drew a parallel between Heine and Lusignan, the lover of the fairy-spirit Mélusine in folklore: “[...] toute femme

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<sup>534</sup> Nerval, *Faust*, 404.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>536</sup> Richer, *Nerval: Expérience et Création*, 55.

<sup>537</sup> Nerval, *OC*, vol. II, 22.

est pour Heine quelque peu nixe ou wili, et lorsque dans un de ses livres il s'écrie à propos de Lusignan, amant de Mélusine: 'Heureux comme la maîtresse n'était serpent qu'à moitié!' il livre en une phrase le secret intime de sa théorie de l'amour."<sup>538</sup> The parallel between Heine, Byron, and Lusignan is reinforced by the question: "Suis-je Amour ou Phébus?... Lusignan ou Biron?"

The names evoked in this line open several hypothetical possibilities. Kristeva claims that on a more general level, this uncertainty serves to underline that which has been lost: "L'accumulation litannique, hallucinatoire de [...] noms propres laisse supposer qu'ils pouvaient avoir seulement valeur d'indices, morcelés et impossible à unifier, de la Chose perdue."<sup>539</sup> The sonnet's proliferation of names ultimately points toward "la Chose innomable," which Kristeva argues does not suggest the death of God but, rather, suggests a hidden God whose name has died. Kristeva maintains that Nerval's poem gives symbolic presence to absence through the incantatory sounding of proper nouns: "Les noms propres sont les gestes qui pointent l'être perdu dont s'échappe d'abord 'le soleil noir de la mélancolie,' avant que ne s'installe l'*objet* érotique séparé du sujet endeuillé, en même temps que l'*artifice des signes* langagiers qui transpose cet objet au plan symbolique."<sup>540</sup> Kristeva's comments on the proper name align with Derrida's understanding of a secret proper name that expresses itself through the "utterances of certain words or syllables" and also through "certain gestures or signs."<sup>541</sup>

Guattari's idea of "transversality" also sheds light on the semiotics in "El Desdichado." For Guattari, psychosis can produce a certain semiotic energy. In his recent article "Guattari, Transversality and the Semiotics of the Untranslatable," Andrew Goffey analyzes the ways in which

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<sup>538</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 231.

<sup>539</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Soleil Noir: Dépression et Mélancolie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 168.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>541</sup> Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 106.



the “*délire* of the schizophrenic” is untranslatable.<sup>542</sup> He underscores the “significant social and political aspects” that Guattari attributed to the schizophrenic’s untranslatable hallucinatory language. Goffey explains that Guattari understood transversality as that which “aims to capture the unconscious as an investment of broader elements and processes within the specific setting of the hospital...,” but he also emphasizes its intimate relationship to enunciation: “Guattari (with Deleuze) argues that conceptions of language that infer features of the subject of enunciation (the one doing the uttering) directly from the grammatical features of the subject are mistaken.”<sup>543</sup> Transversality concentrates on the “fluidity of affects” or “semiotic energetics,” and also on what Deleuze refers to as the “non-sense of *délire*.”<sup>544</sup> Those who experience psychosis often break out of a “normalized language,” and this break gives rise to a “semiotic creativity.”<sup>545</sup> In his conclusion, Goffey calls attention to Guattari’s understanding of an untranslatable “semiotic energetics” and Barbara Cassin’s idea of logology.

For these reasons, it is noteworthy to observe the contrast between the proper name Phœbus, which signifies the Greek God Apollo, and the common noun “phébus,” which designates an obscure style. The fifth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (1798) includes the following definition of “phébus”: “PHÉBUS. subs. masc. (On pron. la finale S.) Terme pris du Latin, pour signifier, Le Soleil et Apollon. Ainsi l’on dit poétiquement, *Le blond Phébus*, pour dire, Le Soleil. Phébus, se dit aussi pour exprimer. Un style obscur et ampoulé. *Donner dans le phébus. Son style n’est que du phébus, est un phébus, est d’un phébus ridicule.*”<sup>546</sup> In the *Trésor de la langue française*, the definition of “phébus” opens with a quote from Chateaubriand: “PHÉBUS, subst.

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<sup>542</sup> Andrew Goffey, “Guattari, Transversality and the Experimental Semiotics of the Untranslatable,” *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (2015): 232.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 235-236.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>546</sup> “phébus,” *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française 5e édition* (1798).

masculine. *Littér., vieilli*. Style obscur, ampoulé et alambiqué. *Donner dans le phébus. Les reproches que l'on a faits au style, au sujet et à l'effet du livre (galimatias, phébus, caractères ridicules, péril pour les mœurs et la religion, profanation, scandale)* (Chateaubr., *Martyrs*, t.1, 1810, p.68).<sup>547</sup> The stylistic definition of the common noun “phébus” adds a new layer of meaning to the proper name.

vii. *Lorely or Lorelei*

In line 11 of Nerval’s 1854 revision of “El Desdichado”, we hear: “J’ai rêvé dans la grotte où nage la sirène.” The image of the siren recalls the songs of Lorelei, the fairy of the Rhine.<sup>548</sup> Describing this fairy (“fée”) in *Lorely*, Nerval develops a lexical field that resonates with “El Desdichado.” After evoking the songs of the siren (“les chants de l’antique syrène”), he uses the expression “tour à tour,” thus recalling line 13 (“Modulant tour à tour sur la lyre d’Orphée”). Describing a nighttime glimpse of Lorely, he notes: “Je l’avais déjà aperçu dans la nuit, sur cette rive où la vigne verdoie et jaunit tour à tour...”<sup>549</sup> The repeated consonant “v” here (rive-vigne-verdoie) gives a lyrical dimension to Nerval’s prose and the “vigne-verdoie” pair recalls the version of “El Desdichado” in the Lombard manuscript, in which line 8 reads “Et la Treille où le pampre à la **vigne** s’allie” and line 11 reads “J’ai dormi dans la Grotte où **verdit** la syrène.”

After describing his nighttime vision of Lorely, Nerval mentions the songs of the water sprite in Heine’s poetry: “cette ondine fatale comme toutes les *nixes* du nord qu’à chantée Henri Heine, elle m’attire encore une fois!” In this passage, the act of creative writing once again draws Nerval’s attraction to the siren (“encore une fois!”). Suggesting a repeated act, the exclamatory

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<sup>547</sup> “phébus.” *Trésor de la langue informatisé*. “Il refit la déclaration d’amour du galant comme froide, prétentieuse, guindée et sentant son phébus (Gautier, *Fracasse*, 1863, p.261). *Diseur de phébus*. Écrivain ou orateur au langage obscur et alambiqué. *C’est un esprit des plus confus, alambiqué, ce que nos pères appelaient un diseur de phébus et qui rend encore plus déplaisantes, par sa façon de les énoncer, les choses qu’il dit* (Proust, *J. filles en fleurs*, 1918, p.474). **Prononc. et Orth.**”

<sup>548</sup> In the *Dictionnaire Nerval*, 23, Pichois and Brix note that “[...] le mythe de Lorely renvoie aux périls courus par les amoureux de l’Allemagne écrite dans le *Second Faust*: le motif du voyageur distrait par les chants de la sirène et faisant naufrage sur les rives du Rhin, sert d’ailleurs de métaphore pour rappeler la crise de 1841.”

<sup>549</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2 :733.

“encore une fois” echoes in lines 10-11 of “El Desdichado”: “Mon front est rouge **encor** du baiser de la Reine / J’ai rêvé dans la Grotte où nage la Syrène...” For Nerval, writing and the siren are sources of memory and these memories are intimately related to his translations. Through hearing and imagining Lorely, he hears Heine’s “nixes du nord” and “les eaux vertes où gémit la Lurely sur son rocher [sic].”<sup>550</sup> Writing thus becomes a means of displacement, stimulating memories and dreams of travel and translation. As Nerval wrote in his “Le Rhin” of *Lorely*: “J’ai mis le pied une fois encore sur le *Steamboat* du Rhin. – C’est toujours Lorely qui m’appelle.”<sup>551</sup>

vii. *The Rising Sun*

Faust: Et même, quand sur les hautes montagnes le dard du soleil  
est vainqueur, le rocher verdoie encore, et la chèvre y prend  
sa frugale pitance.

Nerval, *Second Faust*

Following Ariel’s ringing message of the rising sun in *Faust*, the hero awakens feeling refreshed and deeply connected to life’s pulses and beats. As he waits for the eternal light to fully illuminate the sky, he takes pleasure in the sight of flickering colors and the sounds of reverberating voices: “Déjà le monde s’ouvre à demi dans les lueurs du crépuscule, la forêt retentit d’une existence à mille voix.”<sup>552</sup> When the sun fully rises, however, its powerful light pierces his eyes. In his translation of the sun’s movement, Nerval uses the term “vainqueur”: “Le soleil s’avance en vainqueur. Hélas! voici déjà mes yeux blessés de ses flèches ardentes!”<sup>553</sup> The sun that rises as a “vainqueur” recalls line 12 of “El Desdichado”: “Et j’ai deux fois vainqueur traversé l’Achéron.”

Although Nerval defined himself as a prose poet, he nevertheless turned to the sonnet’s recognizable fixity and regularity to prove his understanding of a pluralized self. The sonnet’s conventions became the spatio-temporal medium through which he could prove the logic of his

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<sup>550</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 216.

<sup>551</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 2:804.

<sup>552</sup> Nerval, *Faust*, 405.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

thought. Since the sonnet was a well-known form, any alteration of its form was thus a means to convey the irregularity of his standpoints on nature and its proportions.

### V. Nerval's Translations of *Faust*

In 1827, at the age of nineteen, Nerval published his first translation of Goethe's tragic play *Faust*. He regarded his translation as both a literary and a philological endeavor. In his preface, Nerval asks an intriguing question: can a work ever be truly translated? Upon presenting his *Faust*, Nerval declares: "Voici une troisième traduction de *Faust*; et ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est qu'aucune des trois ne pourra faire dire: '*Faust* est traduit!'"<sup>554</sup> Although Nerval admits that the act of translation is possible, he nonetheless maintains that the product of the activity, the completely "translated" work, is impossible: "je regarde comme impossible une traduction satisfaisante de cet étonnant ouvrage."<sup>555</sup>

Goethe himself had similarly deemed that his *Faust* could only be provisionally finished. Nerval's translation therefore prolonged Goethe's literary vision; it extended *Faust* a step further, changing its language and form, giving it new breath, allowing it to live what Benjamin has referred to as a "literary afterlife." This is perhaps why Goethe took more pleasure in reading Nerval's translation than in his own original work. In a letter to Johann Peter Eckermann dated January 3, 1830, Goethe praised the remarkable style of Nerval's translation, which gave his tragedy new vitality: "Le 3 janvier 1830, feuilletant le *Faust* français, Goethe avait dit: 'Je n'aime plus lire *Faust* en allemand; mais, dans cette traduction française, tout agit de nouveau avec fraîcheur et vivacité."<sup>556</sup> Gautier describes this event in his *Portraits et souvenirs*, referring to

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<sup>554</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:243. The other two translations to which Nerval refers are those of his predecessors Sainte-Aulaire and Stapfer.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 243. In a similar vein, Nerval commented on the incredible difficulties ("difficultés inouïes") of translating Goethe's *Second Faust* in a June 23, 1840 letter to Jean-Louis Lingay in *ibid.*, 872.

<sup>556</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:1559. In the Notice, the editors remark that Nerval's translation was not the only version acknowledged by Goethe, who also commented on Stapfer's translation.

Goethe as a “demi-dieu de Weymer”: “Sa traduction de *Faust* lui avait valu, du demi-dieu de Weymer, une lettre qu’il gardait précieusement et qui contenait ses mots: ‘Je ne me suis jamais mieux compris qu’en vous lisant.’”<sup>557</sup> Gautier proposed that the clarity of the French language in Nerval’s translation elucidated some of the more opaque aspects of Goethe’s play: “Le style de Gérard était une lampe qui apportait la lumière dans les ténèbres de la pensée du mot. Avec lui, l’allemand, sans rien perdre de sa couleur ni de sa profondeur, devenait français par la clarté.”<sup>558</sup> Regarding this distinction between clarity and obscurity, however, it is important to point out that Nerval did not deliberately attempt to add clarity to Goethe’s drama. In fact, Nerval critiqued Stapfer’s translation of *Faust* for having illuminated vague and ambiguous passages.

Nerval’s translation received widespread recognition in France and overseas. Although he was not the first French translator of *Faust*, Nerval’s translation earned a more favorable reception than those of his predecessors, Louis de Beaupoil de Saint-Aulaire and Stapfer, whose translations were both published in 1823. In France and Germany alike, Nerval quickly became the work’s best-known translator and an inspiration to many well-known French artists.<sup>559</sup> Nerval’s ability to perceive the meaning at the heart of German poetry made him a sharp and effective translator. Ferdinand Baldensparger maintains that Nerval’s translation was less dry than those of his precursors and therefore more successful: “Gérard fut accueillie avec faveur par le jeune Romantisme, que ne satisfaisait ni la sécheresse d’A. Stapfer, ni l’à peu près de Sainte-Aulaire...”<sup>560</sup> Albert Béguin calls attention to the precision of Nerval’s work: “s’il est possible de

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<sup>557</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Portraits et souvenirs* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1875), 12.

<sup>558</sup> Gautier, “Préface aux *Œuvres complètes* (1868),” *L’Hirondelle et le corbeau*, 168.

<sup>559</sup> Nerval’s translation also inspired reputable musical and theatrical works, most notably Berlioz’s *Huit scènes de Faust* (1828) and *La Damnation de Faust* as well as Charles Gounod’s five-act opera *Faust* (1859). In a letter published in *Le Chavari* in 1846, in *OC*, 1:973, Nerval complained that he was not duly credited as the translator of Berlioz’s *Faust*: “Dans l’article que vous publiez aujourd’hui sur le programme du *Faust* de Berlioz, vous voulez bien me compter au nombre des trois *librettistes*. L’affiche porte cependant que certains passages ont été seulement *empruntés* à ma traduction.”

<sup>560</sup> Nerval, *Les Deux Faust de Goethe*, “Notes et éclaircissements”, 534.

traduire avec plus d'exactitude le texte original, aucune autre version française n'aura, autant que celle-là, donné à la France 'son' *Faust*.”<sup>561</sup>

Yet despite the widespread acclaim for Nerval's translation, some critics have drawn attention to the work's inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Jean Malaparte argues that Nerval's translation is essentially a plagiarized copy of Stapfer's translation, published nearly five years earlier. Malaparte claims that Nerval's songs, expressions, rhymes, rhythms, and refrains all seem to parallel those of his predecessor, with only occasional deviations.<sup>562</sup> Béguin similarly notes that when Nerval first began translating *Faust* his knowledge of German language and literature was limited. Hisashi Mizuno has recently reevaluated these assertions. Although Mizuno agrees that Nerval used Stapfer's translation as a model, he maintains that Nerval's translation was more faithful to the original work: “[...] en 1827, il traduit tout le texte en allemand de *Faust* comme Stapfer, et en même temps, il préfère laisser un certain parfum dans sa traduction, comme l'approuveront ses amis H. Heine et Th. Gautier.”<sup>563</sup>

In the preface to his translation, Nerval critiques the work of his predecessors, explicitly addressing the drawbacks of their translation strategies.<sup>564</sup> While Nerval compliments the harmonious style of Sainte-Aulaire's prose, he criticizes its lack of fidelity, especially its deletion of certain passages and scenes: “car il vaut mieux, je crois, s'exposer à laisser quelques passages singuliers ou incompréhensibles, que de mutiler un chef-d'œuvre.”<sup>565</sup> Nerval's use of such a strong verb as “mutiler” is an outright attack and, although he argues that “mutilation” is inexcusable in this particular case, he would later argue the contrary. In July 1840, Nerval wrote a letter to the

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<sup>561</sup> Nerval, *Faust*, preface by Albert Béguin (Porrentruy: Éditeurs des Portes de France, 1946), 9.

<sup>562</sup> Jean Malaparte, “La traduction de Faust par Gérard de Nerval, vérité et légende,” *Cahiers Gérard de Nerval* 13 (1990): 9-17.

<sup>563</sup> Hisashi Mizuno, *Gérard de Nerval, poète en prose* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2013), 28.

<sup>564</sup> For a further analysis of these prefaces, see Frédéric Weinmann's “Etranger, étrangeté: de l'allemand au français au début du XIXe siècle,” *Romantisme: Revue Du Dix-Neuvième Siècle* 106 (1999): 62-65.

<sup>565</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1: 244.

“Rédacteur en chef du *Journal de la Librairie*” to defend his translation of Goethe’s *Second Faust*, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, had come under attack for its extensive deletions. In his letter, Nerval explained that, to please the French public, translators are often obligated to abridge the original work: “...peu d’ouvrages étrangers peuvent, sans coupures, satisfaire le goût du lecteur français.”<sup>566</sup> In his comments on Stapfer’s translation, Nerval argued that its main shortcoming was that it translated too much, thus leaving little room for the reader’s imagination. According to Nerval, Stapfer erred in clarifying opaque passages: “[...] car il est reconnu que *Faust* renferme certains passages, certaines allusions, que les Allemands eux-mêmes ne peuvent comprendre...”<sup>567</sup> Nerval argued that the translator should conserve the play’s mystery and leave obscure passages obscure.

Nerval continued to work on his translations of *Faust* throughout his career. As we have seen, Nerval’s revisions often involved changing passages written in verse into prose. Nerval called attention to these changes in the title of his reedited translation, published in 1835: *Faust, tragédie de Goethe. Nouvelle traduction complète en vers et en prose*. In the preface to this edition, Nerval also included a translation from a passage of Goethe’s autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* on the value of prose translations:

Mais ce qu’il y a de plus important, de fondamental, ce qui produit l’impression la plus profonde, ce qui agit avec le plus d’efficacité sur notre moral dans une œuvre poétique, c’est ce qui reste du poète dans une traduction en prose; car cela seul est la valeur réelle de l’étoffe de la pureté, dans sa perfection.<sup>568</sup>

Nerval published his translation of the *Second Faust* in 1840.<sup>569</sup> In a letter to Jean-Louis Lingay, Nerval detailed the challenges of this translation, which he completed in just one month: “...un mois de terrible besogne. Imaginez-vous que j’ai durant cet espace de temps traduit et analysé le

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 874.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>568</sup> Nerval and Baldensperger, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, 241.

<sup>569</sup> Baldensperger suggests that Nerval’s German friendships with Loève-Veimars, Henri Heine, and Eugène de Stadler may have helped him edit his 1827 version.

*Second Faust* de Goethe qui présente des difficultés inouïes.”<sup>570</sup> An illustrated edition of this translation appeared in 1850: *Faust. Traduction de Gerard de Nerval, illustrée de vignettes*.<sup>571</sup>

In the preface to his *Second Faust*, Nerval explained that the work illustrates a modern pantheism, revealing the presence of God in everything. Nerval quoted Madame de Staël’s remarks on the significance of reflection: “Il faut réfléchir sur tout et sur quelque chose de plus que tout.”<sup>572</sup> Nerval also observed that Goethe’s work portrayed an unending circle in which different centuries intermingle: “...les siècles écoulés se conservent tout entiers à l’état d’intelligences et d’ombres, dans une suite de régions concentriques, étendues à l’entour du monde matériel.”<sup>573</sup> Nerval lastly emphasized the necessity for a literal translation of Goethe’s depiction of Greek mythology. This comment sheds light on the idea that *Bildung* forms an intimate connection between Greek antiquity and the modern world: “Toute cette partie a été traduite littéralement, ce qui était le seul moyen de donner une idée des effets de style de Goethe, qui a tenté ici une sorte de pastiche de la versification grecque.”<sup>574</sup> In his preface he similarly justified his literal translation: “nous avons traduit littéralement, voyant l’impossibilité de rendre autrement les nuances d’une poésie inouïe encore, dont la phrase française ne peut toujours marquer exactement le contour”.<sup>575</sup>

#### *i. Meta-reflection: Translating a Scene of Translation*

In the realm of translation, too, the words *En archē ēn ho Lógos*, [“In the beginning was the word”] apply.  
— Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”

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<sup>570</sup> Nerval to Jean-Louis Lingay, 23 June 1840, *OC*, 1: 872.

<sup>571</sup> Nerval, trans., *Faust [...] illustrée de vignettes par ed. Frère* (Paris: Bry, 1850).

<sup>572</sup> Nerval and Baldensperger, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, 227.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, 433. Similarly, in his preface he justified his literal translation. “nous avons traduit littéralement, voyant l’impossibilité de rendre autrement les nuances d’une poésie inouïe encore, dont la phrase française ne peut toujours marquer exactement le contour” (239).

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.



In translating *Faust*, Nerval chose a work in which the protagonist is also a translator. In the drama's third scene, Faust delivers a monologue, expressing his desire to translate a Biblical verse from the New Testament into his native tongue: The Biblical verse that Faust endeavors to translate is John 1:1 "En archē ēn ho Lógos" or "In the beginning was the *Word*."<sup>576</sup> After dismissing the German translation he reads in his Bible, in which Logos is rendered as "Wort" (word), Faust proposes the following three alternatives: "Sinn" (sense), "Kraft" (force), and "Tat" (action or deed).

**Faust**

Geschrieben steht: "Im Anfang war das Wort!"  
 Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mit weiter fort?  
 Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen,  
 Ich muß es anders übersetzen,  
 Wenn ich vom Geiste rech erleuchtet bin.  
 Geschrieben steht: Im Anfang war der Sinn.  
 Bedenke wohl die erste Zeile,  
 Daß deiner Feder sich nicht übereile!  
 Is es der Sinn, der alles wirkt und schafft?  
 Es sollte stehn: Im Anfang war die Kraft!  
 Doch auch indem ich dieses niederschriebe,  
 Schon warnt mich was, daß ich dabei nicht bliebe.  
 Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh ich Rat  
 Und schriebe getrost: Im Anfang war die Tat! (1224-1237)<sup>577</sup>

Nerval's translations of this "scene of translation" illuminate two essential facets of Romanticism: the self-reflexive artwork and the Bible. Nerval's translations are self-reflexive or self-staging, incorporating their own theory and thus calling on a mimetic mode of mediation. And as Nerval's translations involved restaging a scene of Biblical translation, they shed light on the Romantic idea of the Bible as an ever-evolving work. As Novalis asked in fragment 306 of *The Encyclopedia*: "Shouldn't the Bible be understood as still developing? The Biblical utterances are infinitely variegated — History, poetry, all in profusion".<sup>578</sup> Not surprisingly, Goethe's "scene of

<sup>576</sup> Bayard Taylor, trans., *Faust: A Tragedy by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Translated in the Original Meters* (Boston and New York: The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1870), 50.

<sup>577</sup> Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil*, 62-63.

<sup>578</sup> Novalis, *Pollen and Fragments: Selected Poetry and Prose of Novalis*, trans. Arthur Verslus (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1989), 139. See also David E. Wellbery "Faust and the Dialectic of Modernity." in *A New History of German*

translation” in translation opens several questions, calling attention to the questions raised by Faust about (re)translating John 1:1 into German, while also raising questions for the translators of Goethe’s play.

Commenting on the relationship between the Bible and Romanticism, Kenneth Haynes has observed that “[a]ll the major Romantic poets from Wordsworth through to Byron [...] admired the Bible as literature, as did most writers throughout the nineteenth-century.”<sup>579</sup> In “The Task of the Translator,” Benjamin follows well-established tradition when he distinguishes between two different kinds of translations: the translations of artworks and the translations of Holy Writ. He explains that unlike the translations of artworks, which serve both the language and the text, the translations of Holy Writ work only in the interest of languages. He goes on to note that these translations “must write literalness with freedom in the shape of an interlinear version. For to some degree, all great texts contain their potential translations between the lines; this is true above all of sacred writings.”<sup>580</sup> In several regards, our consideration of Nerval’s self-reflexive translations of Goethe’s “translation scene” will further an understanding of Benjamin’s idea of an interlinear version of the Scriptures and will test the boundaries between these two kinds of translations. However, the focus of our analysis will be the literary context, given that Nerval produced a work of literature and not sacred writing. Our comparative reading examines the ways in which Nerval’s different translations of this “translation scene” alter the drama’s resonances and structural composition.

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*Literature* eds. David Wellbery and Judith Ryan (Cambridge, Mass: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 546-551. Wellbery draws a parallel between *Faust* and the *Encyclopédie* of d’Alembert and Diderot, noting that: “*Faust* is a book that interconnects many books in a vast and intricate semantic network. The space it charts is that of European cultural modernity” (548).

<sup>579</sup> Kenneth Haynes, “Translation and British Literature,” in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, eds. Peter France and Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4:14.

<sup>580</sup> Benjamin, vol. I, 263.

The opening scene of Goethe's drama takes place in Doctor Faust's room. Although it is nighttime, Faust is still awake from his extreme sorrow. In a monologue, he laments his inability to understand the inner workings of the world. To challenge the foundation of knowledge, he radically calls into question the value of words: "Oh! si la force de l'esprit et de la parole me dévoilait les secrets que j'ignore, et que je ne fusse plus obligé de dire péniblement ce que je ne sais pas; si enfin je pouvais connaître tout ce que le monde cache en lui-même, et sans m'attacher d'avantage à des mots inutiles..."<sup>581</sup> Soon after, Faust asserts that words are worthless. In an intellectual conversation with his assistant Wagner, he declares that words are unable to communicate depth: "...et si vous avez quelque chose à dire, ce n'est pas aux mots qu'il faut appliquer davantage."<sup>582</sup> Given that Faust is extremely dismissive of words, the scene in which he retranslates John 1:1 is therefore particularly significant.

Before comparing Nerval's translations, let us briefly recapitulate the details of the "translation scene" in Goethe's drama, which takes place on Easter. As Faust works on retranslating John 1:1, he is unknowingly in the company of the devil Mephistopheles who has entered his room in the form of a black poodle. Although the poodle's diabolic nature has yet to be revealed, Faust finds its presence troubling but nevertheless proceeds to meditate on the potential meanings of the ancient Greek word *logos* as it appears in John 1:1. The term has a wide semantic range, signifying "speech," "tale," "discourse," "proverb," "language," "counting," "proportion," "consideration," "explanation," "reasoning," "reason," "proposition," or "sentence":

The Greek word *logos* [λόγος] has such a wide range of meanings and so many different usages that it is difficult to see from the perspective of another language except as multivocal, and in any case it is impossible to translate it except by using a multiplicity of distinct words. This polysemy, sometimes analyzed as homonymy by grammarians, has usually been considered by modern commentators as a characteristic of

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<sup>581</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, OC, 254. In the 1827 translation, there is one difference in this passage: the secrets are described as "les secrets qui me restent à connaître..." (26) as opposed to "les secrets que j'ignore..."

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., 32, 258.

Greek language and thought that relates, before all of the technical meanings, to the primordial meaning of *legein*: “to assemble,” “to gather,” “to choose.”<sup>583</sup>

As we have noted, Faust proposes three alternative translations of “Wort”: “Sinn”, “Kraft”, and “Tat.” In his analysis of the gradual development of Faust’s retranslations, Rémi Brague suggests that they echo the ambiguity of the Hebrew term “davar,” which signifies not only words but also their related actions: “it means both ‘word’ and ‘thing’ – this last, first of all, in the sense of ‘fact,’ ‘event.’”<sup>584</sup>

Let us now investigate Nerval’s two translations of this scene. Our analysis focuses on two key modifications: Nerval’s rendering of “Wort”, which shifts from “parole” (1827) to “verbe” (1835) and his rendering of the term “Sinn”, which shifts from “volonté” (1827) to “esprit” (1835):

**Nerval’s first translation**  
**(Faust, 1827)**

J’ai envie d’ouvrir le texte et, **me livrant une fois à des sentiments sincères**, de traduire le saint original dans la langue allemande qui m’est si chère. (*Il ouvre le volume et s’apprête*). Il est écrit: **Au commencement était la parole!** Ici je m’arrête déjà! Que me soutiendra plus loin? Il m’est impossible d’estimer assez ce mot, **la parole**; il faut que je le traduise autrement, si l’esprit daigne m’éclairer. Il est écrit: **Au commencement était la volonté!** Réfléchissons bien cette première ligne, et que la plume ne se hâte pas trop! Est-ce bien **la volonté** qui crée et conserve tout? Il devrait y avoir: *Au commencement était la force!* Cependant tout en écrivant ceci, quelque chose dit que je ne dois pas m’arrêter à ce sens. L’esprit me secourt enfin! Je suis tout à coup inspiré et j’écris consolé: *Au commencement était l’action!*<sup>585</sup>

**Nerval’s revised translation**  
**(Faust, tragédie de Goethe. Nouvelle traduction complète en vers et en prose, 1835)**

J’ai envie d’ouvrir le texte, **et m’abandonnant une fois à des impressions naïves**, de traduire le saint original dans la langue allemande qui m’est si chère. (*Il ouvre un volume, et s’arrête*.) Il est écrit: **Au commencement était le verbe!** Ici je m’arrête déjà! Que me soutiendra plus loin? Il m’est impossible d’estimer assez ce mot, **le verbe!** il faut que je le traduise autrement, si l’esprit daigne m’éclairer. Il est écrit: **Au commencement était l’esprit!** Réfléchissons sur cette première ligne, et que la plume ne se hâte pas trop! Est-ce bien **l’esprit** qui crée et conserve tout? Il devrait y avoir: *Au commencement était la force!* Cependant tout en écrivant ceci, quelque chose dit que je ne dois pas m’arrêter à ce sens. L’esprit m’éclaire enfin! L’inspiration descend sur moi, et j’écris consolé: *Au commencement était l’action!*<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> Cassin, *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, 581.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 589.

<sup>585</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, 58.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

In addition to reworking the drama's intratextual logic, these modifications resonate with Nerval's creative works, particularly those in which he alludes to the obscurity of the term "Logos."

Following this scene, the black poodle transforms into Mephistopheles. In their first dialogue, Mephistopheles sardonically characterizes Faust as someone who disdains words: "quelqu'un qui a du mépris pour les mots..."<sup>587</sup> Mephistopheles believes in the power of words. Later, Mephistopheles, disguised as Faust, transmits these ideas to one of Faust's students. During their lesson, the student observes that every word must express an idea. "...un mot doit toujours contenir une idée."<sup>588</sup> Mephistopheles-as-Faust corrects his logic, explaining that words hold an incredible power even when they do not convey ideas: "...il ne faut pas trop s'en inquiéter, car, où les idées manquent, un mot peut être substitué à propos; on peut avec des mots discuter fort convenablement; avec des mots bâtir un système; les mots se font croire aisément..."<sup>589</sup> In considering these remarks on the word, it is important to remember that in Goethe's drama, these remarks intratextually align with the translation scene and therefore serve to reinforce Faust's initial dismissal of the translation of John 1:1 as "Im Anfang war das Wort!"<sup>590</sup>

## *ii. Parole vs. Verbe*

À la matière même un verbe est attaché...  
Nerval, "Vers Dorés"

Nerval first translates the German term "Wort" as "parole" (1827), then "verbe" (1835). These choices significantly alter the drama's intratext. In Nerval's first translation, the term "parole" opens several intratextual echoes through its repeated occurrences. In Nerval's revised translation, however, the term "verbe" occurs exclusively during the translation scene and is therefore a rare

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<sup>587</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, OC, 61 and 280.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid., 86 and 299. In Goethe's text, *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil*, 117, this reads as "Doch ein Begriff muß bei idem Worte sein."

<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 86 and 299.

<sup>590</sup> Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil*, 73.

event within the play. This unique occurrence intertextually resonates with Nerval's own creative works, especially those in which he draws a parallel between "verbe" and "Logos." Before turning to these intertextual parallels, let us first listen to how Nerval's different choices create different intratextual resonances.

The term "parole" figures prominently in both of Nerval's translations but, as we have suggested, the word takes on a heightened significance in the 1827 translation since it also appears in the translation scene. Prior to this scene, a choir of angels sings on Easter morning, announcing Christ's rebirth. The angelic voices invite those who listen to celebrate Christ's loving word, "parole":

**Chœur des Anges: Nerval's 1827 translation**

Christ vient de ressusciter ;  
O vous que sa voix appelle,  
Des disciples troupe fidèle,  
C'est vers lui qu'il faut monter :  
Vous, que sa **parole** touche,  
Vous, qu'inspire son amour,  
Vous, prophètes, dont la bouche  
Le célèbre nuit et jour...  
    Montez troupe fidèle,  
    Au céleste séjour  
    Où sa voix appelle !<sup>591</sup>

In his 1835 translation, Nerval translated this passage in prose rather than in verse. While the term "parole" still appears, it no longer reinforces Faust's translation scene, as Nerval changed "parole" (1827) to "verbe" (1835). However, Nerval's prose translation opens a different resonance with the "translation scene." The angels sing "Qui le glorifiez par l'action." This song prefigures Faust's final rendering of John 1:1, "*Au commencement était l'action!*":

**Chœur des Anges: Nerval's 1835 translation**

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 41.

Christ est ressuscité de la corruption! En allégresse, rompez vos fers! O vous! Qui **le glorifiez par l'action**, et qui témoignez de lui par l'amour; vous qui partagez avec vos frères, et qui marchez en prêchant sa **parole!** Voici le maître qui vient vous promettant les joies du ciel! Le Seigneur approche, il est ici!<sup>592</sup>

Through Nerval's careful use of repetition, punctuation, and alliteration, his prose translation of the chorus of angels is remarkably rhythmic. The song develops a semantics of prosody that gives emphasis to the spoken word, or "paroles." The repeated "par" ("par l'action...par l'amour"), for example, prepares the listener's ears for the verb "partager" and the noun "paroles." Additionally, the phoneme /pr/ figure in three of the verbs "prêcher" ("to preach"), "promettre" ("to promise"), and "approcher" ("to approach").

We hear the word "paroles" during two further significant moments in Nerval's translations of Goethe's drama. After Mephistopheles orders him to sign their contract with his blood, Faust questions the devil's motives, asking him why he mistrusts his spoken promise: "Il te faut aussi un écrit pédant? Ne sais-tu pas ce que c'est qu'un homme, ni ce que la parole a de valeur?"<sup>593</sup> After making their pact, Mephistopheles convinces Faust's student to have absolute faith in his words: "[...] il est difficile d'éviter la fausse route; elle renferme un poison si bien caché, que l'on a tant de peine à distinguer du remède! Le mieux est, dans ces leçons-là, si toutefois vous en suivez, de jurer toujours sur la parole du maître."<sup>594</sup> As with our previous example, these occurrences echo intratextually with the "translation scene" in Nerval's 1827 translation. In his *Second Faust*, the term "parole" also occurs frequently. Faust associates the term "parole" with misconduct and shuns the devil's magical speech, telling Mephistopheles: "Alors ne prononce aucune parole magique..."<sup>595</sup> In the play's finale, Faust expresses his faith in God's "parole": "Ce que j'ai résolu, je veux m'empresser de l'accomplir. La parole du Seigneur a seule de la puissance."<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 76 and 290.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., 86 and 299.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 490.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., 492.

Following Nerval’s shift from “parole” (1827) to “verbe” (1835), these occurrences are no longer structured by the four-word “matrix” in the translation scene. The term “verbe” is a unique event in Nerval’s revised version of *Faust* (1835), although this translation scene intertextually echoes with Nerval’s novella “Isis” in *Les Fille du feu*. Nerval directly associates the “verbe” with Logos, which he interprets as a celestial mother, or “mère,” that gives birth to everything in existence:

...qui sera le *Verbe* (logos) des âges futurs? — Est-ce l’Iacchus-Iésis des mystères d’Éleusis, plus grand déjà, et s’élançant les bras de Déméter, la déesse *panthée*? ou plutôt n’est-il pas vrai qu’il faut réunir tous ces modes divers d’une même idée, et que ce fut toujours une admirable pensée théogonique de présenter à l’adoration des hommes une **Mère céleste** dont l’enfant est l’espoir du monde.<sup>597</sup>

### iii. *Volonté vs. Esprit*

The second major modification that Nerval made to his translation scene involved shifting “volonté” (1827) to “esprit” (1835). Contrary to our first example, Nerval’s revised translation opens more intratextual echoes. Given that the term “esprit” occurs frequently in both of his translations, our analysis will not be exhaustive. Instead, we will call attention to just a few significant examples.

Prior to his attempt to retranslate John 1:1, Faust conjures a spirit who speaks to him. While Nerval translates the spirits’ words into verse in his 1827 version, he shifts these words to prose in his 1835 version:

#### ***Faust (1827)***

L’Esprit:

Tu m’as évoqué puissamment  
Du sein de ma sphère éternelle;  
Quoi donc?

L’Esprit:

Dans les vagues de l’existence,  
Mon orageuse activité

#### ***Faust (1835)***

L’Esprit:

Tu m’as évoqué. Ton souffle agissait sur ma sphère  
et m’en tirait avec violence. Et maintenant...

L’Esprit:

Dans l’océan de la vie, et dans la tempête de l’**action**,  
je monte et descends, je vais et je viens! Naissance et

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<sup>597</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:303.



Vient, ou fuit, vers les cieux s'élance,  
Ou replonge avec volupté.  
Naissance, mort, voilà ma sphère;  
Je suis l'éternel mouvement,  
Je suis cette trame légère  
Et qui varie à tout mouvement.

tombe. **Mer éternelle**, trame changeante, vie  
énergique [...].<sup>598</sup>

In the second example, the spirit compares itself to an eternal ocean or “Mer éternelle”, thus establishing a correlation between the “esprit” in the translation scene and Nerval’s idea of an eternal and celestial mother through the homonymic pairing of “mer” and “mère.” The spirit, furthermore, describes itself as a “tempête de l’action”, corresponding to Faust’s final translation: “*Au commencement était l’action!*”

In Nerval’s revised translation, the spirit evokes Faust’s third attempt at translating John 1:1, “*Au commencement était la force!*” on several occasions. In one example, the spirit explains that Faust conjured its presence through the *force* of his voice: “Toi qui m’attirait ici de toute ta force et ta voix...”<sup>599</sup> Mephistopheles describes himself as a force of good and of evil and as a spirit that negates everything: “Une partie de cette force qui tantôt veut le mal, et tantôt fait le bien.”<sup>600</sup> “Je suis l’esprit qui nie,” he continues.<sup>601</sup> The translation scene therefore structures the drama’s diegetic progression and its intratextual cohesion

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<sup>598</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, OC, 256-257, 29-30.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 281.

*Esprit*

*Force*

*Action*

Vagner: C'est une grande jouissance de se transporter dans l'esprit des temps passés... (33, 259)

Faust: ...ce que vous appelez l'esprit des temps n'est au fond que l'esprit des mêmes auteurs, où les temps se réfléchissent (60, 279)

Faust: Un matière de plus en plus étrangère à nous s'oppose à tout ce que l'esprit conçoit de sublime (261)

Faust: Mais, hélas! le corps n'a point d'ailes pour accompagner le vol rapide de l'esprit (274)

Faust: O si dans l'air il y a des esprits qui planent entre la terre et le ciel... (275)

Faust: Sublime Esprit, tu m'as donné, tu m'as donné tout, dès que je t'en ai supplié (350).

Méphistopheles: Et son esprit plane toujours/ Dans un espace imaginaire (23)

Méphistopheles: Toujours son esprit chevauche dans les espaces, et lui-même se rend compte à moitié de sa folie (250)

Seigneur: Écarte cet esprit de sa source, et conduis-le dans ton chemin, si tu peux (251)

Faust: Qui ne connaîtrait par les éléments, leur force et leurs propriétés, ne se rendrait jamais maître des esprits (60, 279)

Méphistopheles: "Méprise bien la raison et la science, suprême force de l'humanité" (295).

Faust: Je veux laisser des monuments de mon passage et pétrir enfin la nature au moule idéal de ma pensée. Assez de rêves; la gloire n'est rien; mais l'action est tout" (482)

Faust: Mon veilleur se lamente, et l'action qui vient de s'accomplir me chagrine intérieurement (468)

Faust: J'abhorre cette action imprudente et tyrannique (487)

Faust: Je n'ai fait qu'accomplir encore et j'ai ainsi précipité ma vie dans une éternelle action (490).

*iv. Linguistic Difference*

Let us now turn our attention to another important question concerning linguistic difference raised by the translation of Goethe's "translation scene". Should the translator render "Deutsch" as

“German,” thus remaining faithful to Faust’s desire to translate the Bible into German (“In mein geliebtes Deutsch zu übertragen”) or should the translator respect the language of the translation, thus rendering “Deutsch” as “français”? This question is particularly challenging because the translator’s decision has the power to either recognize or conceal the cultural and historical context that is specific to the source tongue. With respect to Goethe’s retranslation scene, for example, Faust casts doubt on Martin Luther’s 1524 vernacular translation of the Bible, which Berman argues attempted to capture the language spoken in everyday life: “Traduire, donc, à l’écoute du parler populaire, du parler de tous les jours, pour que la Bible puisse être entendue. Le bon allemand est celui du peuple”.<sup>602</sup> This translation was of great cultural importance because it led to the development of standard German.<sup>603</sup>

Comparing Nerval’s translation to Stapfer’s reveals significant choices by both translators. Unlike in Nerval’s translations, Stapfer’s Faust expresses his desire to translate the New Testament into his maternal tongue but does not name this language: “Il me prend envie d’ouvrir le texte grec, et, m’abandonnant une fois à toute grandeur de mes sentiments, de traduire le saint original dans ma langue maternelle.”<sup>604</sup>

#### Stapfer’s translation of *Faust*

Il me prend envie d’ouvrir le texte grec, et, m’abandonnant une fois à la candeur de tous mes sentiments, de traduire le saint originel dans ma chère langue maternelle. (Il ouvre un volume et se prépare). Il est écrit: **Au commencement était la Parole!** Me voici déjà arrêté! Qui viendra à mon secours? Il m’est tellement difficile de connaître la valeur de ce mot, **la parole!** Je dois le traduire autrement, si l’Esprit daigne m’éclairer. Il est écrit: **Au commencement était l’Intelligence.** Voyons, pesons bien cette première ligne ; que notre plume ne se hâte pas trop : est-ce bien l’**intelligence** qui crée et conserve tout ? Il devrait y avoir : *Au commencement était la Puissance.* Cependant, même en écrivant ceci, quelque chose me dit que je n’y suis pas encore....L’Esprit m’éclaire ! Je vois maintenant ce qu’il faut, et j’écris avec confiance : *Au commencement était l’Activité!*<sup>605</sup>

<sup>602</sup> Berman, *L’Epreuve de l’étranger*, 46.

<sup>603</sup> For a thorough account of Luther’s translation and its impact, see *L’Epreuve de l’étranger*, 43-60. Berman, 57, explains that the translation is a prime example of “l’épreuve de l’étranger”: “*Elle suggère en outre que la formation et le développement d’une culture propre et nationale peuvent et doivent passer par la traduction, c’est-à-dire par un rapport intensif et délibéré à l’étranger*”.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Albert Stapfer, trans. *Faust, tragédie de M. Goethe* (Paris: C. Motte, 1828), 36.

Unlike Stapfer's Faust, Nerval's Faust declares his desire to translate the Bible in German, a statement that is noticeably out of place in the French language: "J'ai envie d'ouvrir le texte, et, m'abandonnant une fois à des impressions naïves, de traduire, le saint original dans la langue allemande qui m'est si chère."<sup>606</sup> This passage draws the reader's attention to the "translatedness" of Nerval's work, opening a paradoxical linguistic distance. The scene was therefore a means by which Nerval became visible as translator. By way of linguistic difference, he showed his readers that "Je traduis un autre."

The evident "translatedness" of Nerval's translation therefore contrasts with what Derrida refers to as "suicide in translation." In her succinct account of Derrida's concept, Apter explains that, for Derrida, "Descartes' defense of his decision to write [his *Discours de la méthode*] in French on the grounds that the vulgate offers a better conduit to natural reason than Latin" lends itself to the question of "suicide in translation."<sup>607</sup> With concern to this particular example, "suicide in translation" occurs when Descartes' assertion "I am speaking in French" is enunciated in a language other than French.<sup>608</sup> Nerval's translation strategy can be more productively read as enunciating linguistic difference, exposing "literary afterlife" rather than suicide. Nerval becomes visible while Stapfer remains invisible; his Faust expresses a desire to translate the Gospel into his "langue maternelle" instead of explicitly into German, consequently avoiding linguistic difference.

#### v. *A Polyphonic Dream*

Another scene that posed challenges for Nerval was the Walpurgis-Night's Dream or the scene of the Golden Wedding of Oberon and Titania ("Noces d'or d'Obéron et de Titania). In this scene, many characters, several of whom are drawn from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

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<sup>606</sup> Nerval, *Faust*, 88.

<sup>607</sup> Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, 242. See also the chapter "Derrida's Theologies of Translation," 228-246.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

enter into a complex dialogue of call and response. In his first translation, Nerval included a note which described the difficulties the scene presented:

La scène qui va suivre, où Goethe attaque une foule d’auteurs de son temps, est presque incompréhensible, même pour les Allemands, dans certains passages; cela en rendait la traduction exacte très-difficile [...] j’ai tâché d’en éclaircir une partie en me servant des notes de l’édition de Sautolet.<sup>609</sup>

To successfully translate Goethe, Nerval needed to demonstrate linguistic competence in German and literary competence in French, German and English. The Walpurgis-Night’s Dream is pertinent for its musical orchestration and polyphonic play of call and response. The dream’s polyphonic structure allows one to hear the extent to which the reflective or, rather, meta-reflective activity of (re)translation perpetually reconfigures “transtextuality” by creating temporal, spatial, and linguistic distance. New transtextual arrangements (in this case, namely intertextual, metatextual, and hypertextual) heighten one’s chances of falling into a textual *mise en abîme*. In this scene, “mise en abîme” is structured as a persisting memory of a vocalized literary dream; it is a “dreaming of dreaming of dreaming.”

To attempt to trace this “mise en abîme”, Nerval incorporated footnotes with contextual details on the characters and the events described. The dialogue opens as the theater director proclaims:

Aujourd’hui nous nous reposons  
Fils de Meiding, de notre peine:  
Vieille montagne et frais vallons  
Formeront le lieu de la scène.<sup>610</sup>

Nerval included a note, explaining that the “Fils de Meiding” is the “Chef de troupe au théâtre de Weimar.”<sup>611</sup> Following this opening announcement, the theater director enters into a dialogue with a manager, a herald, Oberon, Puck, Ariel (from Shakespeare’s *Tempest*), Titania, an Orchestra, a

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<sup>609</sup> Nerval, *Les deux Faust de Goethe*, 193.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

Spirit, a Little Couple, an Inquisitive Traveller, an Orthodox, a Northern Artist, a Purist, a Young Witch, a Matron, a Leader of the Band, a Dancer, an Idealist, a Realist, a Sceptic, and even a Shooting-Star. Nerval described Puck and Ariel in his footnotes, noting that both were characters invented by Shakespeare: Puck is a “personage fantastique de Shakespeare. Esprit à la suite d’Obéron, exécutant ses volontés, et le divertissant par ses bouffoneries” and Ariel is a “petit génie aérien, aux ordres du magicien, dans la *Tempête*.”<sup>612</sup>

In the opening of the scene’s Intermezzo, the Herald alludes to the “noces d’or,” expressing that gold pleases him infinitely (“Et l’or me plaît infiniment”).<sup>613</sup> The exchanges in the dream scene are obscure and difficult to decipher. The orchestra in *Tutti fortissimo* plays a song of metamorphosis:

*Nez de mouches et becs d’oiseaux  
Suivant mille métamorphoses  
Grenouilles, grillons et crapauds,  
Ce sont bien là nos virtuoses.*<sup>614</sup>

The solo invites one to listen to the divine music played by the bagpipes (“*De la cornemuse écoutez*”).<sup>615</sup> The spirit speaks of a newborn embryo, observing that, due to its wings, it is perhaps an insect but at least an opera. The Northern Artist alludes to madness, the Dancer evokes the monotone murmuring of nature, and the Shooting-Star explains that it has fallen from the sky and now lies upon the grass.

In his notes, Nerval explained that Goethe’s scene makes several allusions to contemporary German writers and literary works. The orthodox proclaims “Ces diables là, sur ma parole, / Ressemblent fort aux dieux des Grecs”, which alludes to *les Dieux de la Grèce*, an ode written by

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>613</sup> Nerval, trans., *Faust*, preface by Albert Béguin, 239.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

Schiller.<sup>616</sup> Furthermore, the names of certain characters correspond to certain literary events in Germany. The name of the character “Xénies” was the title of one of the “*Recueil d’épigrammes*” in which Schiller and Goethe attacked their contemporaries: “*Recueil d’épigrammes* [...] où tout ce qu’il y avait en Allemagne d’écrivains connus, hors eux, fut passé en revue et moqué. La scène est en enfer, comme ici.”<sup>617</sup> Nerval noted that the character “Hennings” corresponds to the name of a victim that Goethe and Schiller attacked in the “Xénies” and the character “Musagète” refers to the director of a contemporary literary journal in Germany: “Rédacteur d’un journal littéraire qui avait pour titre: *les Muses*.”<sup>618</sup> Finally, the character named “Ci-Devant Génie du Temps” refers to a literary journal by Hennings in which Goethe was harshly critiqued.

vi. *Faustian Resonances*

Nerval wrote several of his own dramas inspired by his translations of *Faust: Nicolas Flamel* (1831), a fragment entitled *Faust, L’Alchimiste* (1839) *Léo Burkhart* (1839) which was a collaboration with Dumas, and *L’Imagier de Harlem ou la Découverte de l’Imprimerie* (1851), a drama in five acts which was written with Joseph Méry and Bernard Lopez. Aristide Marie explains that Nerval’s own version of *Faust* was inspired a book by Klinger “*Les Aventures du Dr Faust et sa descente aux enfers*, deux volumes in-12, comprenant 5 livres, traduction de l’allemand avec figures.”<sup>619</sup> In the book by Klinger, the hero Laurent Coster is associated with the typographer Fust, who worked as one of Gutenberg’s assistants. Sieburth notes that Nerval’s obsession with the world of printing stemmed from his own invention of the “stereograph” in 1844.

A crude version of the linotype machine, the cylindrical device was intended to simplify composition by means of a series of discs affixed to a central axis, each featuring the full alphabet in a matrix and rotating independently by means of a lever. Wholly impractical, Nerval’s ‘stereograph’ is the machine version of the

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

<sup>619</sup> Aristide Marie, *Gérard de Nerval. Le Poète et l’Homme d’après des Manuscrits et des Documents inédits*, (Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1955), 228.

combinatory poetics of his ‘Chimeras’, the dream of a purely circular (and purely maternal) language whose mobile characters, like the ancient figures of the Hours, are ranged in a round dance of potentially infinite permutations.<sup>620</sup>

Nerval’s own fragment of Goethe’s drama is an unfinished manuscript of twenty pages in length. In the first scene of the drama, the protagonist awaits an answer about his printing invention from the Senate of Frankfurt, but the Senate refuses his invention. Faust’s invention is compared to a “chimera” and in the drama’s second scene, the Bourgmestre orders Faust to stop wandering in his futile chimera: “Cessez désormais de vous égarer dans de vains chimères; mais attachez-vous au solide, au positif.”<sup>621</sup>

### Conclusion: Strange Detours

In the preface to his *Faust de Goëthe suivi de second Faust*, Nerval commented on the indeterminable movement of the drama’s protagonist, questioning if Faust was moving up or down.

Monte-t-il? descend-il? c’est la même chose parce que notre terre est un globe; va-t-il vers les figures du passé ou celle de l’avenir? Elles co-existent toutes, comme les personnages divers d’un drame qui ne s’est pas encore dénoué, et qui pourtant est accompli déjà dans la pensée de l’auteur ; ce sont les coulisses de la vie où Goëthe nous transporte ainsi.<sup>622</sup>

This description corresponds to Nerval’s characterization of Goethe’s poetry in his *Les Poésies allemandes* (1830). Nerval used the adjective “détourné” to describe the effect that Goethe sought to produce “[...] il veut produire de l’effet par une route détournée, et comme à l’insu de l’auteur et du lecteur.”<sup>623</sup> Moreover, the literary effect that Goethe sought to produce corresponds to the curves and turns of Nerval’s own travels across the Rhine river, which he refers to as “detours.”<sup>624</sup> “J’allais et je revenais par des détours inextricables.”<sup>624</sup> Finally, these detours recall a lesson about traveling and temporality that Nerval learned from a group of sailors while he was in

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<sup>620</sup> Gerard de Nerval, *Selected Writings*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin Books, 1999), xxiii.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>622</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>623</sup> Nerval, *Lénore*, 30-31.

<sup>624</sup> Nerval, *OC*, vol. I, 391.



Constantinople. “Des marins m’ont appris là que, lorsqu’on fait le tour du monde, il y a un jour de gagné ou un jour de perdu, selon qu’on navigue à l’Orient ou à l’Occident.”

### In Transit: Nerval Dreams of Poe

In “Autre Rêve,” the twenty-fifth chapter of *Les Nuits d’Octobres*, Nerval recounted a fictional dream in which he discovered Poe’s name. “Sur une table étaient étendus plusieurs numéros de *Magazines* anglais et américains, et une foule de livraisons illustrées à *four* et à *six pense*, où apparaissaient vaguement les noms d’Edgar Poe, de Dickens, d’Ainsworts...”<sup>625</sup> In his dream scene, Nerval envisioned Poe’s connection to the rising literary medium of the nineteenth-century: the magazine. Significantly, then, the *Grand Robert de la langue française* directly links the French importation of the English term “*magazine*” to Nerval’s writing. The dictionary notes that the French borrowing of the English term “*magazine*” comes from an English importation of the French term “*magasin*.”<sup>626</sup> This doubled act of linguistic borrowing illustrates the rapid exchanges that came to define what Poe refers to as “Magazine Literature.” In item 182 of his *Marginalia*, Poe explained that this new literary medium has increased in “geometrical ratio since it adequately responded to the “*rush* of the age.” Poe’s critical reflections on this expansive growth led him to declare that the “whole tendency of the age is Magazine-ward.”<sup>627</sup>

In addition to Nerval’s own dream of Poe, there are several other significant and uncanny parallels between the two authors. In his essay “Histoire du Romantisme,” Théophile Gautier drew a parallel between the esoteric notes scribbled in Nerval’s journals and the mysterious cryptogram, an integral aspect of the plotline in Poe’s successful tale *The Goldbug*.

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<sup>625</sup> Nerval, *OC*, 1:115-116.

<sup>626</sup> See the entry “magazine” in *Le Grand Robert de la langue française. Version numérique 4* (November 2016), accessed 17 February 2017: “magazine, **ÉTYM**, 1776, au fém., répandu au XIXe siècle, d’abord en parlant des publications anglaises (Nerval, in Rey-Debove et Gagnon); empr. à l’angl. *magazine*, lui-même epr. au franç. *magasin*, qui a eu le même sens aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles.”

<sup>627</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of E.A. Poe*, 16: 117-118. The item was first published in *Graham’s Magazine* in December 1846. Daniel Sangsue comments on the growth of the magazine, noting that 500 periodicals were published in Paris in 1860 and 1,540 periodicals were published in Paris in 1885. See Daniel Sangsue, “Formes brèves. Le conte et la nouvelle au XIXe siècle.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 94.

[...] une multitude de petits carrés de papier où, sous formules abrégatives, en caractères microscopiques entremêlés de signes et de chiffres aussi difficiles à lire que les notes secrètes d'un Raymond Lulle, d'un Faust ou d'un Her Trippa, sont résumées, concentrées, quintessenciées comme quelques gouttes d'élixir, toutes les doctrines de la terre, théogonies, mythologies, religions, systèmes, interprétations, gloses, utopies, papillonnent ou tourbillonnent confusément, présentant un signe hermétique ou cabalistique, car Gérard ne dédaignait pas une visite à Nicolas Flamel et une conversation avec *la femme blanche et le serviteur rouge*, et si l'on tirait à soi l'un de ces papiers, les quelques lignes qu'il renferme vous occuperaient, **comme le cryptogramme du Scarabée d'Edgar Poe**, et vous demanderaient une effroyable intensité d'attention.<sup>628</sup>

To crack the language of the cipher that leads to the buried treasure of incalculable value, Poe's main character in *The Goldbug*, William Legrand, uses a method akin to translation. Gautier suggested that, just as Legrand has the analytic power to solve the cryptogram, so too does Nerval's interest in symbols make him an excellent "déchiffreur." In his study *Névrosés*, Arvède Barine offered a similar portrayal of Nerval: "Les choses lui avaient révélé leurs sens symboliques, les rêves leurs correspondances mystérieuses, et il déchiffrait couramment les augures qui sont autour de nous, dans les nombres, les étoiles, dans les caprices apparents des animaux, les coïncidences attribuées au hasard."<sup>629</sup>

The mysterious deaths of both Poe and Nerval form another parallel between the two writers. Nearly one year after publishing his chef-d'œuvre *Aurélia*, Nerval committed suicide. On the night of January 26, 1855, he hung himself from a bar window located in a dark Parisian street: la Rue de la Vieille-Lanterne. When his body was discovered the following morning, fragments from the last pages of *Aurélia* were found in his pocket, leading to two different hypotheses. Arsène Houssaye believed that Nerval had been assassinated, but Théophile Gautier argued that Nerval had committed suicide. In his account of Nerval's death, Gautier explained that a haunting vision of a raven was the last image that flashed before Nerval's eyes. Gautier also noted that the next morning a raven was seen circling around the shady street where Nerval's corpse was found, calling to mind Poe's memorable poem, "The Raven": "[...] sur les marches d'un escalier où

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<sup>628</sup> Gautier, *L'hirondelle et le Corbeau*, "L'histoire du romantisme," 215.

<sup>629</sup> Arvède Barine, *Névrosés: Hoffmann, Quincey, Edgar Poe, Nerval*, "Nerval," (Paris: Hachette, 1898), 332.

sautillait lugubrement un corbeau familier qui semble croasser, comme le corbeau d'Edgar Poe. *Never, oh! never more.* Ce corps était celui de Gérard de Nerval..."<sup>630</sup> As with Nerval, Poe's final days and death have provoked questions and contradictory theories. In Item 31 of his essay "Marginalia sur Edgar Poe et sur Baudelaire", the French symbolist poet, Remy de Gourmont observes: "Les circonstances de la mort d'Edgar Poe n'ont jamais été bien claires. En ce point sa destinée fut assez pareille à celle de Gérard de Nerval, sur laquelle on ne pourra jamais faire que des conjectures."<sup>631</sup> De Gourmont also observed that both Nerval and Poe were judged as crazy by their contemporaries: "[...] car tous les deux furent-ils pas fous, fous d'une merveilleuse et féconde folie, mais fous?"<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> Gautier, *L'hirondelle et le Corbeau*, "Préface aux Œuvres complètes (1868)," 163.

<sup>631</sup> de Gourmont, *Promenades Littéraires*, "Marginalia sur Edgar Poe et sur Baudelaire," 372.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid. In his own *Marginalia*, Poe reflected on the isolation of madness. In Item 247, he describes the "fate of an individual gifted, or rather accursed, with an intellect *very* far superior to that of his race," remarking that such an individual would be shunned by society, and severely misunderstood. "He would make himself enemies at all points. And since his opinions and speculations would widely differ from those of all mankind – that he would be considered a madman is evident." Poe. *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 16:165. This item was originally published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in June 1849.

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Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Baudelaire, translator, "Histoires Extraordinaires," *Exhibits: The Sheridan Libraries and Museums*, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/items/show/742>

## **Chapter 4: Modernity, Sympathy, Analogy: Baudelaire's Experience as Poet-Translator**

...le langage est originellement traduction, traduction du 'langage' d'une faculté pour le 'langage' de l'autre ; l'imagination est cette traduction, cette traductibilité, cette logique, ce *logos*.

Michel Deguy, "Esthétique de Baudelaire"

### **Contextual Introduction**

#### *i. Poe's Ideal Reader and Translator*

The nineteenth century witnessed an accelerating circulation of print, and also its outcome: a faster exchange of translations, a tendency to reuse earlier texts and, consequently, a rapid flow of citations and quotations. Poe's affirmation that the "whole tendency of the age is Magazine-ward" highlighted a rising trend: the recycling of previously published works.<sup>633</sup> This observation from a writer whom Terrence Whalen identifies as a "commercial writer," illustrates Poe's conception of his audience.<sup>634</sup> Whalen describes three different readers for whom Poe wrote, the Ideal, the Feared, and the Capital Reader: the Ideal Reader is "the reader of taste with whom the author would willingly develop a bond of sympathy," the Feared Reader is the anonymous and collective reader, and, finally, the Capital Reader represents the publishing industry.<sup>635</sup> Through his work on Poe, Baudelaire became Poe's Ideal Reader and his Ideal Translator, and by doing so, he endorses his own commercial productivity.

Like Poe, Baudelaire earned his living as a writer, which meant that he needed to successfully manage his reading public, publishing works that would please the crowd. Through his work as a poet-translator, Baudelaire discovered in Poe a writing method that produced "objects of taste," works with high literary value *and* economic value or "durability."<sup>636</sup> Poor Eddie ("*la*

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<sup>633</sup> Poe. *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 16:117-118.

<sup>634</sup> Terrence Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> Manning, "Words and Things, Goods and Services," 282.

*pauvre Eddie*”) also enriched Baudelaire’s imagination, strengthening what he referred to as “*la reine des facultés*” by introducing him to popular literary themes, new mechanical techniques, unexpected authorial “oddities” and prosodic “idiosyncrasies.”<sup>637</sup> Baudelaire’s newly learned techniques and “formal borrowings” would, in turn, help “poor Eddie” become a more vivid and prolific Eddie.<sup>638</sup> Baudelaire’s (re)translations thus fashioned a popular shared property and Baudelaire’s evolving translation project ultimately helped him create “objects of taste.” Baudelaire perceived Poe’s durability and in his portrait of Poe, he used the verb “*durer*.”

Poe était là-bas un cerveau singulièrement solitaire. Il ne croyait singulièrement qu’à l’immuable, à l’éternel, au *self-same*, et il jouissait — cruel privilège dans une société amoureuse d’elle-même ! — de ce grand bon sens à la Machiavel qui marche devant le sage, comme une colonne lumineuse, à travers le désert de l’histoire. — Qu’eût-il pensé, qu’eût-il écrit, l’infortuné, s’il avait entendu la théologienne du sentiment supprimer l’Enfer par amitié pour le genre humain, le philosophe du chiffre proposer un système d’assurances, une souscription à un sou par tête pour la suppression de la guerre, et l’abolition de la peine de mort et de l’orthographe, ces deux folies corrélatives ! — et tant d’autres malades qui écrivent, *l’oreille inclinée au vent*, des fantaisies giratoires aussi flatteuses que l’élément qui les leur dicte ? — Si vous ajoutez à cette vision impeccable du vrai, véritable infirmité dans de certaines circonstances, une délicatesse exquise du sens qu’une note fausse torturait, une finesse de goût que tout, excepté l’exacte proportion, révoltait, un amour insatiable du Beau, qui avait pris la passion du morbide, vous ne vous étonnez pas que pour un pareil homme la vie soit devenue un enfer, et ce qu’il ait mal fini ; vous admirerez qu’il ait pu *durer* aussi longtemps.<sup>639</sup>

The shared property between Poe and Baudelaire gave rise to a collective writerly identity. Fritz Gutbrodt playfully coins a mutual name for the inextricable pair of writers: “Poedelaire.” Gutbrodt’s pun is both humorous and serious; it lays claim, only partially in jest, to this trendy and “tradable commodity.”<sup>640</sup> By deliberately joking about the writers’ shared authorship, he shows that “translation” can reveal the “volatility of the letter.”<sup>641</sup> The well-known connection between

<sup>637</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 16:106.

<sup>638</sup> James Lawler. “Daemons of the Intellect: The Symbolists and Poe.” *Critical Inquiry* 14.1 (1987): 100. “We cannot be surprised that a plurivalent Poe should be echoed in the greater part of Baudelaire’s prose and poetry: these writings are contemporaneous with the translations and their prefaces.”

<sup>639</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1033. Scott Peeples has noted that “in 1841, [Poe’s] best earning year, he probably made about \$1,100 just above poverty-level wages by the standard of the time.” See Scott Peeples, *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 75.

<sup>640</sup> David Watson, “Derivative Creativity: The Financialization of the American Novel,” *European Journal of English Studies* 21.1 (April 2017): 95.

<sup>641</sup> Fritz Gutbrodt, “Poedelaire: Translation and the Volatility of the Letter,” *Diacritics* 22.3-4 (Autumn-Winter 1992): 48-68.

Poe and Baudelaire or “Poedelaire” highlights the symbiotic nature of the writers’ relationship. Moving between the two “intentions” identified by Benjamin, Baudelaire benefited from a shifting mixture of spontaneity and derivation. From the onset, Baudelaire used a semantic field related to profit to explain the derivative benefits of his discovery of Poe’s tales. In his early essay “Edgar Allan Poe, Sa Vie et Ses Ouvrages” (1852), for example, he explained that finding Poe’s tale “William Wilson” was a “bonne fortune”, for the story provided an autobiographical account of Poe’s experiences as a schoolboy in London, thus shedding light on the undecidable nature of Poe’s national identity.

Les couleurs, la tournure d’esprit d’Edgar Poe tranchent violemment sur le fond de la littérature américaine. Ses compatriotes le trouvent à peine Américain, et cependant il n’est pas Anglais. C’est donc une bonne fortune que de ramasser dans un de ses contes, un conte peu connu, *William Wilson*, un singulier récit de sa vie à cette école de Stoke-Newington.<sup>642</sup>

#### *ii. Foreign-language Studies*

Baudelaire began studying English as a foreign language in high school, placing second in his class in 1837.<sup>643</sup> That following year, Baudelaire received lower marks in his foreign language courses. After receiving fourteenth place in Latin, he shared the disappointing news with his mother. “J’ai une mauvaise nouvelle à t’annoncer; je suis quatorzième en version latine.”<sup>644</sup> By the end of that same year, Baudelaire improved his grades, placing fourth in Latin and first in Latin verse, but also expressed that he was more interested in modern literature than the literature of antiquity.<sup>645</sup> Soon thereafter, Baudelaire would also express his great disappointment with modern literature, writing to his mother on August 3, 1838, Baudelaire explained that Victor Hugo and Sainte-Beuve were the only contemporary authors who truly pleased him. He noted that nearly all

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<sup>642</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1004.

<sup>643</sup> See Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 12 [May?] 1837, in *ibid.*, 41: “Je suis septième en histoire et deuxième en anglais.”

<sup>644</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 5 March 1838, in *ibid.*, 52.

<sup>645</sup> Baudelaire to Colonel Aupick, 17 July 1838, in *ibid.*, 57-58.



other literary works were indigestible: “Je suis complètement dégoûté de la littérature; et c’est qu’en vérité, depuis que je sais lire, que je n’ai pas trouvé un ouvrage qui me plût entièrement, que je ne pusse aimer d’un bout à l’autre; aussi je ne lis plus. Je suis bourré; je ne parle plus.”<sup>646</sup>

In 1838, Baudelaire received two first prizes, in Latin and in French.<sup>647</sup> The following year, he had yet to discover a vocation that would truly satisfy him and he expressed his concerns about his future career.<sup>648</sup> Three years later, Baudelaire definitively decided to pursue a career as a writer. In an attempt to build his professional network, he contacted the editors of several Parisian reviews, the *Bulletin de l’ami des arts*, *L’Artiste*, and the *Revue de Paris*.<sup>649</sup> For his early publications, Baudelaire worked on fictional stories, feuilletons and articles on art history for various literary reviews (*L’Esprit Public*, *L’Époque*, *La Revue Nouvelle*, *La Fanfarlo*, *Le Pays*). In 1847, Baudelaire discovered his love for Poe and, soon thereafter, he began working on translations of ‘his’ American author.

## I. Baudelaire’s Presentation of Poe: Fame in France and Abroad

### *i. Baudelaire’s evolving translation project*

The extraordinary language can be either in overtones, or after the image of a foreign language. The latter proves to be a metaphorical or cryptic language.  
– Novalis, *Faith and Love or the King and the Queen*, 88.

Between 1848 and 1867, Baudelaire published forty-four translations of Poe’s tales and four of his poems, “The Raven,” “To My Mother,” “The Conqueror Worm,” and “The Haunted Palace”. Before publishing *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1857, Baudelaire and his editor, Michel Lévy, published two volumes of his tales: *Histoires extraordinaires* (1856) and *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* (1857).<sup>650</sup> The volumes incorporated several translations that had hitherto appeared in Parisian

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<sup>646</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 3 August 1838, in *ibid.*, 61.

<sup>647</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 23 August 1838, in *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>648</sup> Baudelaire to Alphonse Baudelaire, 23 August 1839, in *ibid.*, 78.

<sup>649</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 16 November 1843, in *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>650</sup> See my Appendix II: Baudelaire – Chronology of Translations.

periodicals. Following these first two volumes, Baudelaire went on to publish three more volumes with Lévy, the last in 1865. In considering Baudelaire's extensive work as a translator of Poe, one might ask: What was the aim of his project? Why did he work so diligently on Poe's tales?

To gain further insight into these questions, let us briefly turn to Baudelaire's correspondence, especially valuable for its chronology of his literary career and its evidence of the evolution of his translation project. Baudelaire discussed and debated his translations in several letters, especially those to his two main editors, Lévy and Auguste Poulet-Malassis. In some letters, Baudelaire explained and even angrily defended his creative choices as a translator ("Pour en revenir à cette prétendue faute...")<sup>651</sup> and, in others, inquired about payment, authorial rights, copyright laws, and distribution.

Baudelaire's vision of his translation project was clear from early on but evolved over time. Two years prior to publishing *Histoires Extraordinaires* (1856), Baudelaire wrote a letter to Paul de Saint-Victor, explaining his plans to publish an expensive edition of Poe's poetry, but this plan never came to fruition. "[...] je vais faire à mes frais un joli petit volume de luxe à cinquante exemplaires avec des poésies d'Edgar Poe; ce sera absolument inédit."<sup>652</sup> Although Baudelaire did not explicitly state the reason as to why he abandoned this endeavor, one could speculate that his decision was motivated by financial concerns. Baudelaire would need to pay out of his own pocket to realize this unprecedented edition, and since poetry was not a well-sought after commodity, profits were not necessarily guaranteed. Furthermore, translating Poe's poetry proved to be an especially challenging task. Rather than devoting his time to this commercially risky project, Baudelaire focused on Poe's tales, a genre that was more likely to please the crowd.

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<sup>651</sup> Baudelaire to Auguste Poulet-Malassis, 23 April 1860, *Corr.*, 31.

<sup>652</sup> Baudelaire, *Corr.*, 1:294.

In a letter to Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve written on March, 18, 1856, Baudelaire explained that he wanted to make Poe a “grand homme” in France, thus rescuing him from his dubious status in America: “*Il faut, c’est-à-dire je désire qu’Edgar Poe, qui n’est pas grande chose en Amérique, devienne un grand homme pour la France.*”<sup>653</sup> Eight days later, Baudelaire wrote to Sainte-Beuve, detailing the structural layout of his first two translated volumes and explaining the intentions behind their accompanying prefaces. The thirteen tales comprising Baudelaire’s first volume, *Histoires Extraordinaires* (1856), aimed to introduce the French public to Poe’s interest in trickery, conjectures, and literary hoaxes.<sup>654</sup> For the volume’s preface, Baudelaire revised an essay that he had published in 1852 in *La Revue de Paris*, “Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages”. A year before writing this essay, Baudelaire expressed his desire to obtain an edition of the complete works of Edgar Allan Poe from London: “Faites donc demander à Londres, AU PLUS VITE, ce livre si vous ne l’avez pas encore fait. *Ceuvres d’Edgar Poe, et surtout l’édition à notice nécrologique s’il y en a une.*”<sup>655</sup> Soon after publishing this first essay, on March, 20, 1852, Baudelaire expressed his desire to publish a revision in a letter to Auguste Poulet-Malassis: “J’ai fait imprimer à la *Revue de Paris* un gros article sur un grand écrivain américain. *Mais je crains bien que la première fois ne soit la dernière. Mon article fait tache.*”<sup>656</sup> In both the early version and the revised version of his essay, Baudelaire sought to critique American ideals: “[...] j’ai essayé d’enfermer une vive protestation contre l’américanisme.”<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>654</sup> Baudelaire published the tales in the following order: *Double Assassinat dans la Rue Morgue, La Lettre Volée, Le Scarabée d’Or, Le Canard au Ballon, Aventure Sans Pareille d’un Certain Hans Pfaal, Manuscrit Trouvé Dans Une Bouteille, Une Descente Dans le Maelstrom, La Verité Sur le Cas de M. Valdemar, Révélation Magnétique, Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe, Morella, Liegeia, and Metzengerstein.*

<sup>655</sup> Baudelaire to [?], 15 October 1851, in *ibid.*, 179. Baudelaire referred to the complete edition edited by Redfield.

<sup>656</sup> Baudelaire to Auguste Poulet-Malassis, 20 March 1852, in *ibid.*, 190.

<sup>657</sup> Baudelaire to Sainte-Beuve, 26 March 1856, in *ibid.*, 344-345. In the preface, entitled “Edgar Allan Poe sa vie et ses oeuvres”, Baudelaire reworked an essay that he had published in March-April 1852 in *La Revue de Paris*, “Edgar Allan Poe sa vie et ses ouvrages.”

In his second volume, *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* (1857), Baudelaire included twenty-two tales that concentrated on fantastic themes, such as hallucination, mental illness, the supernatural, and the grotesque.<sup>658</sup> In the volume's preface, Baudelaire focused his attention on the works by Poe he did not intend to translate, such as his scientific essay (or prose poem) *Eureka*. Baudelaire therefore envisaged his early translation project as short-term, not long-term, but these plans quickly changed, and Baudelaire's work on Poe continued for several more years. For his third volume, Baudelaire translated Poe's one and only novel, *Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym* (1858). Baudelaire's fourth volume *Eureka* was published four years later in 1864. One year later, Baudelaire published his fifth and final volume, the *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* (1865), incorporating ten different works, mostly tales and critical essays.<sup>659</sup>

Poe's rising popularity in France serves as proof that Baudelaire successfully accomplished the primary goal of his translation project: thanks to Baudelaire, readers in France and abroad took an interest in Poe's works. Throughout France, and especially in Paris, Poe and his uncanny tales became a well-known literary phenomenon and Baudelaire's translations themselves were a popular topic of contemporary French reviewers, as were other contemporary French translators of Poe.<sup>660</sup> Following his publication of *Histoires Extraordinaires* (1856), Baudelaire immediately

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<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 344. Baudelaire published the tales in the following order: *Le Démon de la Perversité*, *Le Chat Noir*, *William Wilson*, *L'Homme des Foules*, *Le Cœur Révéléteur*, *Bérénice*, *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, *Le Puits et le Pendule*, *Hop-Frog*, *La Barrique d'Amontillado*, *Le Masque de la Mort Rouge*, *Le Roi Peste*, *Le Diable dans le Beffroi*, *Lionnerie*, *Quatre Bêtes en Une*, *Petite Discussion avec une Momie*, *Puissance de la Parole*, *Colloque entre Monos et Una*, *Conversation d'Eiros avec Charmion*, *Silence*, *L'Île de la Fée*, and *Le Portrait Ovale*.

<sup>659</sup> Baudelaire published the tales in the following order: *Le Mystère de Marie Roget*, *Le Joueur D'Échecs de Maelzel*, *Éléonora*, *Un Événement à Jérusalem*, *L'Ange du Bizarre*, *Le Système du Docteur Goudron*, *Le Domaine d'Arnheim*, *Le Cottage Landor*, *Philosophie de l'Ameublement*, and *La Genèse du Poème*.

<sup>660</sup> Haskell Block, "Poe, Baudelaire and his Rival Translators," in *Translation in the Humanities*, ed. Marilyn Gaddis Rose (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1977), 59-66. Block discusses seven of Baudelaire's rival translators: "Gustav Brunet, Amédée Pichot, Emile Forgues, Isabelle Meunier, Alphonse Borghers, Léon de Wailly, and William L. Hughes". See also Daniel Sangsue, "Formes brèves. Le conte et la nouvelle au XIXe siècle." in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 103. Sangsue notes that Baudelaire's translations of Poe created a temporal divide in the nineteenth-century: a 'before Baudelaire' and an 'after Baudelaire'. "On peut dire que la contribution de Baudelaire à l'esthétique de la nouvelle a partagé le siècle en deux. Il y a en effet un avant et un après Baudelaire, et ce dans une double perspective: d'une part ses traductions ont

sent a copy to Barbey d'Aurevilly, who reviewed it in *Le Pays* on June 10, 1856. D'Aurevilly portrayed Baudelaire as a “traducteur de première force”: “Grâce à cette traduction supérieure qui a pénétré également la pensée de l’auteur et sa langue, nous avons pu aisément juger l’effet produit par l’excentrique Américain.”<sup>661</sup>

ii. *Linguistic Invention: “américaniser”*

Although Baudelaire expressed a vehement distaste for American society and its idea of progress, he sympathized with Poe’s unusual writing style and his strange personality traits, which set him apart from his American counterparts and often provoked their disparagement. In his first essay on Poe, “Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages” (1852), Baudelaire criticized not only the portrait of Poe painted by American biographers but also America’s excessive emphasis on monetary value and its disregard for literary value:

Les divers documents que je viens de lire ont créé en moi cette persuasion que les États-Unis furent pour Poe une vaste cage, un grand établissement de comptabilité, et qu’il fit toute sa vie de sinistres efforts pour échapper à l’influence de cette atmosphère antipathique.<sup>662</sup>

Baudelaire compared America to an industrialist prison that Poe perpetually attempted to flee. Baudelaire’s pronounced distaste for American society even led him to coin a new verb “américaniser,” credited to him in the *Grand Robert*.<sup>663</sup> In *Fusées*, his personal journal, Baudelaire used this new verb to describe the spiritual degeneration caused by extreme materialism: “La mécanique nous aura tellement américanisés, le progrès aura si bien atrophié en nous toute la partie spirituelle en nous que rien, parmi les rêveries sanguinaires [...] des utopistes, ne pourra être

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révélé les contes et nouvelles de Poe à ses contemporains et ces derniers ont été fortement marqués par ce nouveau modèle (par exemple Villiers et Mirabeau), d’autre part, ses études de Poe et Gautier ont formulé une poétique de la nouvelle qui a fait date et qui continue encore aujourd’hui à servir de référence.”

<sup>661</sup> d’Aurevilly and Baudelaire, *Sur Edgar Poe*, 46.

<sup>662</sup> Charles Baudelaire, trans., *Œuvres en prose* (hereafter, *EAP*), ed. Y. G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 1002.

<sup>663</sup> See the entry “américaniser” in *Le Grand Robert de la langue française. Version numérique 4* (November 2016), accessed 6 April 2017: “américaniser, **ÉTYM**, 1855, Baudelaire, américain [...]. Donner, faire prendre le caractère (des États-Unis) à ... Américaniser un peuple, une civilisation, lui donner les caractères d’efficacité économique, de confort matériel, d’urbanisation, de technicité considéré comme propre aux États-Unis.”

comparé à ses résultats positifs.”<sup>664</sup> In his first essay on Poe, Baudelaire radically questioned American values and challenged the consequences of the country’s attempt to progress at any cost.

Il passerait volontiers sur les âmes solitaires et libres, et les foulerait aux pieds avec d’autant d’insouciance que ses immenses lignes de chemin de fer les forêts abattues, et ses bateaux-monstres les débris d’un bateau incendié la veille. Il est si pressé d’arriver. Le temps et l’argent, tout est là.<sup>665</sup>

In the revised version of this essay, Baudelaire reinforced his unwavering views on American progress, using the verb “répéter” to strengthen the conviction of his assertion. “Je répète que pour moi la persuasion s’est faite qu’Edgar Poe et sa patrie n’étaient pas de niveau.”<sup>666</sup>

In his essay “The American Drama,” published in the *American Whig Review* in August 1845, Poe directly addressed the question of progress, remarking that: “[t]he great opponent to Progress is Conservatism. In other words, the great adversary of Invention is Imitation.”<sup>667</sup> Additionally, in several of his tales, Poe satirized the blind desire for progress that Baudelaire characterized as “American” and by doing so, he extended this questioning of positivism beyond national borders. In his autobiographical tale “William Wilson”, for example, the narrator feels the need to qualify his use of the word “fact”: “Yet in fact — in fact of the world’s view — how little there was to remember!”<sup>668</sup> While working on Poe’s tale, Baudelaire published two different translations of the narrator’s account of the word “fact”, or “facts.” In his first translation, Baudelaire pluralized the word “fact” and repeated its plural form in parentheses and not dashes. In his second translation, Baudelaire kept the singular form of “fact”, but he did not maintain Poe’s repetition. Consequently, the reader can no longer hear the echo produced by the “fact”:

“Yet in fact — in fact of the world’s view — how little there was to remember!”<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>664</sup> Ibid. See also *Fusées*, XXII.

<sup>665</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1003.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid., 1032.

<sup>667</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 13:33.

<sup>668</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:407.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

*“Encore, comme faits (j’entends le mot faits dans le sens restreint des gens du monde), quelle pauvre moisson pour le souvenir!”*<sup>670</sup>

“Et cependant, dans le fait — au point de vue ordinaire du monde, —qu’il y avait là peu de choses pour le souvenir!”<sup>671</sup>

In the same paragraph that begins with the narrator’s qualification of the word “fact”, Poe concluded with a French quotation of line 21 from Voltaire’s satire “Le Mondain”: “*Oh! le bon temps, que ce siècle de fer!*”<sup>672</sup> In Baudelaire’s first translation, he shifted “bon temps” to “beau temps”, thus altering Voltaire’s original quotation, but in his second translation, Baudelaire kept Voltaire’s original quotation, thus showing that Poe had correctly copied Voltaire’s satire.

Baudelaire’s attraction to Poe was strengthened by his conviction that the American writer was markedly anti-American. Commenting on Poe’s character in his letter to Sainte-Beuve, he noted that “[Poe] s’est moqué de ses compatriotes le plus qu’il a pu.”<sup>673</sup> While it is true that Poe was critical of his fellow countrymen, Poe was not “anti-American,” as Baudelaire here suggests, and this claim should be closely reconsidered. For Poe, the concepts of “nation” and “nationhood” were themselves highly problematic. Unlike Baudelaire who expressed a clear idea of America, as is evidenced by his newly coined verb “américaniser,” Poe radically called into question the meaning of “America.” What is the “American” genius? What are “American” themes? How does one become a “truly native novelist?”<sup>674</sup> Poe upheld that the word “America” had yet to be defined, and that “American letters” were in a “condition of quagmire a-quagmire.”<sup>675</sup>

On an even deeper level, Poe was generally suspicious of the word “nation”:

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<sup>670</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1006. The first translation of the “facts” first appeared in 1852 as part of the excerpts of “William Wilson” that Baudelaire incorporated in his first essay on Poe.

<sup>671</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 293. This translation of the “facts” first appeared in Baudelaire’s complete translation of “William Wilson”, which was published in *Le Pays* in February, 1855.

<sup>672</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:431 and see Mabbott’s notes in *ibid.*, 449.

<sup>673</sup> Baudelaire to Sainte-Beuve, 26 March 1856, *Corr.*, 345.

<sup>674</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 11:2.

<sup>675</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 16:172.

...the watchword now was, 'a national literature!' — as if any true literature *could be* "national" — as if the world at large were not the only proper stage for the literary *histrion*. We became suddenly, the merest and maddest *partizans* in letters. Our papers spoke of 'tariffs and protection.'<sup>676</sup>

Although Poe suggested that "true literature" cannot be national, he knew that his authorship would be shaped by the "American nation" and was thus critical of the ideas and representations of "America" circulating both at home and overseas. As Terrence Whalen has noted, "Poe's writing was regulated not only by the market *per se*, but also by the instability in the publishing industry, the national investment in a capitalist future, and the rise of information as an economic good, all of which tended to undermine traditional standards of literary value by stressing the growing complicity between capitalism and signification."<sup>677</sup> Gerald Kennedy observes that although Poe might "initially appear" as the "most extraneous and un-American" of America's early authors, in part due to his critique of "American literati and the reading public," this view of Poe has deeply misconstrued his engagement with national issues and concerns.<sup>678</sup> Kennedy shows that Poe's "shuttling between" different American cities (Richmond, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia) and his frequent "crossing and recrossing of the Mason-Dixon Line" allowed him to "confront the multifaceted project of nation-building that gripped the population of the US as well as the publishing world."<sup>679</sup>

On several different occasions, Poe criticized the power of the American publishing industry and in a letter written to James Russell Lowell in mid-1844, he expressed his desire to carry out a book-length study of American literature.<sup>680</sup> On November 22, 1845, Poe published a

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<sup>676</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 11:2.

<sup>677</sup> Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*, 7.

<sup>678</sup> J. Gerald Kennedy. "'A Mania for Composition': Poe's Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building," *American Literary History* 17 no.1 (2005), 2. Further on, Kennedy explains that Poe wrote for "both Northern and Southern audiences and aiming [...] to alienate neither, Poe avoids oversimplifying the national contradiction between liberty and slavery yet feels compelled to expose its ironies" (17).

<sup>679</sup> Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*, 7.

<sup>680</sup> See Chapter 8 "The road to 'Literary America'" in Hayes, *Poe and the Printed Word*, 102.



review of William W. Turner's recent translation from the German of a critical work entitled *America and the American People* written by Frederick Von Raumer, a history professor at the University of Berlin. Poe argued that the book published by his literary rival Mr. Rufus Wilmot Griswold, *Poets and Poetry of America*, had negatively influenced Germany's perception of American poetry. Poe attacked Griswold's book, claiming that it was "evil," its size deceiving: According to Poe, foreigners had mistakenly assumed that Griswold's work was the best since it was the "*largest* [...] of its kind."<sup>681</sup> Yet as Poe emphasized, foreigners were unaware of the fact that "in America, a dexterous quack may force even the most contemptible work into notoriety and consequent circulation."<sup>682</sup>

In his essays, Baudelaire noted that Poe's poetic soul was unable to thrive in literary America. In order to succeed in American literature, Poe needed to become a "*money-making author*", molding his talents and creative faculties to shape the tastes of readerly consumers, or Feared Readers to use Whalen's term. Baudelaire drew a direct parallel between this emphasis on money and the French term "*magasin*", meaning shop, which helped to form the English term "magazine", as we mentioned earlier. "Tout cela me rappelle l'odieux proverbe paternel: *make money, my son, honestly, if you can, BUT MAKE MONEY. — Quelle odeur de magasin!* comme disait J. de Maistre, à propos de Locke."<sup>683</sup> Baudelaire noted that several American literary journals and magazines refused Poe's works, claiming that his superior style did not appeal to the general public's tastes: "Un autre, qui a dirigé des journaux et des revues, un ami du poète, avoue qu'il était difficile de l'employer et qu'on était obligé de le payer moins que d'autres, parce qu'il écrivait

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<sup>681</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 13:17.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid.

<sup>683</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1002.

dans un style trop au-dessus du vulgaire.”<sup>684</sup> In a letter to Armand Dutacq written on June 3, 1854, Baudelaire commiserated with the difficulties that Poe encountered as a writer, complaining that Parisian publishers had unfairly rejected his works. “Il est vraiment trop ridicule qu’un écrivain de Génie soit repoussé comme un polisson de toutes les publications parisiennes.”<sup>685</sup> In a letter to his mother written on March 26, 1853, Baudelaire compared his own literary setbacks to those that Poe encountered in America. Due to these parallels, Baudelaire identified not only with Poe’s literature but also with his personal life: “Comprends-tu maintenant, pourquoi, au milieu de l’affreuse solitude qui m’entourne, j’ai si bien compris le génie d’Edgar Poe, et pourquoi j’ai si bien écrit son abominable vie?”<sup>686</sup> Despite similar setbacks, however, Baudelaire acknowledged the differences between America and France, comparing America to a young child that was jealous of the old continent.

From Baudelaire’s point of view, Poe’s opposition to progress separated him from the masses of American society and, through this estrangement, he developed a heightened sense of hearing and seeing: “Comparerons-nous nos yeux paresseux et nos oreilles assourdies à ces yeux qui percent la brume, à ces oreilles *qui entendraient l’herbe qui pousse*?”<sup>687</sup> Through his attack on American society for its unfair review of Poe, Baudelaire also implicitly critiqued the literary debates in France, without, moreover, provoking negative reactions from his French contemporaries. Shielding himself from potential disapproval in his first essay, Baudelaire clarified: “Je jure que je ne fais aucune allusion à des gens de ce pays-ci. Ce n’est pas ma faute si les mêmes disputes et les mêmes théories agitent différentes nations.”<sup>688</sup> In contrast to his first

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<sup>684</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1004. See also a similar passage in *ibid.*, 1012. “il écrivait avec une fastidieuse difficulté et *dans un style trop au-dessus du niveau intellectuel commun pour qu’on pût le payer cher*, il était toujours plongé dans des embarras d’argent, et souvent lui et sa femme malade manquaient des choses les plus nécessaires pour la vie.”

<sup>685</sup> Baudelaire to Armand Dutacq, 3 June 1854, *Corr.*, vol. I.

<sup>686</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Aupick, 26 March 1853, in *ibid.*, 214.

<sup>687</sup> Baudelaire, “*Notes Nouvelles Sur Edgar Poe*,” *EAP*, 1054.

<sup>688</sup> “Edgar Allan Poe, Sa vie et ses ouvrages,” in *ibid.*, 1010.

essay, however, Baudelaire was noticeably bolder in his preface to *Histoires extraordinaires*. He compared an unfavorable review of Poe to a translation of a Parisian critique: “En lisant cet article, il me semblait lire la traduction d’un de ces nombreux réquisitoires dressés par les critiques parisiens contre ceux de nos poètes qui sont les plus amoureux de la perfection.”<sup>689</sup>

### *iii. Translation in Baudelaire’s Three Essays on Poe*

In reading Baudelaire’s essays on Poe, it is difficult to separate his own voice from the biographical documents that he used as his sources. W.T. Bandy has shown that Baudelaire’s first essay was largely based on two American texts published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*: an obituary entitled “The Late Edgar A. Poe” (1849) by John Reuben Thompson and a more extensive review of Poe’s works anonymously published by John Moncure Daniel in 1850.<sup>690</sup> But, although much of Baudelaire’s essay consists of plagiarized translations of American reviews, Haswell has duly noted that Baudelaire’s translations are not entirely accurate. Haswell observes that through “deliberate alterations, omissions, and additions” Baudelaire “distorted the facts” and “re-creat[e] Poe in his own image.”<sup>691</sup> Haswell draws particular attention to how Baudelaire exaggerated the negative qualities of America.<sup>692</sup>

Although Baudelaire’s essays are essentially concealed “translations,” there are nevertheless moments when his own critical voice becomes visible. In his first essay, the present tense reveals the close proximity between reader, translator, and essayist: “Ici je trouve, dans des notes biographiques, des paroles très mystérieuses, des allusions très-obscur[e]s et très-bizarres sur la conduite de notre futur écrivain.”<sup>693</sup> The repeated adverb “très” suggests a surprised and

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<sup>689</sup> Ibid., 1062.

<sup>690</sup> W. T. Bandy, “New Light on Baudelaire and Poe,” *Yale French Studies* 10 (1953): 65-69.

<sup>691</sup> Henry Haswell. “Baudelaire’s Self-Portrait of Poe: “Edgar Allan Poe: Sa Vie et Ses Ouvrages.”” *Romance Notes*. 10.2 (1969): 253.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid., 256-256.

<sup>693</sup> Baudelaire, “Edgar Allan Poe, Sa vie et ses ouvrages,” 1010. In a July 13, 1860 letter to Alfred Guichon in *Corr.* 2:65, Baudelaire describes the contrasting portraits of Poe in France and America. He notes that, while American

disapproving reaction to the source document (“très mystérieuses,” “très-obscurés,” “très-bizarres”) and, as the sentence concludes, Baudelaire stakes a French claim to Poe, referring to him as “notre futur écrivain.” This gesture on Baudelaire’s part was remarkably successful. For example, commenting on the significance of Baudelaire’s French adoption of the American author, Gautier made the following observation: “Désormais, en France, le nom de Baudelaire est inséparable du nom d’Edgar Poe, et le souvenir de l’un éveille immédiatement la pensée de l’autre. Il semble même parfois que les idées de l’Américain appartiennent en propre au Français.”<sup>694</sup> Similarly, Valéry suggested in his *Variété II* that had it not been for Baudelaire’s translations, Poe might have been forgotten entirely: “Ce grand homme serait aujourd’hui complètement oublié, si Baudelaire ne se fût employé à l’introduire dans la littérature européenne.”<sup>695</sup>

Paraphrased commentary is another indicator of the blurred line between Baudelaire as critic and Baudelaire as translator. In his description of Poe’s prize-winning short story “MS in a bottle,” Baudelaire explained that the committee was initially attracted to the manuscript’s neat and legible handwriting. However, in a parenthetical remark, he inserted his own opinion: “A la fin de sa vie, Edgar Poe possédait encore une écriture incomparablement belle. (Je trouve cette remarque bien américaine).”<sup>696</sup> As this parenthetical statement suggests, Baudelaire used American biographical reviews as the main sources of his essay. For the most part, then, Baudelaire’s essays are translations that he occasionally interrupts with his own questions or critical opinions. Sometimes his comments merge with the translated text, becoming barely noticeable. Yet at other times, Baudelaire’s probing voice visibly appears, such as when he

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editions present Poe as a gentleman “pas de moustache, – des favoris; – le col de la chemise relevé,” French editions portray the opposite image: “Ici, il est à la française; moustaches, pas favoris, col rabattu.”

<sup>694</sup> Théophile Gautier, “Charles Baudelaire,” *Portraits et souvenirs littéraires* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1881), 252.

<sup>695</sup> Paul Valéry, *Variétés II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1930), 144.

<sup>696</sup> Baudelaire, “Edgar Allan Poe, Sa vie et ses ouvrages,” 1009.

questions a document's validity "(pourquoi?)"<sup>697</sup> or avoids taking credit for the content of "his" essay, strategically confessing: "(Cette phrase n'est pas de moi; je prie le lecteur de remarquer le petit ton de dédain qu'il y a dans cet *immédiatement*...)." <sup>698</sup> In other cases, Baudelaire openly admitted that he was relying heavily on incomplete or even inaccurate biographical material.<sup>699</sup>

#### iv. Translation and Self-Discovery

A pleasurable reading experience initiated the success of the Poe-Baudelaire relationship, or what Patrick Quinn has referred to as a "mythological construction" of Poe in the "French imagination."<sup>700</sup> Baudelaire first discovered Poe through Isabelle Meunier's French translation of his supernatural tale "The Black Cat" ("Le Chat Noir") published in *La Démocratie pacifique* on January, 27, 1847, four years after its publication in America.<sup>701</sup> Baudelaire was immediately intrigued. While reading of the perversity and reincarnation treated in Poe's works, Baudelaire began to believe that Poe's sentences and phrases were in fact his own. In an 1860 letter to Armand Fraisse, Baudelaire reflected on his amazing first discovery of Poe:

En 1846 ou 1847, j'eus connaissance de quelques fragments de Poe; j'en éprouvais une commotion singulière; ses œuvres complètes n'ayant été rassemblés qu'après sa mort en une édition unique, j'eus *la patience* de me lier avec des Américains vivant à Paris pour leur emprunter des collections de journaux qui avaient été dirigés par Poe. Et alors je trouvai, croyez-moi si vous voulez, *des poèmes et des nouvelles dont j'avais eu la pensée, mais vague et confuse, mal ordonnée et que Poe avait su combiner et mener à la perfection.* Telle fut *l'origine de mon enthousiasme et de ma longue patience.*<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 1008.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid., 1009.

<sup>699</sup> See *ibid.*, 1010: "Il est évident que je manque de renseignements, et que les notes que j'ai sous les yeux ne sont pas suffisamment intelligentes pour rendre compte de ces singulières transformations." Describing M. Allan's engagement to a young woman following the death of his wife, Baudelaire notes that a domestic fight had ensued but he also admits that he lacks sufficient biographical details to recount the full story: "Une querelle domestique prend ici place – une histoire bizarre et ténébreuse que je ne peux pas raconter, parce qu'elle n'est clairement expliquée par aucun biographe."

<sup>700</sup> Patrick F. Quinn, *The French Face of Edgar Poe* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), 4.

<sup>701</sup> The first publication of Poe's tale in America was in the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post* in 1843.

<sup>702</sup> Baudelaire to Armand Fraisse, February 18, 1860, *Corr.*, 1: 676.

Baudelaire's sense of identification with Poe was so profound that he thought not even Fraisse would believe his uncanny experience. To emphasize his nearly supernatural feeling of connection to Poe, Baudelaire included the imperative "croyez-moi," "Believe me."

In several respects, Baudelaire's letter lays claim to Poe's tales. Baudelaire's use of the pluperfect ("j'avais eu la pensée...") underscores that, prior to reading Poe's works, he had already had similar thoughts. He admits that, despite his anticipatory imaginings of Poe's tales, however, he was unable to effectively craft and structure these ideas. Baudelaire used the verb "combiner" to define Poe's literary methods, thus calling attention to his ability to plan out how the details of his works (syllables, sounds, repetitions, character and place descriptions) would be closely linked together so that the whole could not be grasped without its constituent parts. Baudelaire's letter to Fraisse also reveals how his attraction to Poe helped him become a patient reader and translator. Baudelaire's fascination with Poe and his work as a translator shaped how he went about his daily life. According to his friend and biographer, Charles Asselineau, Baudelaire wanted to talk about Poe wherever he went and whenever he could: "À tout venant, où qu'il se trouvât, dans la rue, au café, dans une imprimerie, le soir, le matin, il allait demandant: 'Connaissez-vous Edgar Poë?'"<sup>703</sup> By asking whether or not one was familiar with Poe, Baudelaire presumably attempted to gauge his own success as a translator. Since Baudelaire sought to introduce Poe to the French public, familiarity with Poe would have served as proof of his own achievements.

In several of his translations, Baudelaire added the French adjective "extraordinaire," thus reinforcing the French title of his work, *Histoires extraordinaires*. In "A Descent into the Maelstrom," for example, Baudelaire rendered the sentence "this was most unusual" as "Cela était tout à fait extraordinaire."<sup>704</sup> Baudelaire also used the adjective "extraordinaire" in his own writing.

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<sup>703</sup> Charles Asselineau, *Charles Baudelaire, sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1869), 39.

<sup>704</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:585; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 189.

In the first version of his “Le Flambeau vivant,” he characterized the angel’s eyes as extraordinary: “Ils marchent devant moi, ces Yeux extraordinaires.”<sup>705</sup> In his prose poem “Les Tentations ou Éros, Plutus et la Gloire,” Baudelaire used the adjective to describe two superb Devils and an extraordinary She-Devil: “Deux superbes Satans et une Diablesse, non moins extraordinaire.”<sup>706</sup> In his prose poem “Les Yeux du pauvre,” Baudelaire used the word “extraordinarily” to characterize the serious faces of three poor children dressed in rags: “Ces trois visages étaient extraordinairement sérieux...”<sup>707</sup> And in his prose poem “Le Joueur Généreux” a narrator describes the “extraordinary” food and drink that he shares with his host: “Nous mangeâmes, nous bûmes outre mesure toutes sortes de vins extraordinaires, et, chose non moins extraordinaire, il me semblait, après plusieurs heures, que je n’étais pas plus ivre que lui.”<sup>708</sup>

In a letter written to Alfred Guichon on July 13, 1860, Baudelaire explained that he considered praises of Poe’s writing as compliments of his own talents: “Monsieur, me dire, qu’on aime si bien Edgar Poe, c’est m’adresser la plus douce des flatteries, puisque c’est me dire qu’on me ressemble.”<sup>709</sup> But some failed to believe the apparent parallels between Baudelaire and Poe. This disbelief angered Baudelaire and to prove a “resemblance” between him and Poe, he compared their relationship to geometrical forms: “Vous doutez que de si étonnants parallélismes géométriques puissent se présenter dans la nature. Eh bien! on m’accuse moi, d’imiter Poe! Savez-vous pourquoi j’ai si patiemment traduit Poe? Parce qu’il me ressemblait.”<sup>710</sup>

According to Asselineau, Baudelaire wanted to discover the many dimensions of Poe’s works. He spent a great deal of time in bookstores searching for special editions written by “his

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<sup>705</sup> Baudelaire to Madame Sabatier, 7 February 1854, *Corr.*, 1:266.

<sup>706</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, vol. I, 259.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>709</sup> Baudelaire to Alfred Guichon, 13 July 1860, *Corr.*, 2:64.

<sup>710</sup> Baudelaire to Théophile Thoré, 20 June 1864 in *ibid.* 386.

author”: “Il accablait les libraires étrangers de commissions et d’informations sur les diverses éditions des œuvres de son auteur...”<sup>711</sup> To gain a deeper understanding of Poe’s language, Asselineau noted that Baudelaire struck up conversations in cafés, asking questions about the English expressions used by Poe: “Un garçon de café, pourvu qu’il fût parler anglais, lui servait de prétexte à discuter le sens d’un mot, d’une expression proverbiale, d’un terme d’argot.”<sup>712</sup> Before publishing his translation of the tale “The Pit and the Pendulum,” Baudelaire attempted to meet with William Wilberforce Mann, an American he had met in Paris who shared editions of Poe’s tales that had been printed in *The Southern Literary Messenger*.<sup>713</sup> On September 16, 1852, Baudelaire wrote to Maxime du Camp, explaining that he needed to consult with Mann as soon as possible about uncertainties over certain passages:

Comme je suis persuadé qu’en passant ce soir à l’imprimerie vous serez en colère ou au moins surpris par l’absence de mon manuscrit, je vous écris pour vous dire que la nécessité de trouver un certain M. Mann de qui dépend l’interprétation d’une LACUNE et de PASSAGES LITTÉRALEMENT INTRADUISIBLES, parce qu’ils sont *altérés* suivant moi, m’a empêché d’envoyer hier matin le manuscrit de *The Pit and the Pendulum* à l’imprimerie, mais qu’il est prêt, et que quand même je ne pourrais pas collationner *aujourd’hui* mon édition anglaise sur l’ancienne édition américaine de M. Mann, j’enverrais d’une manière *positive* mon travail *demain*, sauf à combler la petite lacune à la correction des épreuves.<sup>714</sup>

Baudelaire’s letter highlights an especially difficult issue concerning the translation of Poe’s tales: since Poe often made revisions to his work, the different editions did not necessarily correspond to each other. For example, Poe made three different versions of “The Pit and the Pendulum”: the first version appeared in a Christmas book for 1842 entitled *The Gift: A Christmas and New Year’s Present*, the second was printed in the *Broadway Journal* on May 17, 1845, and the third was published in a completed edition of his tales, *Works* (1850). While working on these different editions, Poe made several changes; he switched plural and singular nouns (“sensations” vs.

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<sup>711</sup> Asselineau, *Charles Baudelaire*, 40.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>713</sup> See “Notes et variantes” in Baudelaire, *Corr.*, 1:815.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.



“sensation”; “dimension” vs. “dimensions”; “depressions” vs. “depression”; “oscillation” vs. “vibration”), changed verbal choices (“realize” vs. “comprehend”; “realize” vs. “perfect”), altered adjectives (“deadly” vs. “heavy”), and corrected spelling errors.<sup>715</sup> Baudelaire was aware that Poe’s works evolved over time and, for this reason, attributed more value to his latter editions: “[...] je sais qu’il avait le goût excessif des retouches et des remaniements, et qu’ainsi toute édition postérieure, *parce qu’elle est postérieure*, peut être considérée comme plus conforme à sa pensée.”<sup>716</sup>

For his published translations, Baudelaire meticulously planned the appearance of each page. Prior to publishing his first essay on Poe, he wrote a thorough letter to the “Correcteur de l’Imprimerie,” noting two small details which he had forgotten to include in his first copy. Baudelaire instructed the “Correcteur” to add the Roman numeral I between the title of his article and the first line. Additionally, he told the “Correcteur” to add the date of Poe’s death. Despite Baudelaire’s desire for precision, however, he mistakenly wrote that Poe had died at the age of thirty-seven, not forty:

Monsieur le Correcteur,

Je crois qu’il vaut mieux que je vous avertisse aujourd’hui que demain de deux oublis que j’ai commis.

En tête de l’article entre le titre et la première ligne, il faut mettre le chiffre romain I.

Ayez l’obligeance de chercher le passage où il est question de la mort de Poe, c’est à peu près trois ou quatre pages avant la fin, et après:

*Et ce fut dans un de ces lits que mourut l’auteur du Chat noir et d’Eureka, ajoutez:*

, le 7 octobre 1849 à l’âge de trente-sept ans.”<sup>717</sup>

Ayez l’obligeance de vérifier toutes les corrections avec l’épreuve déjà corrigée par moi.

Veuillez agréer mes excuses pour tout ce tintouin.<sup>718</sup>

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

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<sup>715</sup> See Mabbott’s notes on the variants in Poe, *CW*, 2: 678-700.

<sup>716</sup> Baudelaire, *Corr.*, 1: 253.

<sup>717</sup> Baudelaire to “un Correcteur de l’Imprimerie Pillet,” 22 February 1852, in *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*

In his two subsequent essays, Baudelaire made corrections to his earlier blunders, presenting a more factual portrait of Poe.

v. *Transatlantic Circulation*

To a certain extent, Baudelaire's identification with Poe was facilitated by the American author's frequent references to the French language and culture. Many of Poe's tales begin with paratextual insertions of French quotations. For example, Poe used two verses by the French poet Phillippe Quinault as the epigraph to "M.S. Found in a Bottle": "Qui n'a qu'un moment à vivre / N'a plus rien à dissimuler."<sup>719</sup> Likewise, in the epigraph to the "Fall of the House of Usher," we hear two verses by the French chansonnier De Béranger "Son cœur est un luth suspendu / Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne."<sup>720</sup> Poe also quotes from De Béranger in item 246 of his *Marginalia*, first published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in June 1849.

I have great faith in fools: — self-confidence my friends will call it: —

Si demain, oubliant d'éclorre  
Le jour manquait, eh bien! demain  
Quelque fou trouverait encore  
Un flambeau pour le genre humain.

By the way, what with the new electric light and other matters, De Béranger's idea is not so *very* extravagant.<sup>721</sup>

Burton Pollin observes that Poe used De Béranger's quote to satire the ideas advanced by St. Simon, Fourier, and Enfantin and to parody the belief in "human-perfectibility."<sup>722</sup>

The hero of Poe's modern detective trilogy, Monsieur Dupin, is of French nationality, and the detective stories are set in a fictional Paris, which blends real places (Montmartre, the Palais Royal, the Théâtre des Variétés) with imaginary ones. Poe also based his detective Monsieur Dupin on a living French politician, André Marie Jean Jacques Dupin, whom he had discovered while

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<sup>719</sup> Poe, "MS. Found in a Bottle," *CW*, 2:135.

<sup>720</sup> Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," *CW*, 2:397.

<sup>721</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of E.A. Poe*, 16:165.

<sup>722</sup> Poe, *The Collected Writing of Edgar Allan Poe – Volume II: The Brevities* ed. Burton R. Pollin, 387.

working on his 1841 review of R. M. Walsh's translation *Sketches of Living Characters of France*.<sup>723</sup> Poe's detective trilogy was therefore deeply rooted in France's literary, geographical, historical, and political landscape. Not unsurprisingly then, Poe described Paris as "the hot-bed of journalism and Paradise of journalists" in his review of Walsh's translation.<sup>724</sup>

As the "hot-bed of journalism," Paris hosted a transatlantic circulation of foreign texts and, as we have already seen, this circulation was bolstered by technological advancements, such as new printing technologies and speedier modes of transportation. Since Poe often incorporated European traditions in his literary works, the translations of his tales and poems helped European poet-translators develop a modern and self-reflective awareness. Due to this network of exchanges, Brewer and Jesinghausen compare Poe's works to amalgamated translations of different literary styles in Europe:

Poe receives European culture in North America; he synthesizes American, French, German and English literary impulses and translates them into a poetic language of his own. From America, Poe transmits the recycled European substance back to Europe, enthusiastically received in Paris, by Baudelaire.<sup>725</sup>

Through his translations of Poe's works, Baudelaire too gained a self-reflective awareness, which would ultimately help his own works move across national boundaries. Kennedy has shown that Poe purposefully wrote tales that were "Eurocentric" so that he could side step the issues that confronted the American nation, and as we noted earlier, Baudelaire adopted a similar strategy in

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<sup>723</sup> Poe, "Review of Sketches of Living Characters," *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 10.3:133-139. The original work consisted of fifteen biographies of French figures published by Louis de Lémonie in the form of weekly *livraisons*. Other French figures featured in Lémonie's work – and also Walsh's translation – included Chateaubriand, Guizot, Lamartine, Hugo, George Sand, and Béranger. The weekly *livraisons* were eventually compiled into a ten-volume collection entitled *Galerie des contemporains illustrés par un homme de rien* (Paris: A. René, 1842) and described in its back matter: "Tous les personnages éminents de l'époque, en France et à l'étranger, figurent dans cette galerie, qui paraît par livraisons de 36 à 52 pages grand in-18. Chaque livraison, est accompagnée d'un beau portrait. L'ouvrage entier se compose de 120 livraisons et forme 10 volumes contenant chacun 500 pages de texte, 12 biographies et 12 portraits."

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>725</sup> Steve Brewer and Martin Jesinghausen, "European Modernity-Awareness and Transatlantic Intertextuality: Poe's Significance for Baudelaire, Benjamin, and Foucault," in Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson and Will Kaufman, eds., *New Perspectives in Transatlantic Studies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 101-102.

his critical essays on Poe. For Baudelaire, the act of critically writing on both Poe and America served as a means by which he could covertly voice his true opinions on the literary debates that were taking place in France.<sup>726</sup>

Through self-reflection, Baudelaire became particularly aware of how his own works would be perceived by readers: Ideal Readers, Feared Readers, and Capital Readers, to use the terms coined by Whalen. Baudelaire's attentiveness to his authorial identity sharpened his abilities as both poet and critic and ultimately helped him to launch his translations and poetic creations into worldwide fame. As Valéry observed in his *Variété II*: "[...] avec Baudelaire, la poésie française sort enfin des frontières de la nation. Elle se fait lire dans le monde; elle s'impose même .comme la poésie de la modernité..."<sup>727</sup>

## II. Translating Prose: The Trials of the Foreign

Baudelaire's attraction to Poe's prose and poems is a prime example of the growing interest in the foreign and the exotic. For Baudelaire, Poe represented the ultimate foreigner; he was not only a foreign writer but, as we have just seen, also wrote about foreign affairs and often incorporated different languages in his works. Several of his tales ("The Imp of the Perverse," "The Man of the Crowd," "The Murders in Rue Morgue") focus on the unknown and the uncanny. Poe's interest in the foreign even inspired Baudelaire to claim that "étrangeté" is an aesthetic value intimately

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<sup>726</sup> Kennedy. "'A Mania for Composition': Poe's Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building," 8. Kennedy notes that for "much of his career as a magazine writer, Poe [...] explicitly avoided national subjects; of his first 42 tales (out of roughly 70), only a handful explicitly refer to American problems, places, or themes — and then often ironically." Kennedy proposes that there was, however, an "American turn" in Poe's writing. He explains that this period corresponds to a period of great productivity. For Kennedy, this "American turn" begins with Poe's tale "The Gold-Bug" which he published in mid-1843. Kennedy compares this "American turn" to an "'industrious' manic phase" (9), a period of twelve months during which he wrote "almost *one-fifth* of the tales he would publish as a magazinist" (10). Further on, Kennedy calls attention to the parallel between Poe's "American turn" and "an emerging ideology of Manifest Destiny" (21). He also notes that 1844, the year of Poe's "manic productivity", "marked the end of a seven-year economic depression and the return to capitalist investment and business growth" (21). Kennedy asserts that "one may argue retrospectively that the aporia at the heart of American nation-building: the gap between a civic, political, and pluralist nationalism (with its corollary image of an American "melting pot") and the latently homogenous and cultural nationalism tied to a myth of Anglo-Saxon descent" (26).

<sup>727</sup> Valéry, *Variétés II*, 130.

related to the beautiful, one he described as “le condiment de la beauté.”<sup>728</sup>

In his essay “The Trials of the Foreign,” Berman maintains that prose is especially difficult to translate, because it is often polylingual: “[...] prose plunges into the depths, the strata, the polylingualism of language.”<sup>729</sup> Several of Poe’s plotlines center on the audibility of foreign languages, calling attention to how different native languages and cultures lead to varying perceptions of speech, sound, and signification. Poe’s tales depict different kinds of dialogic and heterolinguistic spaces (city streets, stars, mansions, seas, etc.) and these spaces often bring about mix-ups, uncertainty, and disorientation, both emotional and physical. In “M.S Found in a Bottle,” for example, the narrator describes an old Swede’s incomprehensible language: “He muttered to himself, in a low broken tone, some words of a language which I could not understand, and groped in a corner among a pile of singular-looking instruments, and decayed charts of navigation.”<sup>730</sup> Baudelaire added the word “étrange” to his translation of the tale: “Il se parlait lui-même, marmottait d’une voix basse et cassée quelques mots d’une langue que ne je pus pas comprendre, et farfouillait dans un coin où l’on avait empilé des instruments d’un aspect étrange et des cartes marines délabrées.”<sup>731</sup>

Poe’s tales highlight the “dialogic interrelationship with other languages.”<sup>732</sup> When Poe was writing, America had yet to establish a “unitary language” or a “national” literary language. Gerald Kennedy called attention to the myth of a purely Anglo-Saxon descent, noting the “differences of ethnicity, religion, culture, and region” that came to form “American citizenship.”

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<sup>728</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1062.

<sup>729</sup> Berman, “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign,” 285.

<sup>730</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:141.

<sup>731</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 175. The biographer Charles Asselineau, *Charles Baudelaire*, 43, noted that Baudelaire sought help for his translations of nautical terminology: “[...] il courait les tavernes et les tables d’hôtes pour découvrir un marin anglais qui pût lui donner le sens exact des termes de navigation, de manœuvre...”

<sup>732</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse and the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262-275, 273.

Unlike France, Greece, Germany, or Italy — which all underwent revolutions in the wake of the American Revolution — the disparate colonies audaciously claiming to be the united states lacked a language of their own, a shared legendary past, or a traditional culture.<sup>733</sup>

To a certain extent, Poe used what we will refer to as Bakhtinian “dialogization” to create his own authorial style and to build a new style for “American literature.” Mikhail Bakhtin defines dialogization as the exchange of different languages, dialects, and speech types that together challenge the “unitary language,” which moves toward “concrete ideological unification” and “sociopolitical and cultural centralization.”<sup>734</sup> As Bakhtin notes: “Every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces).”<sup>735</sup> Through his translations of Poe, Baudelaire challenged the “centripetal forces” of France’s “unitary language.” By introducing Poe to French readers, Baudelaire presented tales that were heterolinguistic and which therefore incorporated “centrifugal and “stratifying forces.”<sup>736</sup> In several regards, moreover, the heterolinguistic nature of Poe’s tales motivated the structure of Baudelaire’s *poèmes en prose*, contributing to their heterogeneity. As Claude Millet observes: “Le poème en prose s’organise à partir de tout ce qui désorganise et défait le poème: le prosaïque, l’hétérogénéité, la disparate.”<sup>737</sup>

#### *i. Accents and Dialects*

To compose his authorial “oddities,” Poe frequently incorporated different accents and dialects in his tales, as in “The Angel of the Odd,” “The Devil in the Belfry,” and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”. In each of these tales, Poe recounts a series of strange events brought about by differing

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<sup>733</sup> Kennedy. “‘A Mania for Composition’: Poe’s Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building,” 3.

<sup>734</sup> Bakhtin, “Discourse and the Novel,” 271.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>736</sup> Rainier Grutman, “Langues étrangères et savoir romantique: considérations préliminaires,” *TTR* 9.1 (1996), 72, defines “heterolingualisme” as “la textualisation d’idiomes étrangers aussi bien que des variétés (sociales, régionales, chronologiques) de la langue auctoriale.”

<sup>737</sup> Claude Millet “L’écèlement poétique; 1848-1913.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 267.

linguistic perceptions. “The Angel of the Odd,” first published in the *Columbian Magazine* for October 1844, is for Thomas Olive Mabbot “probably the most pleasantly absurd story Poe ever wrote.”<sup>738</sup> In the tale’s opening scene, an anonymous narrator reads an unusual story in the newspaper about a man who died from swallowing a needle while playing a game called puff the dart: “Il jouait au jeu de *puff the dart*...”<sup>739</sup> Quoting the article, the narrator states, “The avenues to death are numerous and strange,”<sup>740</sup> which Baudelaire translates as “Les routes qui conduisent à la mort sont nombreuses et étranges.”<sup>741</sup> Contemplating the newspaper article, the narrator wonders whether or not such an “avenue to death” is truly possible and concludes the story must be a hoax, promising himself not to be duped by such trickery. Soon thereafter, however, an outlandish angel appears to him. Speaking in a strange dialect, the angel attempts to prove that unusual events truly do occur. The angel’s speech serves as a case and point of his argument: “Tiz de troof —dal it is — eberry vord ob it [*sic*].”<sup>742</sup>

The angel’s language and “remarkable voice” have a powerful effect on the narrator and also the tale’s readers. Just as the narrator must attempt to discover the origins of the angel’s tongue, readers must decipher Poe’s invented language, specifically taking note of how he conveys the angel’s dialect through writing. Both narrator and reader must listen to the rumbling that reaches their ears (or eyes), paying particular attention to the angel’s “articulation of syllables and words.”<sup>743</sup> To communicate the angel’s strange accent to his readers, Poe used antisthecon, a rhetorical device referring to “the substitution of one letter or sound for another within in a

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<sup>738</sup> Poe, “The Angel of the Odd,” *CW*, 3:1098.

<sup>739</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 909.

<sup>740</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1101.

<sup>741</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 909.

<sup>742</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3: 1103.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*

word.”<sup>744</sup> By replacing the letter /f/ with the letter /v/, for example, Poe transformed the English word ‘for’ into ‘vor.’ Through antisthecon, the angel’s dialect becomes palpable on both a visual and an audible level: ‘see’ shifts to ‘zee’; ‘is’ changes to ‘iz’; ‘word’ becomes ‘vord.’

One noteworthy example is Poe turning ‘sit’ into ‘zit.’ Unlike our previous examples, this case has a higher probability to confuse the ear (or eye), as both ‘sit’ and ‘zit’ are words in the English language. By replacing the letter /s/ with the letter /z/, Poe strengthens the absurdity of the angel’s dialect. The angel orders the narrator to ‘zit ere’ (‘sit here’) but the narrator might ‘hear’ (or ‘ere’) his words differently: instead of ‘sit here’ (‘zit ere’), he could hear ‘zit ear’ or ‘zit here’ or ‘sit hear.’ This potential mix up gives rise to unusual combinations, pushing the boundaries of language and stretching the imagination. Does ‘ere’ mean ‘hear’, ‘here’, or ‘ear’? Is the angel alluding to the ‘ear’? Is the angel perhaps describing a pimple on his ear or elsewhere, a ‘zit ear’ or a ‘zit here’? Is the angel asking the narrator to sit and listen to him? Does he want the narrator to ‘hear’ his words? Or is the angel expressing the most probable option, simply ordering the narrator to ‘sit here’ (‘zit ere’)?

It is no surprise that Baudelaire’s translation of the angel’s odd speech, *L’Ange du bizarre*, stretched the limits of French orthography. His translation appeared on February 17, 1860. Two months later, Baudelaire complained that, due to printing errors, his translation included several mistakes, only some of which were planned. In a letter written to Alfred Guichon on May 26, 1860, he called attention to these errors: “Je ne parle que par mémoire de *L’Ange du bizarre*, qui a paru, il y a quelque temps, à la *Presse*, et qui malheureusement a paru avec de telles fautes et de telles omissions que toute la drôlerie en a été effacée.”<sup>745</sup> In a letter written to Alfred Guichon on July

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<sup>744</sup> Brett Zimmerman, “A Catalogue of Selected Rhetorical Devices Used in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe,” *Style* 33.4 (1999): 642.

<sup>745</sup> Baudelaire to Alfred Guichon, 26 May 1860, *Corr.*, 2:51.



13, 1860, Baudelaire described the consequences of these errors in further detail, noting that the printer had incorrectly skipped lines: “[...] l’orthographe figurative, volontairement absurde, n’a pas été suivie, mais encore où ont été sauté des lignes entières entre les mots, ce qui rend les phrases inintelligibles.”<sup>746</sup> Ironically, the circumstances surrounding Baudelaire’s translation corresponded to the events described in the opening of Poe’s tale. As the tale begins, the narrator explains that in a state of “despair,” he began to read a “stray newspaper.” The narrator even read the unintelligible editorial matter “[...] from beginning to end without understanding a syllable,”<sup>747</sup> conceiving “the possibility of its being in Chinese.”<sup>748</sup> From the onset, Poe introduced two of his tale’s main themes: the relationship between the misperception of syllables and the disbelief in print or “dispelief vat iz print in de print [*sic*].”<sup>749</sup> As Baudelaire translates: “[...] bur ne bas groire se gui hait ibrimé tans l’imbrimé. C’est la phéridé, la phéridé, mot bur mot [*sic*].”<sup>750</sup> Gerber upholds that the narrator’s disbelief or “dispelief” in print was a means by which Poe critiqued “the spirit of social reform” and the idea that the acquisition of knowledge could lead to human perfectibility.<sup>751</sup> According to Gerber, the tale illustrates that “learning a lot produces indigestion—and eventually nightmares.”<sup>752</sup> The narrator’s “consumption of ingestible quantities of food, drink, and learned books” serves as a parody of “utopian excesses”<sup>753</sup> and the followers of Charles

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<sup>746</sup> Baudelaire to Guichon, 26 May 1860, in *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>747</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1101.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.* Walter Benjamin provides a helpful historical account of the expansion of the press following the July Revolution. “In 1824, there were 47,000 newspaper subscribers in Paris; in 1836, there were 70,000; and in 1846, there were 200,000. [...] short, abrupt news items began to compete with detailed reports. These news items caught on because they could be employed commercially. The so-called *réclame* paved the way for them; this was an apparently independent notice which was actually paid for by a publisher and which appeared in the editorial section of the newspaper, referring to a book that had been advertised the day before or in the same issue.” See Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life* ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 60.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 1102.

<sup>750</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 911.

<sup>751</sup> Gerald E. Gerber. “Poe’s Odd Angel.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 23 no. 1 (1968), 89.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*

Fourier, or the “*Believers in everything Odd*.”<sup>754</sup> Kennedy maintains that the narrator’s inebriated vision of the Angel mocks American foolishness and stupidity.<sup>755</sup>

For the readerly consumers of Poe’s tale, the Angel’s strange accent has the power to produce the effect of indigestion that the narrator both describes and experiences. In addition to blurring the boundaries between different languages, the angel’s speech blurs the boundaries within the English language itself. The word “troof”, for example, might fool both the ear and the eye, for it seems to mix “truth” and “proof” and the phrase “dal it is” (“all it is”) might be mistakenly read as “dat it is” (“that it is”). Furthermore, since this muddling of linguistic boundaries is temporal in nature, modern readers might have a different experience of indigestion than the readers living during Poe’s time. For example, the angel’s pronunciation of “sit” as “zit” proves to be an effect of indigestion that is particular to the modern reader; the *OED* notes that the word “zit” is a slang term of unknown origin chiefly used in North America and among its examples of the word “zit” in quotation, the earliest comes from 1966.<sup>756</sup>

While working on his translation, Baudelaire transferred a presumably German accent in English to a German accent in French. To do so, he used the same rhetorical device as Poe: antisthecon. Baudelaire’s translation corresponds to several of Poe’s own substitutions. Baudelaire replaced the letter /f/ with the letter /v/, such that ‘il faut’ (“it is necessary”) becomes ‘il vaut’ (“it is worth”), a shift which confuses necessity and value. Baudelaire switched /v/ to /ph/: ‘vous’ becomes ‘phus,’ ‘vérité’ becomes ‘phéridé,’ ‘voir’ becomes ‘phoir’. Baudelaire also replaced the letter /s/ with /z/: ‘soyez’ becomes ‘zoyez,’ ‘soûl’ becomes ‘zou,’ “suis” becomes “zuis”. These changes in French spelling act as what Bakhtin refers to as “stratifying forces.” The spelling

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<sup>754</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>755</sup> Kennedy. “‘A Mania for Composition’: Poe’s Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building,” 13.

<sup>756</sup> See “zit,” *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press March 2017), accessed February 18, 2018.

mistakes break away from unitary language, moving against “sociopolitical and cultural centralization.”<sup>757</sup> According to Barthes, spelling mistakes and orthographical abnormalities often produce a pleasurable readerly experience:

... que l'on songe à la sorte d'ivresse, de jubilation baroque, qui éclate à travers les 'aberrations' orthographiques des anciens manuscrits, des textes d'enfants et des lettres d'étrangers : ne dirait-on pas que dans ces efflorescences le sujet cherche sa liberté : de tracer, de rêver, de se souvenir, d'entendre ?<sup>758</sup>

In addition to antisthecon, Poe's used barbarismus, a rhetorical device referring to a “mistake in vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar — an illiterate expression that violates the rules of language due to ignorance or confusion.”<sup>759</sup> Calling attention to the narrator's apparently drunken state, the Angel of the Odd exclaims: “[...] you mus be pe so dronk as de pig, den, for not zee me as I zit here at your zide [*sic*].”<sup>760</sup> In Baudelaire's translation, we read: “[...] il vaut gué plus zoyez zou gomme ein borgue, bur ne bas me phoir gand che zuis azis isi à godé de plus [*sic*].”<sup>761</sup> Baudelaire's translation blurs the boundaries between drunkenness and craziness: does “zou” mean “fou” or “soûl”?

To note one more significant passage, Baudelaire directly changed the angel's insult and, in doing so, related the angel's attack to the tongue and the spoken word: “[...] vy vat a low bred buppy ye mos be vor to ask a gentleman and an angel apout his pizziness [*sic*].”<sup>762</sup> The angel's pronunciation of the word “business” (“pizziness”) sounds and looks more like “dizziness” and it seems to reflect Poe's critique of the American capitalist, much like in his satire “The Business Man” published in 1840. Gerber suggests that the term ‘pizziness’ “could be a pun on ‘pizzle’ or ‘in certain quadrupeds, the part which is official to generation and the discharge or urine.”<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>757</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 271.

<sup>758</sup> Roland Barthes, “Accordons la liberté de tracer,” *Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 58.

<sup>759</sup> Zimmerman, “A Catalogue of Selected Rhetorical Devices Used in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe”, 642.

<sup>760</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1012.

<sup>761</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 911.

<sup>762</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1012.

<sup>763</sup> Gerald E. Gerber. “Poe's Odd Angel.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 23 no. 1 (1968), 92.

Additionally, Gerber proposes that this pun on ‘pizzle’ could “explain the angel’s otherwise confusing insistence that he is not a chicken and has no wings.”<sup>764</sup> Baudelaire’s translation of this passage adds further distortion to the angel’s puzzling remarks.

#### **The Angel of the Odd**

“[...] vy vat a low bred buppy ye mos be vor to ask a gentleman and an angel apout his pizziness [*sic*].”<sup>765</sup>

#### **L’Ange du Bizarre**

“[...] oh! guelle phile esbesse de vaguin mal ellefé haite-plus tongue, bur temanter à ein tchintleman et à ein anche z’il vait tes avaires [*sic*].”<sup>766</sup>

While Poe’s original phrase switched to a traditional English spelling, Baudelaire’s translation continued to modify the angel’s strange accent.<sup>767</sup> In his translation of Poe’s correctly spelled English “to ask a gentleman and an angel,” Baudelaire incorporated the German article “ein”: (“ein tchintleman,” “ein anche”). Furthermore, Baudelaire distorted the English word “gentleman” and not the French word “monsieur,” creating the word “tchintleman,” which is especially difficult to decipher.

In a commentary on Poe’s translation of “The Angel of the Odd,” Y.-G. Le Dantec draws a parallel between the tale and Baudelaire’s prose poem “Assommons les pauvres!”<sup>768</sup> In the opening of Baudelaire’s poem, the narrator explains that he confined himself to his room for a fortnight, reading fashionable books about the art of making people happy, rich, and wise. The readings put him in a state of confusion and he is especially annoyed by the absurd rantings of entrepreneurs, which advise the enslavement of the poor: “...On ne trouvera pas surprenant que je fusse alors dans un état d’esprit avoisinant le vertige ou la stupidité.”<sup>769</sup> Soon after these remarks,

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<sup>764</sup> Ibid.

<sup>765</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1012.

<sup>766</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 912.

<sup>767</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1013.

<sup>768</sup> Henri Justin has noted that André Breton featured Poe’s “The Angel of the Odd” in his *Anthology of Black Humor*. See Henri Justin. “The Paradoxes of Poe’s Reception in France.” *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 11.1 (2010): 80.

<sup>769</sup> See the “Notes et Variantes” in Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1117.

the narrator hears the voice of an angel speaking in his ear: "...j'entendis une voix chuchotait à mon oreille, une voix que je reconnus bien; c'était celle d'un bon Ange, ou d'un bon Démon, qui m'accompagne partout."<sup>770</sup> Much like Poe's tale, Baudelaire's prose poem adopts a narrative form. On a more general level, Baudelaire's adoption of this narrative form in several of his prose poems has led Daniel Sangsue to question if Baudelaire invented a new literary genre:

On peut dès lors se demander si Baudelaire n'a pas aussi contribué à populariser un nouveau type de récit bref qui *serait au croisement du poème en prose et de la nouvelle*: un récit 'minimaliste' en quelque sorte, qui conjuguerait les effets de totalité et de finalité de la nouvelle à la concision et à l'attention au langage du poème en prose.<sup>771</sup>

In a similar vein to "The Angel of the Odd," Baudelaire's translation of "The Devil in the Belfry," first published in *Le Pays* on September 20, 1854, also portrays a confusion of tongues. In his commentary on the tale, Mabbott notes that Poe aimed to create the "effects of discord on the sensitive listener."<sup>772</sup> The grotesque tale takes place in an imaginary "bourg hollandais de Vondervotteimittus."<sup>773</sup> The town's inhabitants are dull and have a strange obsession with cabbages and clocks but, after the devil arrives to the town, the inhabitants' sense of routine is profoundly shaken. The devil takes over the belfry and violently rings an imaginary time: thirteen o'clock. In his translation entitled "Le Diable dans le Beffroi", Baudelaire maintained the name of the imaginary town, which plays with the English expression "wonder what time it is": "Vondervoteimittis."<sup>774</sup> Additionally, like Poe, Baudelaire used *antisthecon* to suggest a German pronunciation of French numbers.

### **The Devil in the Belfry**

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<sup>770</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, vol. I, 305.

<sup>771</sup> Daniel Sangsue, "Formes brèves. Le conte et la nouvelle au XIXe siècle." in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 104.

<sup>772</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2: 362.

<sup>773</sup> Baudelaire initially rendered this as "le bourg deutsch," mistaking Dutch for German; see *EAP*, 1091.

<sup>774</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2; 365.

Von, Doo, Dree, Eleben, Dwelf, and Dirteen,”<sup>775</sup>

**Le Diable dans le Beffroi**

Hine, Teusse, Droisse, Honsse, Tousse, and Draisse.<sup>776</sup>

Much like his translation of “The Angel of the Odd,” Baudelaire added further distortion to Poe’s tale. While Poe incorporated the true German word for “devil” (Der Teufel), Baudelaire switched “Teufel” to “Tarteifle.”

**The Devil in the Belfry**

Der Teufel! groaned they, ‘Dirteen! Dirteen!! — Min Gott, it is Dirteen o’clock!! [sic]<sup>777</sup>

**Le Diable dans le Beffroi**

Tarteifle! — gémirent-ils. — Draisse! — draisse!! — Mein Gott, il aître, draisse heires [sic]!!!<sup>778</sup>

The confusion of time and language in Poe’s tale recalls Baudelaire poem “L’horloge,” which portrays the clock as a sinister God. Line 14 describes how the clock’s metal throat speaks every language and, in line 13, the clock cries out “remember” in three different languages, English, French, and Latin: “Remember! Souviens-toi, prodigue! esto memor! / (Mon gosier de métal parle toutes les langues).”<sup>779</sup>

Finally, in his detective tale “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Poe describes the effects of linguistic confusion. After Madame de l’Espanaye and Mademoiselle Camille L’Espanaye are violently murdered in their Parisian apartment, a group of witnesses recount their aural experiences of the event. Since the witnesses come from different countries and have different native languages (French, English, Dutch, Spanish), their experiences do not agree.<sup>780</sup> Most of the witnesses hear two voices: a gruff voice speaking in French and a shrill voice speaking in an undetermined

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<sup>775</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>776</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 420-421.

<sup>777</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:373.

<sup>778</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 421.

<sup>779</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, 1:76.

<sup>780</sup> Gutbrodt, “Poedelaire: Translation and the Volatility of the Letter,” 63, has commented on how the narrator’s national identity and maternal tongue in Poe’s trilogy of detective tales is ultimately indeterminable.

language. The gendarme Isidore Muset describes the “shrill voice” as “strange” and as that of a foreigner: “[he] could not make out what was said, but believed the language to be Spanish.”<sup>781</sup> The neighbor Henri Duval thinks the “shrill voice” was “that of an Italian.”<sup>782</sup> The next witness, Odenheimer, is a foreigner from Amsterdam who requires an interpreter to give his testimony. Unlike the former witnesses who are both French, Odenheimer believes the “shrill voice” was that of a Frenchman.<sup>783</sup> The tailor William Bird is an Englishman and also a foreign witness and believed the “shrill voice” was certainly not speaking in English; he thinks the language was German but “does not understand German.”<sup>784</sup> The undertaker Alfonzo Garcio is a “native of Spain.” Although he does not understand English, Garcio believes that the “shrill voice” was “that of an Englishman,” since it seemed to have the same intonation as an English speaker.<sup>785</sup> Finally, the Italian confectioner, Alberto Montani, thinks the shrill voice was a Russian’s, although he has never “conversed with a native of Russia.”<sup>786</sup> Using his skills of ratiocination, the detective Dupin cracks the confusing linguistic riddle and discovers that, in fact, the “shrill voice” had been that of an orangutan.

## *ii. Revisions*

While working on his translations, Baudelaire made several different corrections. To note just one particularly striking revision, let us consider his work on the detective story “The Mystery of Marie Roget.” Before publishing his translation, Baudelaire had a heated debate with his editor Lévy over the difference between *Shirt* and *Skirt*. On May 31, 1864, Baudelaire explained that he had used a German edition to make his translation but, due to its extremely small print, Baudelaire

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<sup>781</sup> Poe, CW, 2:540.

<sup>782</sup> See *ibid.*: “[he] could not distinguish the words, but was convinced by the intonation that the speaker was an Italian”

<sup>783</sup> In *ibid.*, 541, he also notes that the voice is more “harsh” than “shrill.”

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*, 542.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*, 543.

mistakenly misread *Shirt* and not *Skirt*: "...j'ai lu, en plusieurs endroits, *Shirt* au lieu de *Skirt* (*Jupon* au lieu de *Chemise*)..."<sup>787</sup> Given that Poe based his tale off of a true murder trial in New York, Baudelaire insisted that his translation needed to be accurate, noting that he needed to maintain similarity in repetition, especially in the case of quotation. On June 1, 1864, he wrote to Lévy, explaining his unacceptable blunder: "...j'ai [...] commis un joli contresens *qui court maintenant d'un bout à l'autre de l'ouvrage*."<sup>788</sup> Baudelaire told his editor that in order to revise his translation, he needed to have a full copy of his translation so that he could correct it in its entirety. When his editor failed to respond promptly, Baudelaire angrily expressed the urgency of his request:

— Un travail comme *Marie Roget*, étant une instruction judiciaire, — comme l'*Assassinat de la rue Morgue*, — demande une exactitude minutieuse dans les plus petits détails, et, en cas de citations tirées du commencement, une similitude absolue dans la répétition de ces citations à la fin.<sup>789</sup>

### iii. *Translating the Maternal Tongue*

In his tales and literary reviews, Poe frequently used soraismus, a rhetorical device referring to “mingling languages through ignorance or a desire to show off.”<sup>790</sup> In his adolescence, Poe learned Latin, French and Greek while studying abroad in England and continued his foreign language studies at the University of Virginia, enrolling in the department of ancient and modern language where he received highest honors in Latin and French. In his literary works, Poe made efforts to show off his language abilities. In addition to soriasmus, he used peregrinism, a rhetorical device referring to the “use of linguistic terms borrowed from a foreign language” and to the imitation of “the sound system, graphy, and sentence melodies as well as grammatical, lexical or syntactic forms” of other languages.<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> Baudelaire to Noël Parfait, 31 May 1864, *Corr.*, 2:65.

<sup>788</sup> Baudelaire to Michel Lévy, 1 June 1864, *Corr.*, 2:65.

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>790</sup> Zimmerman, “A Catalogue of Selected Rhetorical Devices Used in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe”, 654.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*



Since Poe frequently included French expressions and phrases in his works, Baudelaire encountered his maternal tongue through the perspective of a foreigner. In several of his translations, Baudelaire maintained Poe's inclusions of the French language, such as in his translation of "The Angel of the Odd" ("*contre-temps*," "*accidents bizarres*," "*l'élite*") and "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" ("*maison de santé*," "*à la sauce veloutée*," "Mille pardons, mam'zelle," "*mon ami*," "*morceau*," "*au chat*," "*bagatelle*").<sup>792</sup> In this particular tale, Baudelaire included a translator's note explaining that Poe's incorporation of terms relating to French cuisine were stereotypical and often outdated:

À propos du veau *à la Sainte-Menehould*, de la *sauce veloutée*, de la *vieille cour*, etc. il ne faut pas oublier que l'auteur est américain, et que, comme tous les auteurs anglais et américains, il a la manie d'employer des termes français et de faire parades d'idées françaises, - termes et idées d'un répertoire un peu suranné. (C.B.)<sup>793</sup>

Although Baudelaire maintained Poe's French expressions on some occasions, Edith Philips has observed that on other occasions, Baudelaire changed Poe's French "into good French currency."<sup>794</sup> For example, Baudelaire altered Poe's personal interpretation of the French adjective "*recherché*," which in his works, referred to as a "carefully sought out choice."<sup>795</sup> In "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe wrote that "victory can be decided upon only by some *recherché* movement," which Baudelaire rendered as "la victoire ne peut être décidée que par une tactique habile."<sup>796</sup> Similarly, in "The Purloined Letter," Poe described "such *recherché* nooks for concealment," which Baudelaire rendered as "des cachettes aussi originales."<sup>797</sup> Calling attention to another significant example, Phillips explains that Poe often used the adjective "outré" to convey

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<sup>792</sup> Poe first published this tale in *Graham's Magazine* in November 1845. Baudelaire's translation first appeared in *Le monde illustré* in January 1865.

<sup>793</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1118.

<sup>794</sup> Edith Phillips, "The French of Edgar Allan Poe," *American Speech* 2.6 (March 1927): 270.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*

the eccentric or that which is beyond the limits of what is normal. However, Baudelaire “invariably avoids” this adjective in his translations.<sup>798</sup>

### III. Baudelaire’s Translation of “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains”

In February 1778, Franz Anton Mesmer arrived in Paris and declared he had discovered a fluid that was found in all human bodies. He claimed that the fluid had a magnetic force like that of gravity and had the power to connect multiple bodies to one another. Robert Darnton explains the wide appeal of Mesmer’s ideas: “mesmerism expressed the Enlightenment’s faith in reason taken to an extreme, an Enlightenment run wild, which later was to provoke a movement toward the opposite extreme in the form of romanticism.”<sup>799</sup> Prior to the French Revolution, Mesmer’s pseudo-scientific theories were one of the most popular subjects in French pamphlets; it came to signal a radical mentality and was promoted by those who sought change in French politics and society.

Like mesmerism, translation challenges spatio-temporal boundaries, calling into question a teleological understanding of time. Yet with regard to what one might call the mesmeric *rapport* in translated works— that is, the relationship between the “mesmerized” (reader/translator) and the “mesmerizer” (author) — translation breaks down these binaries, altering the magnetic relationship.<sup>800</sup> In his three essays on Poe, Baudelaire described the American author as “clairvoyant,” a quality that intimately relates to Poe’s tales of mesmerism and hypnosis, such as “Mesmeric Revelation,” which first appeared in August 1844 in the *Columbia Magazine* and was translated by Baudelaire in *La Liberté de penser* on July 15, 1848. Poe’s earliest mesmeric work

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>799</sup> Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 39.

<sup>800</sup> For more on Poe’s mesmeric relationship to his readers, see Sidney E. Lind, “Poe and Mesmerism,” *PMLA* 4 (1947): 1077-1094. See also Zane Gillespie, “‘Mesmeric Revelation’: Art as Hypnosis,” *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 2016): 142-160.

“A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” imaginatively delves into themes of telepathy, reincarnation, and Mesmer’s theories of electromagnetic waves.

*i. Retitling: Memory and the “Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe”*

Necessity of paying heed over many years to every causal citation, to every fleeting mention of a book.

— Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

The structure of Poe’s tale involves a narrative within a narrative. As the narrator recounts Bedloe’s account of a dream-like experience, Bedloe explains his dream to Dr. Templeton. He describes a day in November when he did not come home from his daily walk. On this particular day, a series of strange events unfolded: he discovered a gorge, encountered a hyena, and was transported from the mountains of Charlottesville to the mountains of Benares, India. The strange occurrences climax when Bedloe is fatally shot by a poisoned arrow in his right temple, thus wounding him on a part of the body that recalls his doctor’s name (Templeton) and that Poe associates with poetic gift, as Mabbott notes: “Phrenologists consider great expansion above the regions of the temple a sign of ideality, or poetic gift. Poe used the word ‘ideality’ in the phrenological sense in his criticism, and may have liked the notion, for he had a high forehead himself.”<sup>801</sup> As Bedloe narrates these events, Templeton listens as if he has already heard the story and, when he concludes the story, Templeton shows him a miniature of his deceased friend Oldeb, who died in 1780 during the Indian Insurrection against the British led by Cheyte Singh and who bears a striking resemblance to Bedloe. Templeton goes on to tell Bedloe that he had been writing down his memories of Oldeb’s death forty-seven years ago at the same time that Bedloe was experiencing his strange day. One week after this conversation, the tale’s anonymous narrator explains that Bedloe died from a poisonous black leech that Dr. Templeton had placed on his temple to stop the

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<sup>801</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:418 and 402.

heavy bleeding from the arrow wound. In the tale's conclusions, the narrator notes that in Bedloe's obituary, the editors made a typographical error, deleting the *e* in his name and rendering it a perfect anagram of Oldeb (Oldeb-Bedloe).

The "mirror-image" of the same name (Oldeb-Bedloe) reinforces the tale's themes of metempsychosis and transmigration. Kennedy upholds that Poe uses this "mirror-image", or what he refers to as "twinning", to critique the path to empire, asserting that Poe deliberately made an "association between the Native Americans mistakenly called Indians and the people of the Asian subcontinent who resisted British rule."<sup>802</sup> For Kennedy, "the twinning of Bedloe and Mr. Oldeb [...] hints that, like British imperialism in India, American efforts to subjugate dark-skinned, indigenous populations may have fatal consequences."<sup>803</sup> On the debate surrounding this point, Kennedy notes that "contrary to the assumptions of some cultural critics, Poe deplored the Anglo-American decimation and displacement of native people and (following Irving's lead) proposed in 1846 that the nation be called 'Appalachia' in order to honor the Aborigines."<sup>804</sup>

By retitling Poe's tale "Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe", Baudelaire substitutes the initial attention to setting (i.e., the Ragged Mountains in Charlottesville that transform into the mountains in Benares, India) with a twofold focus: the memorized patient's name (M. Auguste Bedloe) and memories ("souvenirs"). The name "Auguste Bedloe" had originally alluded to William Bedloe, a seventeenth century English informer against the papists. Thomas Babington Macaulay's essay mentioned "Bedloe" in the essay on Warren Hastings that he published in the *Edinburgh Review* in October 1841. Macaulay's essay formed part of the historical archive concerning the insurrection in Benares, India, which was circulating when Poe wrote his work and

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<sup>802</sup> Kennedy. "'A Mania for Composition': Poe's Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building," 19.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid.

as Mabbott has noted, Macaulay's essay was one of many sources that Poe used to tell his tale of reincarnation.<sup>805</sup> Commenting on the tale's unique combinations of many different sources and reused materials, Mabbott writes: "Whatever its basis, this tale is another demonstration of Poe's extraordinary ability to put together images and ideas from a number of different recognizable sources to make a coherent fabric distinctively his own."<sup>806</sup>

The "souvenirs" in Baudelaire's title call to mind not only Bedloe's personal "souvenirs," but also the narrator's and Templeton's memories of Bedloe. For Templeton, these memories merge with his experience of the Indian insurrection in 1780, during which his friend Oldeb was killed. By retitling Poe's tale, Baudelaire succeeds in simultaneously alluding to these different layers of individual memories. Through the juxtaposition of "souvenirs" and the patient's name ("M. Auguste Bedloe"), Baudelaire's retitling foreshadows the synchronous relationship between Bedloe and Templeton's late friend Oldeb, laying emphasis on a historical and collective dream from the onset.

*ii. Translation as Retelling: The Thousand and One Nights*

In addition to retitling Poe's tale, Baudelaire's translation involves another shift in titles. While narrating his mesmeric transportation to Benares, India, Bedloe explains that from the "foot of a mountain," he looked upon an "Eastern-looking city." Bedloe compares this city to the folk stories told in the "Arabian Tales," a collection of fairy tales also known as *The Thousand and One Nights*. To emphasize the significance of this modification in titles, let us briefly turn to Borges' essay on the different translations and versions of these tales.<sup>807</sup> In his essay, Borges traces the earliest association between the tales and the number "thousand" to its Persian version *Hazar Afasana* or

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<sup>805</sup> See Mabbott's notes on these historical parallels in Poe, *CW*, 2:950.

<sup>806</sup> See Mabbott's preface to Poe's tale in *ibid.*, 936.

<sup>807</sup> L. Moffitt Cecil, "Poe's 'Arabesque,'" *Comparative Literature* 18.1 (Winter 1966), 61, provides a comprehensive account of the tales' translations into English, which helps to trace their influence on the Romantic movement.

“the thousand tales,” which were made using the tales’ first compilation in Egypt in the fifteenth century. This leads Borges to ask an essential question, “Why were there first a thousand tales and a later a thousand and one?”, to which he offers the following hypothesis:

First, there was the superstition – and superstition is very important in this case – that even numbers are evil omens. They then sought an odd number and added *and one*. If they had made it nine hundred and ninety-nine we would have felt there was a night missing. This way we feel that we have been given something infinite, that we have received a bonus – another night.<sup>808</sup>

This “bonus night” suggests the idea of infinity plus one. Due to the movement between languages, Baudelaire’s translation shifts the title of the English version *The Arabian Nights* to the title of its French version, “les *Mille et une Nuits*,” thus evoking the idea of an added bonus. It is worth mentioning that Poe added an extra bonus to this infinity through his own tale “The Thousand-And-Second Tale of Scheherazade,” first published in *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book* in 1845.<sup>809</sup>

According to Borges, *The Thousand and One Nights* is a prime example of the “eternal processes of literature and poetry.” These “eternal processes” challenge the Western invention of history, which as Borges explains, relies on the false belief in chronology and the succession of facts.<sup>810</sup> Through his study on the “inexhaustible book,” Borges questions traditional historical timelines and proposes an alternative beginning to the Romantic movement. Contrary to popular belief, Borges suggests that the Romantic movement emerged in the early eighteenth century:

When we think of the Romantic movement, we usually think of dates much later. But it might be said that the Romantic movement begins when someone, in Normandy or in Paris, reads *The Thousand and One Nights*. He leaves the world legislated by Boileau and enters the world of Romantic freedom.<sup>811</sup>

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<sup>808</sup> Jorge Luis Borges and Eliot Weinberger, “The Thousand and One Nights,” *The Georgia Review* 38.3 (Fall 1984), 569.

<sup>809</sup> See *CW*, 3:1149-1174. Several French writers also played with this title: Dumas wrote a collection entitled *Les Mille et un fantômes*; Gautier wrote a tale entitled “La mille et deuxième nuit.” See Daniel Sangsue, “Formes brèves. Le conte et la nouvelle au XIXe siècle.” in *Histoire de la France littéraire*. T. 3. eds. Patrick Berthier and Michel Jarrety (Paris: PUF, 2006), 93.

<sup>810</sup> Borges and Weinberger, “The Thousand and One Nights,” 569.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, 574.

The French orientalist Antoine Galland published the first European volume of the *Mille et une nuits* in 1704. Through Bedloe's allusion to *The Arabian Nights*, and more importantly through Baudelaire's shift to the title "les *Mille et une Nuits*," the movement of translation raises questions concerning historical movement. Poe's tale itself calls attention to historiographical "error" and exposes the boundary between fact and fiction. Zwarg claims that it "opens our view" to the "homogenous, empty time" that Benjamin hopes to "explode" through his traumatic reading of history"<sup>812</sup> Kennedy notes that Poe concludes "his tale with the resonant word 'error'"<sup>813</sup>

### iii. *Translation and Trace: Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*

The creative process...consists in an unconscious activation of the archetype and in an...elaboration of this original image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist in some measure translates this image into the language of the present.  
– Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

The accentuation of memory in Baudelaire's retitling resonates with two sections in his *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*: "V. Mnémonique" and "VI. Les Annales de la Guerre." In a similar vein to the "souvenirs" evoked in Baudelaire's retitling, the title of section V of his *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* emphasizes the art of memory. Referring to Constantin Guys, an illustrator for British and French newspapers, as M.G, Baudelaire describes the artist's innate ability to create a "despotic mnemonic" that captivates the spectator. On several occasions, Baudelaire uses the word translation to communicate the effects of M.G's works. For example, he compares the artist's drawings to a legendary translation or a "traduction *légendaire*"<sup>814</sup>:

Ainsi, M.G., traduisant fidèlement ses propres impressions, marque avec une énergie instinctive les points culminants ou lumineux d'un objet (ils peuvent être culminant ou lumineux au point de vue dramatique), ou ses principales caractéristiques, quelquefois même avec une exagération utile pour la mémoire humaine ;<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> Christina Zwarg, "Vigorous Currents, Painful Archives: The Production of Affect and History in Poe's 'Tale of the Ragged Mountains,'" *Poe Studies* 43 no. 1 (2010): 9.

<sup>813</sup> Kennedy. "'A Mania for Composition': Poe's Annus Mirabilis and the Violence of Nation-Building," 20.

<sup>814</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, 1:698.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

Baudelaire also notes that spectators are required to translate M. G's works: "Le spectateur est ici le traducteur d'une traduction toujours claire et enivrante."<sup>816</sup>

In his subsequent section, "Les Annales de la Guerre," Baudelaire focuses on the historical significance of these "translations," explaining that M.G. is an archivist of the Orient and its wars. Even more importantly, M.G. is an archivist of life itself:

J'ai compulsé **ces archives de la guerre d'Orient** (champs de bataille jonchés de débris funèbres, charrois de matériaux, embarquements de bestiaux et de chevaux), tableaux vivants et surprenants, **décalqués** sur la vie elle-même, éléments d'un pittoresque précieux que beaucoup de peintres en renom, placés dans les mêmes circonstances, auraient étourdiment négligés [...]. **M.G. a des rapports visibles, si on veut ne le considérer que comme archiviste de la vie.**<sup>817</sup>

Baudelaire compared these sketches to an untranslatable poem, coupling the verb "traduire" with the noun "souvenir":

En vérité, **il est difficile à la simple plume de traduire ce poème fait de mille croquis**, si vaste et si compliqué, et d'exprimer l'ivresse qui se dégage de ce pittoresque, douloureux souvent, mais jamais larmoyant, amassé sur quelques centaines de pages, dont les maculatures et les déchirures disent à leur manière, **le trouble et le tumulte au milieu desquels l'artiste y déposait ses souvenirs de la journée.**<sup>818</sup>

M. G's attempt to draw "souvenirs" of the day's tumultuous events calls attention to the transient rhythm of modernity, an idea which is reinforced by Baudelaire's juxtaposition of "maintenant" and "ancien": "Maintenant, sur des sentiers âpres et sinueux, jonchés de quelques débris anciens..." In his conclusion, Baudelaire used the verb "traduire" once again. In this case, Baudelaire related translation to the technology of engraving, an innovation that allowed reproductions of the artist's sketches to appear in the news: "Il est malheureux que cet album, disséminé, maintenant en plusieurs lieux, et dont les pages précieuses ont été retenues par les graveurs de les traduire ou par les rédacteurs de l'*Illustrated London News*, n'ait pas passé sous les yeux de l'Empereur."<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid., 700-701.

<sup>818</sup> Ibid., 702-703.

<sup>819</sup> Ibid., 703.



iv. *Bedloe's Shocks*

Poe makes his tales audible through homonyms, repeating certain linguistic structures. Since he sought to create an unexpected effect, Poe first trained the reader's ear. In the conclusion to "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," the *soul-sole* homonym recalls the first textual moment in which one hears a description of the soul:

I now arose hurriedly, and in a state of fearful agitation — for the fancy that I dreamed would serve me no longer. I saw — I felt that I had perfect command of my senses —and these senses now brought to my soul a world of novel and singular sensation. The heart became all at once intolerable. A strange odor loaded the breeze. A low continuous murmur, like that arising from a full, but gently-flowing river, came to my ears, intermingled with the peculiar hum of multitudinous voices.<sup>820</sup>

In the climax of Poe's tale, Bedloe narrates his sentiment of shock and nonentity. By way of repetition, Poe develops a semantics of prosody that plays with the "sole-soul" homonym, which corresponds to the singularity of Bedloe's "soul" while subtly sounding out the homonym "sole", which evokes the singularity of Bedloe's foot and his strange walk in the Ragged Mountains. As Bedloe details his out-of-body experience, Poe lays emphasis on this "sole-soul" parallel. After feeling a "sudden shock," Bedloe explains that he retraced his "circuitous path" in the mountains: "For many minutes, [...] my sole sentiment—my sole feeling—was that of darkness and nonentity, with the consciousness of death. There seemed to pass a violent and sudden shock through my soul, as if of electricity."<sup>821</sup> Soon thereafter, Bedloe reports a different "shock." Unlike his first shock, which transported him out of his body, Bedloe's second shock returns him to his corpse and his former identity: "When I had attained that point of the ravine in the mountains, at which I had encountered the hyena, I again experienced a shock as of a galvanic battery, the sense of weight, of volition, of substance, returned."<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:944.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, 948-949.

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*

By introducing changes through repetition, Baudelaire adds variation to sameness and also creates his own signifying chain. To translate Bedloe's first shock, Baudelaire used the less literal term "secousse" but, for Bedloe's second shock, he used the more literal "choc." Baudelaire's translation repeats the word "secousse," thus forming a "secousse-soudaine-secousse" chain which echoes with the "souvenirs" in the title: "A la longue, il me sembla qu'une secousse violente et soudaine comme l'électricité traversait mon âme. Avec cette secousse vint le sens de l'élasticité et de la lumière."<sup>823</sup>

Following his first shock, Bedloe retraced his tortuous walk in the Ragged mountains, prior to which he had taken his daily dose of morphine. Baudelaire shifted the plural "mountains" to the singular "montagne": "I bent my steps immediately to the mountains..." becomes "[j]e dirigeai mes pas immédiatement vers la montagne..."<sup>824</sup> To characterize the thick fog that penetrated the scene depicted by Bedloe, Baudelaire uses the adjective "poétique," thus accentuating the ways in which Poe's text enlivens the reader's imagination. Baudelaire's adjectival decision is an excellent example of how the act of translation leads to metareflection: "[s]o dense was this pleasant fog" becomes "cette brume poétique était si dense."<sup>825</sup> Through this nuanced alteration, Baudelaire's translation provides a metacommentary on the poetic effect of Poe's writing. The "brume poétique" significantly recalls Poe's poem "The Sleeper," first published in 1841, which opens a striking intertextual space:

An opiate vapour, dewy, dim,  
Exhales from out her golden rim,  
And softly dripping, drop by drop,  
Upon the quiet mountain top,  
Steals drowsily and musically  
Into the universal valley.  
The rosemary nods upon the grave;  
The lily lolls upon the wave;

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<sup>823</sup> Baudelaire, "Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe," *EAP*, 231.

<sup>824</sup> See Poe, *CW*, 2: 942; and Baudelaire, "Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe," 225.

<sup>825</sup> See Poe, *CW*, 2:943; and Baudelaire, "Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe," 226.

Wrapping the fog about its breast,  
The ruin moulders into rest;  
A conscious slumber seems to take,  
And would not, for the world, awake.<sup>826</sup>

The dreamy fog depicted by Poe in “The Sleeper” recalls the heavy fog that covers the Ragged Mountains. Due to the fog, Bedloe loses his sense of direction on both a physical and emotional level. In a disoriented state, he begins to wander in the mountains and, as he does, his daily dose of morphine (or opium) starts to kick in. As Poe’s character feels the “customary effect” of the drug, the effect of Poe’s tale magnetizes the reader (the Ideal Reader, the Feared Reader or the Capital Reader).

On several different occasions, Poe stressed that he laboriously planned the effect of his works. In both his critical essays and his fictional works, the word “effect” appears frequently. To highlight the significance of effect, let us consider Poe’s well-known essay “The Philosophy of Composition.” As its title clearly suggests, Poe’s essay aimed to outline his philosophical approach to writing but the essay is paradoxical for several different reasons, raising some important questions concerning the process of writing. Ironically, it is questionable as to whether or not Poe himself truly followed his own philosophy. Baudelaire was well aware that Poe’s essay was not a true account of his creative method and, in the preface to his translation, explained that Poe’s essay was a strategic ruse.

#### **IV. Effect: “The Philosophy of Composition” and “La Genèse du poème”**

The first publication of “The Philosophy of Composition” appeared in 1845, one year after the first publication of Poe’s memorable poem “The Raven.” The chronology of these publications is

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<sup>826</sup> Poe, “Irene and The Sleeper,” *CW* 1:187, vv. 3-15.

significant, as Poe's essay provided a step-by-step account of the method he used to produce the haunting effect of "The Raven." Poe contended that, before composing his tales and his poems, he "prefer[s] commencing with the consideration of an *effect*." According to Poe, a well-composed poem or tale should above all produce a "vivid" and "true poetical effect."<sup>827</sup> Like Poe, Baudelaire also contemplated this idea. In his *Salon de 1846*, which he published prior to translating Poe's essay, he focused on the effect of painting rather than literature. Baudelaire's critical work on paintings helped him perceive the parallels between different art forms through analogical rapport. His remarks on the melodic and harmonic effects of colors used in paintings can therefore be applied to poetry:

L'harmonie est la base de la théorie de la couleur.  
La mélodie est l'unité dans la couleur, ou la couleur générale.  
La mélodie veut une conclusion ; c'est un ensemble où tous les effets concourent à un effet général.  
Ainsi la mélodie laisse dans l'esprit un souvenir profond.<sup>828</sup>

Baudelaire's understanding of effect serves as evidence of the profound affinity between his own artistic theories and those developed by Poe. Another essay revelatory of sympathy between the writers is "Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs"; the essay was first published in *L'esprit public* on April 15, 1846. In the essay's fifth section entitled "Des Méthodes de Composition," Baudelaire focused on the origin or "genèse" of artworks, arguing that compositions should ideally have a single origin. For this reason, Baudelaire argued that Balzac's works tend to be disorganized: since Balzac does not decide a predetermined "genèse," his work lacks unity on the level of the sentence and also as a whole.

Baudelaire's critique of Balzac's method is remarkably similar to Poe's "Philosophy of Composition." However, Baudelaire published his essay thirteen years before publishing his translation of "The Philosophy of Composition," which he strategically retitled *La Genèse d'un*

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<sup>827</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>828</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, 1:883.

*poème*. Through this retitling, Baudelaire called attention to a key word that he used in his own essays on composition, “genèse,” while also subtling the translation “Méthode de Composition.”<sup>829</sup> It is particularly striking that “The Philosophy of Composition” and “Des Méthodes de Composition” were published not only in the same year but also in the same month: April 1846. This temporal synchronicity seems to justify Baudelaire’s surprised reaction to Poe’s writing. Baudelaire was particularly struck by Poe’s phrases and, in an oft-cited letter to Théophile Thoré from June 1864, he retrospectively reflected on his first discovery of them, noting that they were uncannily similar to his own:

La première fois que j’ai ouvert un livre de lui, j’ai vu, avec épouvante et ravissement, non seulement des sujets rêvés par moi, mais des PHRASES pensés par moi, et écrites par lui vingt ans auparavant.<sup>830</sup>

Although Baudelaire noted that Poe’s phrasing had been crafted twenty years before his own works, the similarities between “The Philosophy of Composition” and “Des Méthodes de Compositions” suggest otherwise. These parallels present a case where the poets’ ideas correspond to one another on both an aesthetic and temporal level.

Now that we have seen that Baudelaire and Poe both stress the importance of well-planned effect, let us consider Baudelaire’s handling of the carefully calculated prosody that Poe used to produce the effect described in “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains”: the customary effect of a daily dose of morphine (or “opium”). Poe’s prose becomes markedly rhythmic as the “customary effect” of opium takes control over the mind and body of his character Bedloe. To graphically convey Bedloe’s deep sense of focus, Poe used a series of dashes. Yves Bonnefoy makes a helpful observation regarding Poe’s use of the dash: “...l’excès est vite là, qui donne chez un Edgar Poe une impression de paralysie psychique, assez angoissante.”<sup>831</sup> In “A Tale of the Ragged

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<sup>829</sup> Baudelaire, “La Genèse d’un poème,” *EAP*, 984.

<sup>830</sup> Baudelaire, *Corr.*, 2:386.

<sup>831</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *La Petite phrase et la longue phrase* (Paris: La TILV, 1994), 21.

Mountains,” dashes highlight Bedloe’s attention to the sounds and shapes of his surrounding environment:

#### **A Tale of the Ragged Mountains**

In the quivering of a leaf — in the hue of a blade of grass — in the shape of a trefoil — in the humming of a bee — in the gleaming of a dew-drop — in the breathing of the wind — in the faint odors that came from the forest — there came a whole universe of suggestion — a gay and motley train of rhapsodical and immethodical thought.

#### **Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe**

Dans le tremblement d’une feuille, — dans la couleur d’un brin d’herbe, — dans la forme d’un trèfle, — dans le bourdonnement d’une abeille, — dans l’éclat d’une goutte de rosée, — dans le soupir du vent, — dans les vagues odeurs qui venaient de la forêt, — se produisait tout un monde d’inspirations, — une procession magnifique et bigarrée de pensées désordonnées et rhapsodiques.<sup>832</sup>

In the French translation, Baudelaire creates a calque of the English “rhapsodical.” The *Grand Robert de la langue française* traces the introduction of the French term “rhapsodique” to Baudelaire’s translation of Poe: “ÉTYM 1852, Baudelaire, calqué de l’angl. *rhapsodical*, in E. A Poe.”<sup>833</sup>

In his *Le Poëme du Haschich*, Baudelaire incorporated a definition of his calque. The verb “définir” indicates the foreignness of the French adjective “rapsodique,” which Baudelaire relates to chance circumstances, a rapid acceleration of thought and ecstatic expression:

... mais le mot *rapsodique*, qui définit si bien un train de pensées suggéré et commandé par le monde extérieur et le hasard des circonstances, est d’une vérité plus vraie et plus terrible dans le cas du haschisch. Ici, le raisonnement n’est plus qu’une épave à la merci de tous les courants, et le train de pensées est *infiniment plus accéléré et plus rapsodique*.<sup>834</sup>

In a letter to Saint-Beuve written on January 15, 1866, Baudelaire used his new word to describe his aspirations for his prose poems: “Enfin, j’ai l’espoir de pouvoir montrer, un de ces jours, un nouveau Joseph Delorme accrochant sa pensée rapsodique à chaque accident de sa flânerie et tirant

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<sup>832</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 226.

<sup>833</sup> See “rhapsodique” in *Le Grand Robert de la langue française. Version numérique 4* (November 2016), accessed 6 April 2017. The citation included in the entry is from *Paradis artificiels, Poëme du haschisch*, IV, a work in which Baudelaire quotes his translation of “The Ragged Mountains.”

<sup>834</sup> Baudelaire, *Le Poëme du Haschich*, *OC*, 1:373.

de chaque objet une morale désagréable.”<sup>835</sup> On a final note, the adjective “rhapsodique” also suggests a compositional structure that depends on free improvisation, thus calling to mind a musical rhapsody. Detailing this effect in his “L’Homme-Dieu,” Baudelaire likens music to another language: “La musique, autre langue chère aux paresseux ou aux esprits profonds qui cherchent le délassément dans la variété du travail, vous parle de vous-même et vous raconte le poème de votre vie: elle s’incorpore à vous, et vous vous fondez en elle.”<sup>836</sup> Elaborating on the relationship between music and language, Baudelaire declares that corresponding combinations depend on circumstance: “... chaque mouvement du rythme marquant un mouvement connu de votre âme, chaque note se transformant en mot, et le poème entier entrant dans votre cerveau comme le dictionnaire doué de vie.”<sup>837</sup> Baudelaire also notes that opium and hashish lead to a deeper appreciation of grammar:

La grammaire, l’aride grammaire elle-même, devient quelque chose comme une sorcellerie évocatoire ; les mots ressuscitent revêtus de chair et d’os, le substantif, dans sa majesté substantielle, l’adjectif, vêtement transparent qui l’habille et le colore comme un glacis, et le verbe, ange du mouvement, qui donne la branle à la phrase.<sup>838</sup>

To gain an understanding of how the prosody of Poe’s tales produces both the cause and effect of rhapsodic thought and its supratemporal rhythm, let us turn to a closer look of Poe’s use of the dash.

## V. Poe’s Dash

All meaning — the true, the good, the beautiful, — is grounded within itself.  
— Walter Benjamin, “Experience”

A consideration of Poe’s comments on the dash is noteworthy for several different reasons. First, it informs our reading of “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains.” As we have just seen, the dash is a

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<sup>835</sup> Baudelaire, *Corr.*, 2:583.

<sup>836</sup> Baudelaire, *Le Poème du Haschich*, OC, 1:373.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>838</sup> *Ibid.*

visual indication of Bedloe's fragmented thoughts. On a broader level, however, the dash reveals one of the means by which Poe composed the logical structure of his thought in his tales, poetry, critical essays, literary reviews, and prose poems.<sup>839</sup> In Item 197 of his *Marginalia*, Poe commented on the value of punctuation. To illustrate the importance of the point, Poe incorporated three dashes in his remark: "...a sentence may be deprived of half its force — its spirit — its point — by improper punctuation."<sup>840</sup> In what follows, Poe explained the importance of the dash.<sup>841</sup> According to Poe, the dash "represents a *second thought — an emendation*" and, consequently, it has a specific function. The dash helps Poe communicate his ideas to the reader and it encourages the reader's active participation: "The dash gives the reader a choice between two, or among three or more expressions, one of which may be more forcible than another, but all of which help out the idea."<sup>842</sup> To clarify what he means here, Poe referred to his previous comment. With the dash, Poe explained that his writing reflects his idea: "In using [the dash] just above I have exemplified its use. The words 'an emendation' are, speaking with reference to grammatical construction, put in *apposition* with the words a 'second thought.'"<sup>843</sup> In considering this remark, it is worth noting

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<sup>839</sup> Several of the definitions in the *OED* reflect the variety of interpretations of the frequent presence of the dash in Poe's works: "[...] 5a. A small portion (of colour, etc.) as it were dashed or thrown carelessly upon a surface. b. a small quantity (of something) thrown into or mingled as a qualifying admixture with something else; an infusion, touch, tinge. Usually *fig.* 6. A hasty stroke of the pen. 7. A stroke or line (usually short or straight) made with a pen or the like. 7a. Such a mark drawn for writing erasure. 7c. A horizontal stroke of varying length (-, —, ——) used in writing or printing to mark a pause or break in a sentence, a parenthetical clause, an omission of words or letters or of the intermediate terms of a series, to separate distinct portions of matter, or for other purposes; sometimes implying the use of strong language; hence as a mild substitute for *devil*. 7d. A short vertical mark placed above or beneath a note to indicate that it is to be performed staccato. [...] 7f. One of the two signals (the other being the dot) which in various combinations make up the letters of the Morse alphabet. 8. A sudden impetuous movement, a rush; a sudden vigorous attack or onset. 9. Spirited vigour of action." See "dash, n.," *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press March 2017), accessed June 9, 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/47366>.

<sup>840</sup> Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 16:130. This item was first published in *Graham's Magazine* in February 1848.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>843</sup> *Ibid.*, 131, italics original. The grammatical definition of "apposition" included in the *OED* further clarifies Poe's remark on the dash: "6. *Grammar*. The placing of a word beside, or in syntactic parallelism with, another; *spec.* the addition of one substantive to another, or to a noun clause, as an attribute or complement; the position of the substantive so added." Poe's understanding of the relation between the dash also corresponds to the definition of "apposition" used in rhetoric: "5. *Rhetoric* The addition of a parallel word or phrase by way of explanation or



that Poe italicizes the prefix *-ap* in the word “*apposition*.” Much like the dash, the typography of Poe’s writing performs his thought, as the italicized prefix ‘*ap*’ gives emphasis to the importance of position: “*apposition*”.

A passage from Poe’s essay “The Poetic Principle,” first published in *Sartrain’s Magazine* in October 1850, illustrates the extent to which the dash intimately relates to Poe’s idea of a “true poetical effect.” Poe used ten separate dashes in the second sentence of this essay. The dashes create different intervals or segments, which divide the opening image (“bright orbs that shine in Heaven”) from the final one (“the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells”).<sup>844</sup> Eight dashes figure in the third sentence; three appear in the fourth; six appear in the fifth; and eight appear in the sixth and final sentence.<sup>845</sup> This concluding sentence crescendos to the main idea of the true poetic effect, *love*. The arrangement of Poe’s essay suggests that *love* combines each segment. As the “true poetical effect”, *love* is cumulative, an aggregate of many thoughts, feelings and images.

Before turning to this passage, it is significant to point out that Poe coupled nearly all of his dashes with the preposition “in.” The preposition repeats forty times and, for this reason, the passage functions according to what I will call an “operative force of ‘in.’” The general sense of the preposition expresses “the relation of inclusion, situation, position, existence, or action, within limits of space, time, condition, circumstances.”<sup>846</sup> The *OED*’s first definition notes that “in” can signify “a place or position in space or anything having material extension.” With respect to Poe’s “true poetical effect” or *love*, the eighth definition is particularly relevant, for it describes “non-

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illustration of another.” See “*apposition*, n.”, *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2017), accessed June 08, 2017.

<sup>844</sup> Poe, “The Poetic Principle,” *CW*, 14:275.

<sup>845</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>846</sup> See “in, prep.”, *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2017), accessed April 06, 2017.

physical realms.” In these realms, the preposition refers to “regions of thought, [...] faculties of the mind, spheres of action [...] treated as having extension.” The preposition may also suggest a

situation within the range of sensuous observation or the sphere of action of another (II: 9d.)[; a] condition or state, physical, mental, moral (II: 10a)[; a] manner (way, mode, style, fashion) (II: 12a)[; a] form, shape, conformation, arrangement, order (II: 12b)[ a] manner of speech or writing II: 12c)[; an expression of] reference or relation to something (II: 17)[; a being] in spiritual or mystical union with (III: 23)[;] an integral quality, attribute, faculty, or capacity (III: 25)[;] partaking, sharing, associated (III: 27)[;] motion or direction (V)[;] to partake, share [...] (VI: 32b).

Keeping in mind the semantic range of the preposition “in,” let us look at Poe’s description of the “true poetical effect”:

We shall reach, however, more immediately a distinct conception of what the true Poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which **induce in** the Poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognizes the ambrosia which nourishes his soul, **in** the bright orbs that shine **in** Heaven — **in** the volutes of the flower — **in** the clustering of low shrubberies — **in** the waving of the grain-fields — **in** the slanting of tall, Eastern trees — **in** the blue distance of mountains — **in** the grouping of clouds — **in** the twinkling of half-hidden brooks — **in** the gleaming of silver rivers — **in** the repose of sequestered lakes — **in** the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. He perceives it **in** the songs of birds — **in** the harp of Æolus — **in** the sighing of the night-wind — **in** the repining voice of the forest — **in** the surf that complains to the shore — **in** the fresh breath of the woods — **in** the scent of the violet — **in** the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth — **in** the suggestive odour that comes to him, at eventide, from far-distant, undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored. He owns it **in all** noble thoughts — **in all** unworldly motives — **in all** holy impulses — **in all** chivalrous, generous, and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it **in** the beauty of woman — **in** the grace of her step — **in** the lustre of her eye — **in** the melody of her voice — **in** her soft laughter — **in** her sigh — **in** the harmony of the rustling of her robes. He deeply feels it **in** her winning endearments — **in** her burning enthusiasms — **in** her gentle charities — **in** her meek and devotional endurances — but above all — ah, far above all — he kneels to it — he worships it **in** the faith, **in** the purity, **in** the strength, **in** the altogether divine majesty — of her *love*.<sup>847</sup>

Through these frequent repetitions of “in,” Poe verbally dramatizes the “poetical modes of inculcation.”<sup>848</sup> This elucidation of the “true poetical effect” is strikingly similar to his portrayal of Bedloe’s intense attention, which is induced by his intake of morphine.

Fittingly, then, the pulsation of the “true poetical effect” corresponds to Baudelaire’s definition of the adjective “rapsodique” in his “L’Homme-Dieu.” Baudelaire used four dashes in his description of the depth of space and its fleeting horizons:

Paysages dentelés, horizons fuyants, perspectives de villes blanchies par la lividité cadavéreuse de l’orage ou illuminées par les ardeurs concentrées des soleils couchants, — profondeur de l’espace, allégorie de la profondeur du temps, — la danse, le geste ou la déclamation des comédiens, si vous vous êtes jetés dans un

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<sup>847</sup> Poe, “The Poetic Principle,” in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 16:290-291.

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

théâtre, — la première phase venue, si vos yeux tombent sur un livre, — tout enfin, l'universalité des êtres se dresse devant vous avec une gloire nouvelle non soupçonnée jusqu'alors.<sup>849</sup>

Baudelaire's definition of "rapsodique" accentuates that theatrical dance and gesture is a common human experience. To communicate this effect, Baudelaire used repetition. The repeated dash conveys the depth of space and time: "— profondeur de l'espace, allégorie de la profondeur du temps, —".

## VI. Sounds and Noises: "The Fall of the House of Usher"

"The Fall of the House of Usher" is another tale in which intensity is closely associated with the pacing of the dash. In the opening of the tale, the dash traces the narrator's gaze as he looks upon the frightening surroundings outside the Usher House: "— with an utter depression of soul which [the narrator] can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium."<sup>850</sup> Inside the house, the dash controls the choppy rhythmical pacing of Usher's quick utterances, which move between suspension and animated articulation:

His voiced varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision — that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation — that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

Sa voix passait rapidement d'une indécision tremblante, — quand les esprits vitaux semblaient entièrement absents, — à cette espèce de brièveté énergique, — cette énonciation abrupte, solide pausée et sonnante le creux, à ce parler guttural et rude, parfaitement balancé et modulé, qu'on peut observer chez le parfait ivrogne ou l'incorrigible mangeur d'opium pendant les périodes de leur intense excitation.<sup>851</sup>

The foreboding atmosphere of the Usher house is melancholic and splenic.<sup>852</sup> In the opening sentence of Poe's tale, the clouds hang "oppressively low in the heavens," which Baudelaire translates as "où les nuages pesaient lourds et bas dans le ciel."<sup>853</sup> Baudelaire's translation is strikingly similar to the first verse of his "LXXVIII: Spleen": "Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse

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<sup>849</sup> Baudelaire, *Le Poème du Haschich*, OC, 1:376.

<sup>850</sup> Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," *CW*, 3:397.

<sup>851</sup> See *ibid.*, 402; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 350.

<sup>852</sup> The tale appeared in the same magazine in 1840 and 1845.

<sup>853</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 337.

comme un couvercle.”<sup>854</sup> In both the first sentence of his translation and in the first line of “Spleen,” we encounter the verb “peser,” (“to weigh down”), the noun “ciel” (“sky,” “heavens”), and the adjectives “lourd” (“heavy”) and “bas” (“low”). The metaphor comparing the oppressive sky to a “couvercle” moves from the opening image of the atmosphere conjured in Poe’s tale to another one of its striking images: the moment when the narrator and Roderick Usher “screw down the lid” of a coffin on Madeline Usher, Roderick’s twin sister: “Nous replaçâmes et nous vissâmes le couvercle...”<sup>855</sup> The title of the poem “Spleen” was borrowed from an English term and is therefore in and of itself a sign of Baudelaire’s “Englishness”, as Horowitz has observed. “The advantage of the word ‘spleen’ is that it comes from English, bespeaking its connection to modernity in a way that *ennui* cannot.”<sup>856</sup>

The tale opens as the narrator views “the melancholy House of Usher” and its surrounding landscape and his descriptions develop a lexical field of “insufferable gloom” and “utter depression.”<sup>857</sup> The images are “desolate and terrible,” suggesting dismal emptiness and a state of extreme distress. The building is dreary, cold, and inhospitable. Its walls are “bleak” and the vegetation in the surrounding landscape is decaying: “rank sedges” and “a few white trunks of decayed trees.”<sup>858</sup> The scene has a powerful effect on the narrator, who compares it to an unsolvable mystery and who develops a vocabulary of ratiocination, using terms such as “unsatisfactory conclusion” and “analysis,” to determine the cause of his “sorrowful impressions.”<sup>859</sup> He specifically wonders if a different combination of the scene’s details would alter its intense effect:

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<sup>854</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, 1:70.

<sup>855</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 350.

<sup>856</sup> Evan Horowitz, “London: Capital of the Nineteenth Century.” *New Literary History*. 41.1 (2010): 118.

<sup>857</sup> Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” *CW*, 2:397.

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particularities of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression.<sup>860</sup>

In Baudelaire's translation, we read:

Il était possible, pensais-je, qu'une simple différence dans l'arrangement des matériaux de la décoration, suffit pour modifier, pour annihiler peut-être cette puissance d'impression douloureuse.<sup>861</sup>

As the narrator reflects on the possibility of rearrangement, his eyes focus on a "tarn," which creates an outside reflection, changing the "particularities of the scene," and providing the answer to his question. His inner reflection is externalized when the "lurid tarn" inverts the images. The "remodeling" of the scene on the surface of the water leads him to conclude that the scene is rendered even more "thrilling" through rearrangement.<sup>862</sup> The water's reflections shift the narrator's focus: while he first concentrates on a "few rank sedges," his eyes then zoom in on a "gray sedge" in the inverted image and, while he first notices "a few white trunks of decayed trees," he studies "ghastly tree-stems" in the image.<sup>863</sup> Despite the shift in focus, however, one object remains fixed. Even when it is "remodeled and inverted," the narrator is captivated by "the vacant eye-like windows." But in Baudelaire's translation, these windows are not fixed: the narrator first describes the windows as "fenêtres semblables à des yeux distraits" and, when he sees the inverted image, the windows become "fenêtres semblables à des yeux sans pensée."<sup>864</sup> The windows are, significantly, a source of reflection: like the surface of the water, windows reflect the outside scene. Furthermore, since the windows are eye-like, they act as a doubled source of reflection. The passage thus evokes reflection on several different levels: on the level of the mind, on the level of the tarn, on the level of the window, and on the level of the eye. These reflective surfaces combine to create a mirroring activity. Accordingly, then, Baudelaire translated Poe's

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<sup>860</sup> Ibid.

<sup>861</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 338.

<sup>862</sup> Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," *CW*, 2:398.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid., 397-398.

<sup>864</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 337-338.

“black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling” as “un noir et lugubre étang, qui, miroir immobile, s’étalait devant le bâtiment.”<sup>865</sup> By explicitly calling attention to the mirroring effect of the tarn, Baudelaire subtly suggests that his own translation is a reflection.<sup>866</sup> Poe’s tale invites this specular activity and as Scott Peeples has observed, Poe used “the house to reflect on literary structures.”<sup>867</sup> Through its numerous repetitions, the tale “calls attention to words as *words*.”<sup>868</sup>

Like the stagnant water in the tarn, which rearranges the outside surroundings of the Usher mansion, Baudelaire’s translation reshapes the scene’s language and grammar, and in so doing, adds intensity to the tale’s imaginative effect. In his section “L’Homme-Dieu,” Baudelaire meditates on the power of the mirror, commenting on the reflective surface of water:

Les miroirs deviennent un prétexte à cette rêverie qui ressemble à une soif spirituelle, conjointe à la soif physique qui dessèche le gosier, et dont j’ai parlé précédemment: les eaux fuyantes, les *jeux* d’eau, les cascades harmonieuses, l’immensité bleue de la mer, roulent, chantent, dorment avec un charme inexprimable.<sup>869</sup>

Baudelaire’s italicized “*jeux*” suggests that the mirroring dream is akin to a game, perhaps a play of self, that is, a play on the “I” or “je.” In lines 13-14 of his poem “Le Poison,” Baudelaire conjured up a similar image, describing the reveries produced by wine and opium overturning his soul: “Lac où mon âme tremble et se voit à l’envers / Mes songes viennent en foule.”<sup>870</sup> The inverted image of the lake is thus reminiscent of the opening reflection and reversal in “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

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<sup>865</sup> See Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” *CW*, 2:398; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 338.

<sup>866</sup> In 22, f° 17, f° 269, *Baudelaire*, 572, Benveniste comments on the significance of the mirror in Baudelaire’s poetry: “Tout est donc chez Baudelaire *correspondances* / et tout tend à réaliser une *harmonie*: ‘Correspondance’ et ‘Harmonie’ sont justement des titres de poèmes. De là l’importance de la notion de *miroir*: l’homme et le monde se reflètent l’un dans l’autre.”

<sup>867</sup> Scott Peeples, “Poe’s constructiveness and ‘The Fall of the House of Usher.’” In *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe* ed. Kevin J. Hayes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 180.

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>869</sup> Baudelaire, *Le Poème du Haschich*, *OC*, 1:377.

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

In his translation, Baudelaire rendered Poe's "remodelled and inverted images" as "des images répercutées et renversées."<sup>871</sup> The verb "repercuter" ("to pass on," "to echo") not only reshapes the scene's visual images but also distorts the scene's sounds. Further on in the tale, Baudelaire translates the verb "to reverberate" as "répercuter," the same verb used to translate "to reverberate" and "to remodel." Baudelaire's translation therefore rearranges repetitions, leading to new variations of sound and noise.

On three different occasions that evoke the imaginary rather than reality, Baudelaire rendered sound as "bruit" ("noise"), and not "son" ("sound"). On both a literal and a figural level, these shifts add noise to the tale and alter the consistency of the tale's repetitive "sound." Rudder's dictionary *Ces mots qui font du bruit* distinguishes between sound and noise, explaining that, unlike sound, noise is a non-harmonic vibration that cannot be written using musical notation. This distinction sheds light on Baudelaire's translation decisions.<sup>872</sup> Describing Usher's madness, the narrator explains that Usher seemed to be profoundly listening to an "imaginary sound," a "sound" that Baudelaire renders as "bruit." Similarly, the sounds in the antique volume "Mad Trist" by Sir Launcelot Canning are also changed to noise. As the narrator reads the volume aloud to Usher, the sounds or "bruits" appear to echo throughout the House and, as the vocalization of the fictional events begin to penetrate the scene, the narrator questions if his auditory experience is real or hallucinatory. He also wonders if Usher is hearing the same "sounds in question," which Baudelaire shifts to "les bruits en question":

"there were but peculiar **sounds** and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror" (403)

"il n'y avait que quelques **sons** particuliers, c'est-à-dire ceux des instruments à cordes, qui ne lui inspirassent pas d'horreur" (343)

"an unusually sharp grating **sound**" (410)

"un **son** singulièrement aigu et discordant" (350)

<sup>871</sup> See Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," *CW*, 2:398; and Baudelaire, "La Chute de la Maison Usher," *EAP*, 338.

<sup>872</sup> Rudder, "bruit," *Ces mots qui font du bruit*, 68: "n.m. XII siècle., de bruire. Se dit d'une vibration non harmonique, par opposition à un son (ce qui peut s'écrire au moyen d'une notation musicale par exemple)."

“as if listening to some imaginary <b>sound</b> ” (411)	“comme s’il écoutait un <b>bruit</b> imaginaire” (351)
“certain low and indefinite <b>sounds</b> ...” (411)	“certains <b>sons</b> bas et vagues...” (351)
“the <b>noise</b> of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarummed and <b>reverberated</b> throughout the forest” (413)	“le <b>bruit</b> du bois sec et <b>sonnant le creux</b> porta l’alarme et fut <b>répercuté</b> d’un bout à l’autre de la forêt” (353)
“there came indistinctly to my ears, what might, in its exact similarity of character, the <b>echo</b> (but a stifled and dull on certainly) of the very cracking and ripping <b>sound</b> which Sir Lancelot had so particularly described” (414)	“du manoir était venu confusément à mon oreille un <b>bruit</b> qu’on eût dit, à cause de son exacte <b>analogie</b> , l’ <b>écho</b> étouffé, amorti, de ce <b>bruit</b> de craquement et d’arrachement si précieusement décrit par sir Launcelot” (353)
“for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled <b>noises</b> of the still increasing storm, the <b>sound</b> , in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me” (414)	“car, parmi le claquement des châssis des fenêtres et tous les <b>bruits</b> confus de la tempête toujours croissante, le <b>son</b> en lui-même n’avait rien vraiment qui pût m’intriguer ou me troubler” (354)
“with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Elthered had fain to close his ears with his hands against dreadful <b>noise</b> of it...” (414)	“un rugissement si épouvantable, si âpre et si perçant à la fois, qu’Elthered fut obligée de se boucher les oreilles avec ses mains, pour se garantir de ce <b>bruit</b> terrible...” (354)
“a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating <b>sound</b> — the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon’s unnatural shriek as described by the romancer” (414)	“un <b>son</b> affaibli et comme lointain, mais âpre, prolongé, singulièrement perçant et grinçant, - l’exacte contre-partie du cri surnaturel du dragon décrit par le romancier, et tel que mon imagination se l’était déjà figuré” (354)
“I was by no means certain that he had noticed the <b>sounds</b> in question...” (415)	“Je n’étais pas du tout sûr qu’il eût remarqué les <b>bruits</b> en question...” (354)
“with a mighty great and terrible ringing <b>sound</b> ” (415)	“avec un puissant et terrible <b>retentissement</b> ” (355)
“there was a long and tumultuous shouting <b>sound</b> like the voice of a thousand waters...” (417)	“Il se fit un <b>bruit</b> prolongé, un fracas tumultueux comme la voix de mille cataractes...” (357)

## VII. Murmurs and Flows: “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar”

In his translation of Poe’s mesmeric tale “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” Baudelaire adds force to the concluding passage through his inclusion of a supplementary dash. The tale concentrates on “mesmeric influence,” offering a fictional account of an “*inward* examination [...]”



in cases of sleep-walking.”<sup>873</sup> So as to closely study the syllables that the mesmeric patient Valdemar utters in his sleep, the Doctors apply a mirror to his lips. Despite their many efforts to heal the malady that afflicts him, Valdemar dies. In the conclusion, the tale’s narrator, who is also known as “P,” explains that, following Valdemar’s death, his tongue survived for a few split seconds. Baudelaire adds a dash to his translation of this final paragraph. In his translation of the last paragraph, Baudelaire also developed a noteworthy semantics of prosody. The term “moins” (“less”) echoes with the witnesses, “témoins.” With the shift of a single letter, the “moins-témoins” resonates with the patient’s body that rots in the doctor’s hands, “mains”: “dans l’espace d’une minute et même **moins** / tous les **témoins** / son corps / [...] se *pourrit* absolument sous mes **mains**.”<sup>874</sup> Through the “moins-témoins-mains” parallel, Baudelaire’s translation highlights the inextricable connection between the observed (i.e., Valdemar) and the observers (“P” and the members of the company) and, moreover, calls attention to the temporal bound that limits their observations: Valdemar’s imminent death.

The two fragments that are broken up by Baudelaire’s supplementary dash consist of three monosyllables. The parallel pattern of these fragments enacts the somatic movement of Valdemar’s body: “tout son corps — d’un seul coup.” In the first monosyllable, the dental consonants /d/ and /t/ seem to correspond to the tongue’s position. Valdemar’s vibrating tongue touches his teeth as it voices distinct syllables. The tongue then curls, producing frication; the oscillations of the sibilant /s/ generate a tumultuous airflow. But, as the verbal fragments close, the plosive consonant /c/ seems to stop or block the air; a clicking noise sounds as the “corps” or body connects to the word “coup.” In this case, the “coup” not only signifies the speed of a stroke or the swiftness of an emotional fit but also a sudden bang produced by shock and, finally, the events

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<sup>873</sup> Poe, “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar, *CW*, 3:1237.

<sup>874</sup> Baudelaire, “*La Vérité sur le cas de M. Valdemer*,” *EAP*, 210.

that occur in time. Through this parallel pattern, Baudelaire's translated prose suggests the cadenced clacks voiced by Valdemar's tongue. The verb "to crumble," which Baudelaire translates as "s'émietter," captures the fragmentation of temporal continuity. In the fleetingness of the now, time is interrupted by the tongue's post-mortem movement:

As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of "dead! dead!" absolutely *bursting* from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once — within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk — crumbled — absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid of loathsome of detestable putridity.<sup>875</sup>

Comme je faisais rapidement les passes magnétiques à travers les cris de "Mort! Mort!" qui faisaient sur la langue et non sur les lèvres du sujet, — tout son corps, — d'un seul coup, — dans l'espace, d'une minute et même moins, se déroba, — s'émietta — se *pourrit* absolument sous mes **mains**. Sur le lit, devant tous les **témoins**, gisant une masse dégoûtante et quasi-liquide, — une abominable putréfaction.<sup>876</sup>

In Baudelaire's translated passage, the repetition of the consonant /m/ seems to shorten Valdemar's syllabification. The tongue's movement quickens and the accelerating pace of Valdemar's rapid murmurs mimes the moment when he announces his death. The exclamatory announcement repeats "Mort! Mort!", generating a distorted echo: "Mort! Mort! – murmurs."

Here, it is important to note that Baudelaire added the word "murmur" to his translation. He rendered Valdemar's "barely audible whisper" as a "murmure à peine intelligible."<sup>877</sup> This shift adds stress to the consistent murmurs in Baudelaire's translated tale, contributing to its unity of effect.<sup>878</sup> Poe's original tale makes no mention of murmurs, repeating "utters" instead. As the members hear the words uttered by Valdemar, they experience an "unutterable shuddering of horror" and Valdemar's "utterly lusterless" eyes further relate to the "utterly insensible" syllables that he voices in his sleep.<sup>879</sup> This "shudder-utter-unutterable" series recurs in several of Poe's works. The members' attempt to factually record Valdemar's utterances ultimately underscores

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<sup>875</sup> Poe, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," *CW*, 3:1243.

<sup>876</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 210.

<sup>877</sup> See Poe, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," *CW*, 3:1241; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 1238.

<sup>878</sup> Poe, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," *CW*, 3:1241.

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.*, 1240-1241.

that which cannot be uttered. Unlike Valdemar, the members are silent. As they attempt to interpret his verbalizations, they busy themselves “without the utterance of a word.”<sup>880</sup>

Commenting on the onomatopoeic quality of the verb “murmurer” in his *Dictionnaire raisonné des onomatopées françaises*, Nodier writes: “Cette onomatopée ne varie point dans le grec, dans le latin, dans l’italien, dans l’espagnol. Ce sont là les mots que la nature semble avoir enseignés à tous les peuples.”<sup>881</sup> By emphasizing murmurs, Baudelaire opens Valdemar’s post-mortem tongue into a universal tongue. The repeated /m/ and /r/ in “murmures” distortedly echo the final syllable of the patient’s name (“murmures”-“Valdemar”) and, as Valdemar declares his death, the consonants /m/ and /r/ repeat once more: “Oui, toujours; — je dors, — je meurs.”<sup>882</sup> These murmuring oscillations extend to “each member of the company” who develops a mesmeric rapport with the “moribund.” In the French translation, the term “member” is stressed; it refers not only to the “membres de la société” but also to the limbs or “membres” of Valdemar’s body. Repetition adds force to this union:

“his lower limbs”

“ses membres inférieures”<sup>883</sup>

“until I had completely stiffened the limbs of the slumberer”

“jusqu’à ce que j’eusse complètement paralysé les membres du dormeur”<sup>884</sup>

“the limbs were as rigid and as cold as marble.”

“les membres était aussi rigides et aussi froid que du marbre.”<sup>885</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> Ibid., 1241. To reinforce the endless iterability generated by translation, it is also worth mentioning one of the sources of Poe’s tale. In his thorough editorial annotations, Mabbott calls attention to the similarities between Poe’s work and *The Seeress of Prevorst*, Catherine Crowe’s translation of the German “poet and spiritualist” Justinus Andreas Kerner. As Mabbott has noted: “[a]n American edition of *The Seeress of Prevorst* in paper covers was published by Harper & Brothers, [and] *The Broadway Journal* advertised Crowe’s translation on August, 2, 1845.” This advertisement appeared only four months before Poe’s Valdemar case, which he published in the same journal on December 20, 1845; see *CW*, 3:1229. Describing the seeress and the magnetic relation, Crowe, *ibidem*, writes: “She often called loudly for me, though I was absent at the time; when she appeared dead, someone having uttered my name, she started into life again, and seemed unable to die, — the magnetic relation between us being not yet unbroken.” Later, Crowe continues “the dying woman uttered a loud cry of joy; ‘her spirit then seemed to be set free’.”

<sup>881</sup> Charles Nodier, *Dictionnaire raisonné des onomatopées françaises*, (Paris: Demonville, 1808), 133-134.

<sup>882</sup> See Poe, *CW*, 3:1241; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 208.

<sup>883</sup> See Poe, *CW*, 3:1234; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 201.

<sup>884</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 205.

<sup>885</sup> See Poe, *CW*, 3:1238; and Baudelaire, *EAP*, 205.

These vacillations can be likened to the mirror applied to Valdermar's lips. Through these many murmuring pulsations, Baudelaire foreshadows the tale's climax, the moment when Valdemar cries out: "— Oui, — non, *j'ai dormi*, — et maintenant, —maintenant, *je suis mort*."<sup>886</sup> In his analysis of the mesmerized patient's contradictory exclamation, Barthes characterizes it as both an affirmation and a negation:

Il ne s'agit pas d'une simple dénégation, au sens psychanalytique, "je suis mort" voulant dire alors "je ne suis pas mort," mais plutôt d'une affirmation-négation: "je suis mort et pas mort"; c'est là le paroxysme de la transgression, l'invention d'une catégorie inouïe: le *vrai-faux*, le *oui-non*; la *mort-vie* est pensée comme un entier indivisible, incombable, non dialectique, car l'antithèse n'implique aucun troisième terme; ce n'est pas une entité bi-face, mais un terme un et nouveau.<sup>887</sup>

Baudelaire's translation develops another significant series in a passage that describes Valdemar's eyes and mouth. An alliteration of the fricative consonant /v/ conveys the vibrations of Valdermar's eye: "le vacillement vitreux de l'œil." Similarly, a recurring plosive /p/ pronouncedly voices the pulse of the mesmeric passes, or "le pouls": "avec quelques **p**asses latérales **r**apides, je fis **p**alpiter les **p**aupières, et en insistent un **p**eu, je les fermai tout à fait."<sup>888</sup> The narrator also compares the sudden closing of Valdermar's cadaverous eyes to the rapid extinguishment of a candle by the puff of a breath": "la soudaineté de leur disparition me fait penser à une bougie soufflé plutôt qu'à autre chose."<sup>889</sup> As Valdemar shuts his eyes, he simultaneously opens his mouth wide, disclosing "in full view [his] swollen and blackened tongue." In Baudelaire's translation, the portrayal of Valdemar's body moves from the "bougie soufflé" to "la langue noire et boursoufflé," a pattern paralleled by the opened mouth, "la bouche toute grande ouverte."<sup>890</sup> Through these patterns, the translated passage conveys the tension between opening and closing, sounding out the progression from the patient's pupils to his tongue:

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<sup>886</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 201.

<sup>887</sup> Roland Barthes, "Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Poe," *L'Aventure sémiologique*, 353.

<sup>888</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 204.

<sup>889</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>890</sup> *Ibid.*

“Les yeux roulèrent dans leurs orbites, lentement découverts par les paupières qui remontaient...”<sup>891</sup>

The upper lip, at the same time, writhed itself away from the teeth, which it had previously covered completely, while the lower jaw fell with an audible jerk, leaving the mouth widely extended and disclosing in full view the swollen and blackened tongue.<sup>892</sup>

La lèvre supérieure, en même temps, se tordit en remontant au-dessus des dents qui tout à l’heure elle couvrait entièrement, pendant que la mâchoire inférieure tombait avec une saccade qui put être entendue, laissant la bouche toute grande ouverte et découvrant en plein la langue noire et boursoufflée.<sup>893</sup>

Like Valdemar’s universal onomatopoeic murmurs, Poe’s epigraph to “The Fall of the House of Usher” suggests his desire to open his tale to an unknowable source. Poe used verses composed by the French *chansonnier* Béranger as his epigraph: “Son cœur est un luth suspendu/ Sitôt qu’on le touche il résonne.” These verses resonate with the improvised verses composed by Usher in the poem “The Haunted Palace,” the nineteenth and twentieth of which describe the harmonious stirring of Spirits: “Spirits move musically / To a lute’s well-tuned law”.<sup>894</sup> In considering this focus on echoes, it is noteworthy that the *Émile Littré: Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1872-1877) cites Béranger’s works five times under the term “écho,” quoting his poem “Le Prisonnier”:

Reine des flots, sur ta barque rapide,  
Vole en chantant au bruit des longs échos;  
Les vents sont doux, l’onde est calme et limpide,  
Le ciel sourit; vogue, reine des flots.<sup>895</sup>

The repeated image of the “reine des flots” resonates with the alliterative “float and flow” in the ballad composed by Usher.

Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing

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<sup>891</sup> Ibid.

<sup>892</sup> Poe, *CW*, 3:1239.

<sup>893</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 206.

<sup>894</sup> Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” 2:407.

<sup>895</sup> The entry “écho,” *Émile Littré Dictionnaire de la langue française*, includes other verses by Béranger: “BÉRANG., *Couplets à des Mauritiens.*: De tant d’échos résonnant jusqu’à nous, Les plus lointains nous semblent les plus doux BÉRANG., *le Suicide.*: Pauvres enfants ! l’écho murmure encore L’air qui berça votre premier sommeil / Lieu où l’écho est reproduit. BÉRANG., *Adieux.*: Ciel vaste et pur, daigne encor me sourire ; Échos des bois, répétez mes adieux / Adorer l’écho, chercher la solitude, l’écho se trouvant ordinairement entre les rochers.”

And sparkling evermore  
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty  
Was but to sing.<sup>896</sup>

Baudelaire translates the repetitive “flowing, flowing, flowing” as “flots, flots, flots.”<sup>897</sup>

These echoes and flows exemplify repetitive sound. In his *Le Vers Français*, Maurice de Grammont uses the images of the “flot” as an example of the assertion that “[l]e moyen le plus sensible de peindre un bruit ou un mouvement répété consiste simplement à répéter un mot ou quelques mots.”<sup>898</sup> De Grammont cites a verse from Hugo’s *Napoléon II*: “Le flot sur le flot se replie.”<sup>899</sup> Similarly, Benveniste comments on the power of the phoneme *fl* in his remarks on Baudelaire’s poetry:

Quelque chose, dans la sonorité du mot / associée à son sens, s’accorde avec l’impression évoquée par le vers entier (ou / par le poème). Type: les souffles de la nuit / flottaient sur Galgala. Hugo aurait pu écrire / (mais n’a pas écrit) : les brises de la nuit. / Alors c’est la valeur Évocatrice de –*fl*– qui, réduite / à un seul appui (“flottaient”), risquait de / disparaître. Le –*fl*– ne prend sa valeur que / répété.<sup>900</sup>

Analyzing the “flot” in his *Dictionnaire raisonné des onomatopées françaises* (1808), Nodier writes: “Flot (fleuve, flux, fluides, choses qui fluent): Du bruit des liquides qui s’écoulent. Cette racine se retrouve dans presque toutes les Langues.”<sup>901</sup> Much like murmurs, these “flows” challenge the sound system. As Daniel Heller Roazen remarks in his *Echolalias*, onomatopoeia allows “a single tongue” to “move into an indistinct region that belongs to no one language.”<sup>902</sup> As Baudelaire writes, “C’est du reste, le caractère de la vraie poésie d’avoir le flot régulier, comme les grands fleuves qui s’approchent de la mer, leur mort et leur infini, et d’éviter la précipitation et la saccade.”<sup>903</sup>

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<sup>896</sup> Poe, *CW*, 2:407.

<sup>897</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 347.

<sup>898</sup> Maurice de Grammont, *Le vers français, ses moyens d’expression, son harmonie*, 2nd ed. (Paris: H. Champion, 1913), 211.

<sup>899</sup> De Grammont, *Le vers français*, 211.

<sup>900</sup> Benveniste, *Baudelaire*, 592, 22, f° 27 / f° 279.

<sup>901</sup> Nodier, *Dictionnaire raisonné des onomatopées françaises*, 130.

<sup>902</sup> Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias*, 17.

<sup>903</sup> Baudelaire, *OC*, 2:126.

### Conclusion: Sympathy and Unparticled Matter

In addition to translating five volumes of Poe's tales, Baudelaire translated and critiqued two works by Thomas de Quincey: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and *Suspira de Profundis*.<sup>904</sup> In May 1860, he included his work in *Les Paradis artificiels* under the title *Un Mangeur d'Opium*.<sup>905</sup> In her keen analysis of Baudelaire's translation practice as an "amalgam," Emily Salines suggests that *Un Mangeur d'Opium* can be interpreted as a quotation: "[T]ranslation can be seen as a form of quotation, more or less integrated into [Baudelaire's] corpus, and prompted by the awareness of possible links and interactions between the foreign voice and his own."<sup>906</sup> Similarly, Alan Astro reads *Un Mangeur d'Opium* as an "allegory of translation," arguing that the work involves a combination of the writing practices that compose all translations: quotation, close translation, paraphrase, deletion, and commentary.<sup>907</sup>

Since Poe regarded De Quincey as a literary double of sorts, Baudelaire thus closely read the works of this pair of literary doubles in whom he saw his own reflection. Similar to De Quincey and Poe, Baudelaire viewed himself as a visionary and an eccentric whose poetic intellect alienated him from society. Much like Poe's characters who stir the reader's sympathy, De Quincey's Opium-Eater provokes a feeling of intense empathy, as Baudelaire noted: "Il faut que le personnage soit connu, qu'il se fasse aimer, apprécier du lecteur. [...] il veut créer pour sa personne

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<sup>904</sup> He first published the works on January 15 and 30, 1860, in the *Revue Contemporaine* under the title "Enchantements et tortures d'un mangeur d'opium." Mallarmé comments on Baudelaire's translation of de Quincey in his anthology *Les Beautés d'Anglais*, OC, 2:1419: "Les fragments principaux des *Confessions* ont été traduits, ainsi que l'analyse, de l'œuvre entière donnée (*Paradis Artificiels*) par Charles Baudelaire, le traducteur d'Edgar Allan Poe."

<sup>905</sup> On May 13, 1858, Baudelaire, *Corr.*, 1:495, wrote his mother: "Le *mangeur d'opium* est une nouvelle traduction d'un auteur magnifique, inconnu à Paris".

<sup>906</sup> Emily Salines, *Alchemy and Amalgam: Translation in the Works of Charles Baudelaire* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 174.

<sup>907</sup> Alan Astro, "Allegory of Translation in Baudelaire's 'Un Mangeur d'Opium,'" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 18.1-2 (Fall-Winter 1989-1990): 165-171.

une sympathie dont profitera l'ouvrage."<sup>908</sup> Baudelaire's ideas on sympathy defined his literary ideal. From an early age, he expressed that sympathy should be the primary goal of all writing. As he wrote to Sainte-Beuve in 1845: "[...] n'est-il pas clair que tout écrivain est responsable des sympathies qu'il éveille?"<sup>909</sup>

To reflect on an adjective coined by Poe in his tale "The Mesmeric Revelation," one could say that the sympathy between authors is formed by the "matter *unparticled*" that connects everything within existence. "[...] matter *unparticled* — without particles — indivisible — *one*; and here the law of impulsion and permeation is modified. The ultimate, or unparticled matter, not only permeates all things but impels all things — and thus *is* all things within itself."<sup>910</sup> Baudelaire created a "calque", or a copy, of Poe's invented word, introducing the adjective "imparticulé" into the French language. "[...] une matière *imparticulée*, — sans molécules, — indivisible, — *une*; et ici la loi d'impulsion et de pénétration est modifiée."<sup>911</sup> Vibrations are the medium of impartibility and translatability. The retina vibrates in accordance with the luminous ether, and these vibrations are then communicated to the "optic nerve", which then "conveys" similar vibrations to the brain.<sup>912</sup> Baudelaire used the verb "traduire" to translate the English verb "to communicate." "[...] cette vibration en engendre de semblables dans la rétine, lesquelles en communiquent de semblables au nerf optique; le nerf les traduit au cerveau, et le cerveau à la matière imparticulée qui le pénètre;"<sup>913</sup>

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<sup>908</sup> Baudelaire, *Un Mangeur d'Opium*, OC, 1:391.

<sup>909</sup> Baudelaire to Sainte-Beuve, late 1844/early 1845, *Corr.*, 1:116.

<sup>910</sup> Poe, CW, 3:1033.

<sup>911</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 215.

<sup>912</sup> Poe, CW, 3:1038

<sup>913</sup> Baudelaire, *EAP*, 215.



## In Transit: *Glanes* — Baudelaire and Poe as Mallarmé's Literary Masters

...une origine commune immémoriale  
Mallarmé, *Les Mots Anglais*

Stéphane Mallarmé expressed an interest in poetry and language from an early age. He experimented with different poetic forms and techniques throughout his adolescence and excelled in the French and foreign language courses taught at the Lycée de Sens. In the spring of 1857, at the age of fifteen, Mallarmé received second place in Greek translation and fourth place in French composition.<sup>914</sup> The following year, he was first in his English class, second in French composition and Latin translation, and runner-up for the Latin prize.<sup>915</sup> The same year, he began working on his early poems, playing with different combinations of rhyme and rhythm. Throughout his studies, Mallarmé continued to demonstrate academic distinction, placing first in Latin and third in French composition in 1860, an especially significant year that also saw his first attempts to translate Edgar Allan Poe's verse.<sup>916</sup> These early translations are collected in Mallarmé's personal anthology *Glanes*, which consists of three notebooks covered in brown cloth in which he copied thirty-eight poems written by Baudelaire and translated nine poems written by Poe: "À Hélène," "Ulalume," "À quelqu'un qui est dans le paradis," "Annabel Lee," "Eulaly," "Le Colisée," "Le Corbeau," "Léonore," and "Les Cloches."<sup>917</sup> *Glanes* offers insight into Mallarmé's youthful reading experiences and establishes Baudelaire and Poe among his sources of poetic inspiration. Additionally, the verse translations compiled in *Glanes* inform Mallarmé's evolution as a translator. Unlike his early verse translations, which remained unpublished, Mallarmé's published translations are in prose.

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<sup>914</sup> Roger Pearson, *Stéphane Mallarmé* (London: Reaction, 2010), 22.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>917</sup> See Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:1753.

In 1860, at the age of eighteen, Mallarmé closely researched the poetic techniques of his two literary masters. In his own handwriting, he copied Baudelaire and translated Poe. The act of copying prepared Mallarmé for a successful literary career. In his famous *poème critique* “Crise de vers,” Mallarmé attributed great importance to the value of transmitting literary legacy.

Avec l’ingénuité de notre fonds, ce legs, l’orthographe, des antiques grimoires, isole, en tant que Littérature, spontanément elle, une façon de noter. Moyen, que plus! principe. Le tour de telle phrase ou le lac d’un distique, copiés sur notre conformation, aident l’éclosion, en nous, d’aperçus et de correspondances.<sup>918</sup>

For Mallarmé, one could argue that the ultimate task of the poet depended on what Walter Benjamin has referred to as the “derivative intentions” of the translator. As a poet-translator, Mallarmé endeavored to transmit poetic heritage and tradition. In his *Les Mots Anglais*, he called attention to a loss of literary tradition: “[...] les lettrés des temps avancés (où se perd la force creative et avec elle la tradition).”<sup>919</sup> To highlight the virtues of what he referred to as the “natural filiation” of writing, Mallarmé used the French verb “dériver”, meaning “to derive.” In his pedagogical translation project *Les Mots Anglais*, Mallarmé attributed great value to “Dérivation” and in his *Déplacement avantageux*, he declared:

Comme si l’écriture avait antérieurement à sa vertu, ou d’une généralité, dérivé un bien, notre coutume, singulière et belle, pourvu que complétée, en coupe à court délai la transmission: avec cette vue, que l’héritage, passé le temps, se reporte de la filiation naturelle à la lignée par l’esprit.<sup>920</sup>

By carrying out a translation project that Baudelaire had not himself accomplished, Mallarmé came to personally experience the ways in which the transmission of literary heritage yields derivative values on both a poetic and an economic level.

Like Baudelaire before him, Mallarmé regarded translation as a reliable means to earn money. His translations of Poe reaped the benefits of Baudelaire’s previous achievements. As Pierre Champion has observed: “la poétique est une opération de *rémunération*, c’est-à-dire une

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<sup>918</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur. Divagations. Un Coup de dés*, 374.

<sup>919</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 950.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

opération symbolique, et plus précisément économique et monétaire, de rachat, autrement dit de *rédemption*.”<sup>921</sup> Thanks to Baudelaire, Poe was an extraordinarily popular name in France that Mallarmé therefore did not need to introduce to the French public. In his *Scolies*, Mallarmé explained that Baudelaire had transplanted Poe’s unforgettable works to France, allowing his name to equal those of France’s own leading writers.

Extérieurement du moins et par l’hommage matériel, ce livre, achevant après un laps très long la traduction de l’œuvre d’histoires et de vers laissée par Edgar Poe, peut passer pour un monument du goût français au génie qui, à l’égal de nos maîtres les plus chers ou vénérés, exerça chez nous une influence. Toute la génération dès l’instant où le grand Baudelaire produisit les *Contes* inoubliables, jusqu’à maintenant qu’elle lira ces *Poèmes*, a songé à Poe tant, qu’il ne serait pas malsonnant, même envers les compatriotes du rêveur américain, d’affirmer ici que la fleur éclatante et nette de sa pensée, là-bas dépaylée d’abord, trouve un sol authentique.<sup>922</sup>

By translating the American author’s poetry, rather than his tales, Mallarmé sought to introduce new dimensions of Poe to the French public. Twenty-five years after copying and translating his literary masters in *Glances*, Mallarmé wrote to John Ingram, an English editor and scholar of Poe, explaining to Ingram that he demanded to be well-paid for his complete translations of Poe’s verse. “Un éditeur qui me paraît suffisamment engoué de ma littérature, m’a demandé quelque chose et j’ai commencé par sortir d’un tiroir et remettre entre ses mains, ma traduction complète des poèmes de Poe, avec conditions: il me la paie généreusement et va en faire un livre de luxe.”<sup>923</sup>

Upon defining his translation project, Mallarmé described it as a continuation of Baudelaire’s legacy.<sup>924</sup> On September 30, 1867, one month after Baudelaire’s death, Mallarmé explained his translation project to Armand Gouzien, the director of *La Revue des lettres et des*

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<sup>921</sup> Pierre Champion, *Mallarmé. Poésie et Philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 21.

<sup>922</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 766.

<sup>923</sup> Mallarmé’s letter is cited in Léon Lemonnier, trans., *Poèmes d’Edgar Poe* (Paris: J. Corti, 1949), 202.

<sup>924</sup> For more on this see Pauline Galli, “De Poe à Mallarmé, de Mallarmé à Poe: traduction, édition, création.” *TTR, Traduction, terminologie, redaction*. 25.2 (2012): 143-148. “La filiation qui nous permet de relier Poe et Baudelaire à Mallarmé est donc complexe, et ne peut être limitée à une simple influence de l’un et l’autre par la lecture. Baudelaire est estimé pour lui-même, mais également comme passeur, vecteur de Poe qui, quant à lui, est admiré grâce aux traductions de ce dernier. La toile s’est tissée par ce rapport d’admiration, et, dans ce réseau, la traduction tient une place centrale et symbolique. Elle constitue un lien intime, une connivence posthume avec les deux auteurs, puisqu’il s’agit d’élargir le célèbre binôme Baudelaire-Poe en incluant un trinôme Mallarmé.” (147-148).

arts who had sought to publish Mallarmé's translated poems: "Vous aurez dans l'un des premiers numéros quelques poèmes de Poë auxquels je me remettrai; j'accepte cette tâche comme un legs de Baudelaire."<sup>925</sup> Despite his early efforts to publish a complete collection of his translated poems, Mallarmé's first collected edition appeared in 1872, when Émile Blémont printed eight of the translations in his *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique*. Three years later, Mallarmé's translation of "The Raven" entitled "Le Corbeau" appeared with the publisher Richard Lesclide along with a drawing of the ebony bird illustrated by Édouard Manet.<sup>926</sup>

In 1888, all of Mallarmé's translations were published in a collection with the Belgian editor Deman.<sup>927</sup> Mallarmé dedicated this collection to Baudelaire and on the work's opening page, he expressed his indebtedness to his literary predecessor: "À La Mémoire de Baudelaire. *Que la Mort seule empêcha d'achever, en traduisant l'ensemble de ces poèmes, le monument magnifique et fraternel dédié par son génie à EDGAR POE.*"<sup>928</sup> This edition featured further illustrations by Manet, including a drawing of Poe and sketches of a raven and his tombstone. Dominique Julien has suggested that these drawings serve as an "intersemiotic transposition" of Poe's verse.

As a translator, Mallarmé did not simply transfer meaning from source text to target text: the additional dimensions of intertextual reference (Baudelaire's Poe) and intersemiotic transposition (Manet's pictures) complicated the translation into not simply a reflection but a reflection of multiple elements."<sup>929</sup>

To the extent that they entail a new structuring of a page's image, marginal spaces serve as a prime example of "intertextual references" and "intersemiotic transposition." As a poet-translator, Mallarmé came to picture the white space of the page as an image in and of itself. The

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<sup>925</sup> Ibid., 1754.

<sup>926</sup> Dominique Julien. "Translation as illustration: the visual paradigm in Mallarmé's translations of Poe." *Word & Image*. 30.3 (2014): 249-260. Julien suggests that "Manet's illustrations themselves can be viewed — and indeed were viewed — as translations on multiple levels" (253) and adds that "the *japonais* style of the pictures, in addition to their technique, points to Manet as a kind of translator of Japanese" (253).

<sup>927</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Les Poèmes d'Edgar Poe* (Brussels: Edmond Deman, 1888).

<sup>928</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:723.

<sup>929</sup> Julien, "Translation as illustration: the visual paradigm in Mallarmé's translations of Poe," 256.

typographical details of Mallarmé's poetry and critical reflections (capitalized letters, italics, dashes, commas, parentheses, colons, ellipses) were a means by which he reshaped and reimagined the literary images of the past. In a section of his *Divagations* entitled "Volumes sur le divan," Mallarmé wrote a piece entitled "Autrefois, en Marge de Baudelaire", a title that clearly echoes Poe's *Marginalia*. Writing in a poetic space "en Marge," Mallarmé's prose transmits Baudelaire's legacy as a poet-translator. The lexical field of Mallarmé's prose recalls Baudelaire's translations of Poe's tales, for it alludes to opium and nerves and depicts a landscape that is strikingly similar to the depressing scene portrayed in the "The Fall of the House of Usher." The parallel that Mallarmé draws between decaying vegetation, stringed instruments, and reflective mirroring allow his marginal piece to reproduce an image of Poe's tale. Through his singular use of the dash, Mallarmé draws a separation between the Prayer of a faraway horizon and the distressing vegetation that (re)produces the scene's sorrowful effect.

Un paysage haute intense comme l'opium; là-haut et à l'horizon, la nue livide, avec une trouée bleue de Prière — pour végétation, souffrent des arbres dont l'écorce douloureuse enchevêtre des nerfs dénudés, leur croissance visible s'accompagne malgré l'air immobile, d'une plainte de violon qui, à l'extrémité frissonne en feuilles : leur ombre étale de taciturnes miroirs en des plates-bandes d'absent jardin, au gradin noir du bord enchâssant l'oubli, avec tout le futur.<sup>930</sup>

Mallarmé's digression on Baudelaire, which also enfolds Poe, reinforces the intimate connection between reader and writer and the complex mutual entanglement of nerves. Jerome McGann explains that as a writer of "marginalium," Poe "exposes the fact that writers are always readers and reciprocally, that readers are always rewriting what they read. In the event that readers have been provoked to expose themselves, their thinking, to themselves."<sup>931</sup> Kevin Hayes has duly noted that Poe envisioned the margins not only as a space where readers encountered writers, but also as

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<sup>930</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:110.

<sup>931</sup> Jerome McGann, *The Poet Edgar Allan Poe* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014), 22.

a space where “manuscript and print culture come together.”<sup>932</sup> In several regards, then, margins became an enabling condition of the “intertextuality” that came to define the works of the French Symbolists, for they form the space of the “inter”: “The intertextuality we discover in the Symbolists is the sign of their common origin; at the same time it reveals the irreducible cast of their idioms. Valéry depends on Mallarmé, who depends on Baudelaire without whose offices Poe could never have been the influence that he was.”<sup>933</sup>

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<sup>932</sup> Kevin Hayes, *Poe and the Printed Word*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 28. Hayes notes that for Poe, *Marginalia* was a means by which he “deliberately conflated manuscript and print, confidential and public.”

<sup>933</sup> James Lawler. “Daemons of the Intellect: The Symbolists and Poe.” *Critical Inquiry* 14.1 (1987): 110.



Edouard Manet, artist and Stéphane Mallarmé, translator, "Frontspiece for *Le Corbeau*," *Exhibits: The Sheridan Libraries and Museums*, accessed March 30, 2018. <http://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/items/show/746>.

## Chapter 5. Mallarmé's Experience as Poet-Translator: Fiction and Idea

Il y a de l'à traduire. Des deux côtés il assigne un contrat. Il engage moins des auteurs que des noms propres au bord de la langue, il n'engage essentiellement ni à communiquer ni à représenter, ni à tenir un engagement déjà signé, plutôt à établir le contrat et à donner naissance au pacte, autre dit au *symbolon*, en un sens que Benjamin ne désigne pas sous ce nom mais suggère sans doute par la métaphore de l'amphore, puisque dès le début nous avons suspecté le sens courant de la métaphore, par l'ammétaphore.

Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel"

### Contextual Introduction

#### *i. Mallarmé's Career as an English Professor*

...la forme toute anglaise d'— **EER en career.**  
Mallarmé, *Les Mots Anglais*

Two years after first translating Poe in his *Glances*, Mallarmé decided to pursue a career as an English language professor. In a letter written to his grandparents on January 17, 1862, he explained that teaching a foreign language was a reputable career: "Et parmi les chaires qui mènent le plus loin, il faut compter celle des langues étrangères."<sup>934</sup> In the same letter, Mallarmé mentioned that in the future, he hoped to write a thesis on a foreign author: "Une thèse à faire sur un auteur étranger, cela serait autant une distraction qu'un travail."<sup>935</sup> On February 5, 1862, he again wrote to his grandmother, explaining that he took great pleasure in learning English and Latin, which he studied with the aspiring writer Emmanuel des Essarts.<sup>936</sup> In 1863, he travelled to London to pursue his foreign language studies. During his study abroad in London, Mallarmé wrote a letter to his friend Henri Cazalis in which he quoted Poe's melodic poem "Ulalume," which "many considered as the greatest of all Poe's poems."<sup>937</sup> Mabbot eloquently describes how the poem's effect directly depends on the developmental progression of its "vocal music": "The vocal music by itself

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<sup>934</sup> Mallarmé, *Correspondance* (hereafter, *Corr.*), ed. Henri Mondor and J. G. Aubry (Paris, Gallimard, 1959), 1:15.

<sup>935</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>936</sup> *Ibid.*, 21: "J'ai commencé mes études anglaises: sois persuadée, chère bonne maman que, le professeur venant tous les jours et corrigeant mes devoirs, je ne peux rester inoccupé. Je me remets aussi au latin que je n'avais pas quitté complètement. Est-ce parce que je n'y suis pas forcé comme on l'est dans un collège? Je ne sais, mais ce qui me semblait besogne pédantesque et ennuyeuse pendant mes classes a, maintenant que je le fais librement, un charme exquis."

<sup>937</sup> Poe, *CW*, 1: 409.



conveys one emotion after another, like the lapping of a river against a shore — steady, quiet, and resistless. It must be read aloud or sounded by the ‘inner ear,’ and indeed was composed for recitation.”<sup>938</sup> In his letter, Mallarmé reformulated the question that Baudelaire frequently had asked friends, family, and strangers on the street. Unlike Baudelaire, who had questioned whether or not one knew Poe (“Connaissez-vous Edgar Poë?”),<sup>939</sup> Mallarmé asked Cazalis if he was familiar with Poe’s verse: “Connais-tu les vers d’E Poe? *Astarté est plus chaude que Diane. elle roule à travers un éther de soupirs – elle joue dans un monde de soupirs.*”<sup>940</sup> Mallarmé translated “Ulalume” as many as three different times, moving from his two unpublished verse translations in *Glanes* to one published prose translation.

Shortly after returning from London, Mallarmé became a certified English language teacher. On September 17, 1863, he earned a certificate for his participation in a competitive exam. The same month, Mallarmé began teaching English at the Lycée Tournon-sur-Rhône in Ardèche, earning 2000 francs for the school year. Despite this position, his knowledge of the language remains questionable. Carl Paul Barbier claims that Mallarmé was far from proficient in English: “Mallarmé connaît mal l’anglais, [...] il le parle peu avec un accent, le traduit avec difficulté et ne l’écrit que rarement.”<sup>941</sup> Mallarmé’s foreign language teaching in fact received negative reviews that claimed he lacked appropriate teaching methods. On May 24, 1866, Mr. Adler-Mesnard, a professor of German at the École Normale Supérieure wrote that Mallarmé’s students pronounced English words inaccurately, adding that they had difficulty translating basic phrases:

Tous ses élèves prononcent très mal l’anglais et ne savent pas les mots les plus usuels. En première année d’Enseignement spécial, quatorze élèves, unissant leurs efforts, n’ont pas pu traduire: “Donnez-moi du pain et de l’eau.” De tous les quatrièmes, pas un de mérite de passer en troisième. Au cours supérieur, le professeur

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<sup>938</sup> Ibid.

<sup>939</sup> Asselineau. *Charles Baudelaire, sa vie et son œuvre*, 39.

<sup>940</sup> Mallarmé to Henri Cazalis, 24 July 1863, *Corr.*, 1:93.

<sup>941</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Recueil de “Nursery Rhymes”*, ed. Carl Paul Barbier (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 17.

fait traduire *Le roi Lear* de Shakespeare à livre ouvert. Nécessairement, les élèves n’y comprennent rien...<sup>942</sup>

On June 11, 1865, the reviewer Mr. Deynez wrote that Mallarmé devoted too much classroom time to literary studies: “Occupe trop ses élèves supérieurs de théories littéraires.”<sup>943</sup> In another review, dated May 26, 1866, Deynez noted that Mallarmé was pretentious: “Esprit cultivé, mais prétentieux, parlant beaucoup de poésie et d’idéal.”<sup>944</sup> In conformity with his poetic Ideal, Mallarmé’s lessons defamiliarized language, moved away from referential meaning, and attempted to fix several different back-and-forth movements between French and English.

## ii. *Academic Lecturing: La Musique et les Lettres*

Near the end of his career, Mallarmé gave an important lecture at Oxford and again in Cambridge entitled *La Musique et les Lettres* (1894). Although he was a professor of English and presenting his research at two of the top universities in England, he nevertheless delivered his lecture in French. Prior to appearing in print, Mallarmé’s *La Musique et les Lettres* was thus an oral performance for an academic conference. Calling attention to the significance of the performative dimension of Mallarmé’s speech, Annick Etlin asserts that the conference allowed Mallarmé to play the role of “poète-orateur,” affording him the opportunity to theatrically announce what he referred to as the crisis of letters: “Quelque chose comme les Lettres existel.”<sup>945</sup> The act of vocalizing his speech allowed Mallarmé to emphasize the value of literary work or action.<sup>946</sup> In the notes accompanying the written publication of his speech in *La Revue Blanche*, Mallarmé explained that while preparing his lecture, he had reflected on Poe’s public persona as an orator:

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<sup>942</sup> Adler-Mesnard is quoted in Austin Gill, “Mallarmé fonctionnaire d’après le dossier F 17 21231 des Archives Nationales,” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 68.1 (1968), 9.

<sup>943</sup> Deynez is quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>944</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>945</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur. Divagations. Un Coup de dés*, 373.

<sup>946</sup> Annick Etlin, *Le Double Discours de Mallarmé: Une Initiation à la Fiction*. (Paris: Les Éditions d’Ithaque, 2017), 27.

*Quant au Pembroke Collège — Poe eût lecturé, devant Whistler. Soir. L'immense, celle du bow-window, draperie, au dos de l'orateur debout contre un siège et à une table qui porte l'argent d'une paire puissante de candélabres, seuls, sous leurs feux. Le mystère, inquiétude que, peut-être, on le déversa ; et l'élite rendant, en l'ombre, un bruit d'attention respiré, comme autour de visages, leur voile. Décor, du coup dorénavant trouvé, Charles Whibley, par votre frère le cher Dun, à ce jeu qui reste transmission de rêveries entre un et quelques-uns.*<sup>947</sup>

Mallarmé's theatrical announcement of the crisis of letters was thus not only intimately connected to the portrait that he had painted of Poe, his literary master, but also to the event's setting.<sup>948</sup> In his speech, Mallarmé laid emphasis on the verb "*lecturer*," thus recalling the notes that appeared in the print version of his speech: "*Poe eût lecturé.*"

In her analysis of the performative dimensions of Mallarmé's poetry, Mary Lewis Shaw explains that the "uniqueness of the performative utterance" is "dependent on its self-referentiality."<sup>949</sup> Shaw stresses that much like ritual, the performative utterance unfolds in the "here and now" and it requires the "*presence* of a speaker who is speaking in the *present*."<sup>950</sup> Additionally, Shaw asserts that the "ritual and theatrical performance [...] must take place in the context of a human (or other corporal/ spiritual) presence whose testimony renders it *authentic*."<sup>951</sup> Through his performative gesture, Pearson has explained that Mallarmé attempted to revitalize language, allowing it to take on unexpected value. Pearson calls attention to the lexical field of finance that Mallarmé developed in his speech.

... "discredit", "à grands frais", the pun on "capitale", "compte", and in a characteristically two-edged use of the conjunction – "or." The writer is the exception, separating out what is valuable ("or") in the spectacle of Darwinian struggle before him ("s'entre-dévore"). As Mallarmé then goes on to say, the writer is an "interprète" who 'plays' the language of the real world [...] in such a way as to revalorize that language, not as the expression of the ineffable but as a form of 'music' rooted in our common human experience.<sup>952</sup>

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<sup>947</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur. Divagations. Un Coup de dés*, 368-369.

<sup>948</sup> For more on *La Musique et les lettres* and the "crisis of letters," see Chapter 1 "Crise de lettres" in Annick Etlin, *Le Double Discours de Mallarmé*, 20-29.

<sup>949</sup> Shaw, *Performance in the Texts of Mallarmé*, 12.

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>952</sup> Roger Pearson, "Les Chiffres et les Lettres: Mallarmé's Or and the Gold Standard of Poetry." *Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes* 2.1 (2004): 49.

The pedagogical translation projects that Mallarmé undertook during his career as an English Professor led to these financial and poetic reflections on the relationship between music, lecturing and the status, or rather crisis, of letters.

### *iii. Pedagogical Translation Projects*

Tirer des lois phoniques...  
— Mallarmé, “Notes sur le langage.”

The growth in foreign language teaching in the nineteenth century led to an increasing demand for university textbooks.<sup>953</sup> Over the course of his career as a professor of English, Mallarmé worked on two pedagogical translation projects. For his first project, *Nursery Rhymes* (1879-1881), Mallarmé translated English children’s songs into French. For his second project, *Les Dieux Antiques* (1879), he made an adapted translation of *A Manual of Mythology in the Form of Question and Answer* by the British historian George Cox. In addition to his translation projects – which also include three poems by Lord Alfred Tennyson, one poem by William Bonaparte-Wyse, and “Le ‘Ten O’Clock de M. Whistler,’” Mallarmé worked on a philological study of the English language *Les Mots Anglais* (1877), which was, in part, an adaptation of *The Philology of the English Tounge* (1873) written by John Earle.<sup>954</sup> Finally, Mallarmé wrote a study of language in general entitled “Notes sur le langage,” and he intended to publish an anthology on English prose and verse entitled *Les Beautés de l’anglais*, but the manuscript was published only posthumously.

While Mallarmé’s pedagogical projects corresponded to his sincere poetic interests, he nevertheless told Valéry that he pursued this work to make a living: “J’ai dû faire, dans des moments de gêne ou pour acheter de ruineux canots, des besognes propres et voilà tout (*Les Dieux*

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<sup>953</sup> Jacques Michon, “La langue dans la langue. Ce que c’est que l’anglais de Stéphane Mallarmé,” *Études littéraires*. 22.1 (1989), 29.

<sup>954</sup> See Chapter 2 “Transformations Textuelles” in Jacques Michon, *Mallarmé et les Mots Anglais*, 53-78. See also Appendice 1: Un Travail de Mosaïque in *ibid*, 167-186.

*Antiques, Les Mots Anglais*).<sup>955</sup> Despite this claim, Jacques Michon maintains that Mallarmé benefited from his pedagogical translation projects on both a financial level and a poetic level and that these projects helped him work against his writer's block: "Cette abondante production contraste avec l'image du poète stérile torturé devant la page blanche. Mallarmé retrouve sa verve et sa fertilité dans ces traductions, adaptations, transpositions, corrections et savants bricolages philologiques."<sup>956</sup>

Through his experience with the space between languages, Mallarmé conceived a linguistic theorem that he spent many years attempting to prove. The depth of Mallarmé's Idea resists universal applicability, as it resists totalization. As Liliane Welch has noted, Mallarmé rejected a "systematic approach" to writing and his thoughts on writing "have no method of their own which could make sense apart from concrete experiences."<sup>957</sup>

The kind of thinking requisite for understanding art must be one that floats to and fro with the fluctuations of the experience of art. For the experience here is that of life itself, life as emergent, alive and becoming, and the thinking which remains true to it must flow with it, enter into its play, and beware of the prudish attitude of aloofness which inevitably attends reflective thought as its supreme temptation.<sup>958</sup>

The development of Mallarmé's Fiction thus depends not only on his own experiences as a poet-translator and professor, but also on his readers' experiential engagement with his works. In the opening Note to his polytypographic poem *Un Coup de dés*, Mallarmé imagined a skilled reader, or "Lecteur habile," who would discover the dynamic movement of his Idea. Mallarmé's emphasis on the readerly experience corresponds to how Poe himself imagined his readers. Jerome McGann

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<sup>955</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Autobiographie: Lettre à Verlaine Stéphane Mallarmé* (Caen: l'Échoppe, 1991), 17. Ironically, Michon notes that *Les Mots Anglais* received little sales and was harshly critiqued and judged as an unsuitable pedagogical resource due to its obscure language. See Michon, *Mallarmé et Les Mots Anglais*, 48-49.

<sup>956</sup> Michon, "La langue dans la langue," 30.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>958</sup> Liliane Welch. "Mallarmé and the Experience of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30.3 (1972): 369.

remarks that for Poe, “[t]he rationale of *poesis* comes as a performance carried out for the attentive readers.”<sup>959</sup>

## II. Effect

Much like Baudelaire, Mallarmé was deeply inspired by the logical writing method that Poe had outlined in his 1845 essay “The Philosophy of Composition”. In her study *The Prose of Mallarmé: The Evolution of Literary Language*, Judy Kravis observes that Mallarmé viewed Poe as a writer who upheld the “mythical status” of Literature. Kravis explains that Mallarmé’s fascination with Poe lies in the “juxtaposition of theory and practice.”<sup>960</sup> In the notes accompanying his translation of “The Raven,” Mallarmé referred to Baudelaire’s translation of the essay and asked a thought provoking question.

Que penser de l’article, traduit par Baudelaire sous le titre *Genèse d’un poème* et par Poe intitulé *Philosophie de la composition*? sauf que c’est un pur jeu intellectuel.<sup>961</sup>

À savoir que tout hasard doit être banni de l’œuvre moderne et n’y peut être que feint ; et que l’éternel coup d’aile n’exclut pas le regard lucide scrutant les espaces dévorés par son vol.<sup>962</sup>

In his early letters, Mallarmé expressed a desire to develop a method of composition that, like Poe’s, is one of reflection and meditation; he aspired to write a poem “digne de Poe.” Alluding to his dramatic poem “Hérodias,” Mallarmé wrote: “Il me faudra trois ou quatre hivers encore, pour achever cette œuvre, mais j’aurai enfin fait ce que je rêve, écrire un poème digne de Poe et que les siens ne surpasseront pas.”<sup>963</sup> What is striking about Mallarmé’s commentary is that he not only desired to write a poem that is worthy of Poe but also one that would surpass the work of his literary master. To gain a deeper understanding of why Mallarmé was so fascinated with Poe’s

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<sup>959</sup> Jerome McGann, *The Poet Edgar Allan Poe*, 93.

<sup>960</sup> Judy Kravis, *The Prose of Mallarmé. The Evolution of Literary Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 31.

<sup>961</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:771.

<sup>962</sup> *Ibid.*, 772.

<sup>963</sup> Mallarmé, Stéphane, Henri Mondor, and Lloyd James Austin. *Correspondance*. Volume I (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 207.

literary methods, let us briefly observe Poe's description of rhythm, music, and beauty in his essays "The Rationale of Verse" and his "The Poetic Principle,"

In his "The Rationale of Verse," first published in *The Pioneer* in March 1843 under the title "Notes on English Verse," and then in *The Southern Literary Messenger* in October-November 1848, Poe outlined what he referred to as the underlying reason of Verse. Opening his essay, Poe describes Verse as "all that is involved in the consideration of rhythm, rhyme, meter and versification".<sup>964</sup> According to Poe, while one tenth of the subject of Verse appertains to ethics, "nine tenths appertain to mathematics".<sup>965</sup> From the opening of his essay, Poe establishes that poetry is integrally related to mathematics, the study of quantity, structure, space and change. A key mathematical term used throughout Poe's Rationale is *Quantity*. According to Poe, the appreciation of quantity is universal. "It appertains to no region, nor race, nor æra in especial".<sup>966</sup> Verse depends on the human enjoyment of *equality*, meaning similarity, proportion, identity, and repetition. The repetition of certain sounds, such as phonetic units, consonants, and vowels, contributes to the poem's semantic effect. "The perception of pleasure in the equality of *sounds* is the principle of *Music*."<sup>967</sup>

In his remarks on the perception of pleasure in sound, Poe makes a distinction between unpracticed ears and uncultivated taste versus practiced ears and cultivated taste. While unpracticed ears can only take pleasure in what Poe calls "simple equalities," practiced ears are able to derive pleasure from more than "simple equalities," because, they have developed a cultivated taste over time. For Poe, the intensity of pleasure experienced by the practiced ear directly relates to memory.

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<sup>964</sup> Poe, "The Rationale of Verse," in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 14:209.

<sup>965</sup> Ibid.

<sup>966</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>967</sup> Ibid., 219.

Highly cultivated musical taste in this manner enjoys not only these double equalities, all appreciated at once, but takes pleasurable cognizance, through memory, of equalities the members of which occur at intervals so great that the uncultivated taste loses them altogether.<sup>968</sup>

Although Poe maintains that equality is the source of pleasure and beauty in poetry, he also upholds that variation is necessary, for it allows the practiced ear to delight in more complex equalities.

... in listening to the lines, he does actually, (although with a seeming unconsciousness, on account of the rapid evolutions of sensation,) recognize and instantaneously appreciate, (more or less intensely as his ear is cultivated,) each and all of the equalizations detailed.<sup>969</sup>

To explain in more detail his understanding of rhythm, Poe then comments on the reading or enunciation of poetry. By doing so, he demonstrates that rhythm directly depends on the reading flow of a poem. As Poe writes: “rhythm is erroneous, (at some point or other more or less obvious,) which *any* ordinary reader *can*, without design, read improperly. It is the business of the poet so to construct his line that the intention *must* be caught *at once*.”<sup>970</sup> Poe regarded the reading of a poem as a natural or empirical law of poetry. Whether a poem can be ‘properly’ scanned according to scholastic prosody, a system of fixed laws, is therefore, according to Poe, not an adequate means by which one may judge the value or Beauty of a poem. Contrary to scholastic prosody, Poe’s argument is that scansion must correspond to reading flow. Written scansion should therefore convey to both the ear and the eye the rhythmical and musical progression of a poem, allowing the reader to see and hear how the poet intended his versification to be read and heard.

Through his translations of Poe’s verse, Mallarmé discovered how to graphically convey the intended scansions of his poems. By following Poe’s method, he learned how to meticulously plan each and every last detail. Mallarmé shared with Poe a distaste for lyrical abandonment, and before engaging in the creative process, he emphasized that he first needed to decide the poem’s form and effect. “Je ne veux pas faire cela d’inspiration: la turbulence du lyrisme serait indigne de

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<sup>968</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>969</sup> Ibid., 227

<sup>970</sup> Ibid., 237.



cette chaste apparition que tu aimes. Il faut méditer longtemps: l'art seul, limpide et impeccable, est assez chaste pour la sculpter religieusement.”<sup>971</sup> In a letter written to Cazalis in January 1864, Mallarmé described the creation of his poem “L’Azur,” which he modeled after Poe’s ideas on effect. Mallarmé explained to Cazalis that before the writing process could begin, he intentionally eliminated the lyrical tendencies that had previously haunted him:

Je te jure qu'il n'y a pas un mot qui ne m'ait coûté plusieurs heures de recherche, et que le premier mot, qui revêt la première idée, outre qu'il tend lui-même à l'**effet général du poème**, sert encore à préparer le dernier. **L'effet produit**, sans une dissonance, sans une fioriture, même adorable, qui distrait, – voilà ce que je cherche.<sup>972</sup>

By deeply reflecting on the desired effect of “L’azur,” Mallarmé composed a poem that combined “pure poetry” with a dramatic element. In the final line of his poem, the noun azure repeats four different times and the italicized “*Je suis hanté*” typographically communicates an external presence. The ellipses following “*Je suis hanté...*” introduce a pause between the first hemistich (4/2), disrupting the expected reading flow of the alexandrine. Time is thrown of balance as a lingering voice utters “*Je suis hanté...*”(4) which is soon followed by the dramatic and exclamatory “L’Azur! L’Azur! L’Azur! L’Azur!” (2-2-2-2)

Il roule par la brume, ancien et traverse  
Ta native agonie qu’un glaive sûr ;  
Où fuir dans la révolte inutile et perverse?  
*Je suis hanté...*L’Azur! L’Azur! L’Azur! L’Azur! (v. 33-36)

Additional dramatic effects include several unexpected enjambments such as in lines 1-2 (ironie/Accable), lines 5-6 (je le sens qui regarde/ Avec intensité), lines 9-10 (versez vos cendres monotones/ Avec de longs haillons). Punctuation further accentuated certain enunciations, such as in line 9 (“Brouillards, montez! versez vos cendres monotones”), line 17 (“Encor! que sans répit les tristes cheminées), and line 29 (“En vain! L’Azur triomphe je l’entends qui chante”).

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<sup>971</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>972</sup> Mallarmé, *Corr*, vol. I, 103-104, my emphasis.

In a letter to Cazalis written in 1864, Mallarmé detailed his goals for his dramatic work *Hérodiade*. In addition to his emphasis on effect, he explained his desire to create a new language and a new poetics:

J'ai enfin commencé mon *Hérodiade*. Avec terreur, car j'invente une langue qui doit nécessairement jaillir d'une poétique très nouvelle, que je pourrais définir en ces deux mots: *peindre, non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit*. Le vers ne doit donc pas, là, se composer de mots; mais d'intentions, et toutes les paroles s'effacer devant la sensation.<sup>973</sup>

Like Poe, Mallarmé believed that every word must be intentional and well-planned. He harshly criticized Emmanuel des Essarts's poetic collection *Elévations* because it left too much to chance: "je vois des mots, des mots, mis souvent au hasard, sinistre s'y pouvant remplacer par lugubre, et lugubre par tragique, sans que le sens du vers change."<sup>974</sup> Unlike Essarts's aleatory word selection, Mallarmé's ideal poetics was one in which each word is consciously crafted. Describing his admiration for Villiers De L'Isle D'Adam's poetry to his friend Léfèbure, Mallarmé remarked: "Vous sentirez une sensation à chacun des mots, comme en lisant Baudelaire. Il n'y a une syllabe qui n'ait été pesée pendant une nuit de rêverie."<sup>975</sup>

#### *i. Theatrical Composition*

Poe wrote that he "carefully [thought] over all the usual artistic effects – or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense," an admission that Baudelaire translates in his *La Genèse du poème*: "Méditant soigneusement sur tous les effets d'art connus, ou plus proprement sur tous moyens d'*effet*, le mot étant entendu dans le sens scénique..."<sup>976</sup> In a letter written in early January 1865, Mallarmé detailed his future poetic project, "L'Après-midi d'un faune," noting that his poetry

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<sup>973</sup> Mallarmé, *Corr*, 1:137, my emphasis.

<sup>974</sup> *Ibid.*, 153. In his poetic advice to his friend Cazalis, Mallarmé wrote that it seemed as though he had dreamed his verses at random and Mallarmé therefore recommended revision before pursuing publication: "Il est un peu rêvé au hasard, et ne se sent pas des profondes études des poètes modernes. Ceci n'est pas l'ombre d'un reproche. Si tu publiais un volume de vers, je m'inquiéteraï."

<sup>975</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>976</sup> See Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," in Harrison, ed., *Vol. XIV: Essays and Miscellanies*, 199; and Baudelaire, trans., "La Genèse d'un poème," *EAP*, 989.

depended on the theatrical.: “Ce poème renferme une très haute et très belle idée, mais les vers sont terriblement difficiles à faire, car je le fais absolument scénique, non *possible au théâtre*, mais *exigeant le théâtre*.”<sup>977</sup> One week later, Mallarmé referred to his poem as a “composition théâtrale” and he used the word “calques” to describe the “coupe” of his verses, thus drawing a parallel between his translation technique (“le calque”) and his own creative writing process: “je crois même avoir trouvé un vers dramatique nouveau, en ce que les coupes sont servilement calquées sur le geste, sans exclure une poésie de masse et d'effets, peu connue elle-même.”<sup>978</sup> Like several of his works, Mallarmé’s strengthened the effect of his theatrical composition through the correlations between music and letters. Pearson explains that “in French ‘Faune’ is a faun, but also homophonically (in the pronunciation of the time), a ‘phone’, or ‘unit of sound.’”<sup>979</sup>

## ii. *Calque*

...le calque a fait entrer une altérité dans l’identité.  
Henri Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire*.

To closely trace linguistic and poetic exchanges, Mallarmé frequently used a translation strategy called the “calque.” While working on Poe’s verse, Mallarmé discovered several English derivatives of archaic French words, which he then reintroduced into the French language through the “calque.” In addition to bringing archaic French words back into circulation, the “calque” allowed Mallarmé to acquaint the French reader with Poe’s own idiosyncratic terms. In the sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* (1835), the term “calque” is defined as the light stroke of a drawing. Figuratively, a “calque” designates an imitation.

*Calque* s.m. Trait léger d’un dessin qui a été calqué. *Prendre un calque*.  
Il se dit figurément de toute production de l’esprit qui n’est que l’imitation servile d’une autre.<sup>980</sup>

<sup>977</sup> Mallarmé, *Corr.*, 1:166.

<sup>978</sup> Mallarmé to Léfébure, early January 1865, *Corr.*, 1:169.

<sup>979</sup> Pearson, *Stéphane Mallarmé*, 53.

<sup>980</sup> See “calque,” *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française. Sixième Édition*. T.1. (Didot, Paris, 1835)

By adopting the “calque” as his translation strategy, Mallarmé sought to provide a close copy of each word’s materiality, that is to say it’s letters. Significantly, Mallarmé used this strategy much more frequently in his prose translations than in his early verse translations.

In the preface to his *Poèmes d’Edgar Poe Première Édition Complète: Traduction Nouvelle*, the translator Léon Lemonnier observed that most of Mallarmé’s “errors” in translation are due to his use of the “calque.” Lemonnier critiqued Mallarmé’s work as a translator, noting that he oftentimes ignores the figurative connotations of words. Lemonnier explained, for example, that Mallarmé always translates “people” as “peuple” even in cases when it should be translated as “les gens.”<sup>981</sup> Lemonnier also noted that Mallarmé mistranslates “lily” because he did not know that when water was nearby, “lily” should be rendered as “nénuphar” and not “lys.”<sup>982</sup> In both examples critiqued by Lemonnier, Mallarmé offers a translation that corresponds more closely to the number of letters in the English word and also the letters themselves: (people/ peuple and lily/lys). Gobin duly observes that several of Mallarmé’s mistranslations capture phonic and etymological connections between words.

...lorsqu’il effectue de tels glissements, c’est systématiquement dans le sens d’une identification phonique ou syntaxique capable de stimuler la recherche d’un niveau d’expression plus général et de remonter par une transformation dans la direction d’*universaux* linguistiques, philologiquement fondés ou résultant d’une certaine perception poétique de l’unité.<sup>983</sup>

Let us observe just a few noteworthy examples of the ways in which the “calque” leaves graphemic traces of the English words from Poe’s verse.

Poe coined several new words in his musical poem “Ulalume,” which he first published in the *American Review* in December 1847. The poem depicts a narrator who wanders near Auber

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<sup>981</sup> Léon Lemonnier. trans. *Poèmes d’Edgar Poe*. (Paris: J. Corti, 1949), 9. In the footnotes accompanying his translations, Lemonnier explained the differences between Mallarmé’s translations and his own. Lemonnier explained that he sought to translate all of Poe’s poetry, even poems that had not been translated by Mallarmé.

<sup>982</sup> Ibid.

<sup>983</sup> Ibid., 150

Lake and Weir Forest on an ominous night in October.<sup>984</sup> The narrator follows a lustrous star that leads him to his lost lover Ulalume, whom he buried exactly one year ago. In line 14, Poe coined the adjective “scoriac” to describe the narrator’s volcanic heart. Each adjective repeats the consonant /c/: “scoraiaic-volcanic.” The adjective “scoraic” refers to the noun “scoriae,” meaning jagged blocks of loose lava.<sup>985</sup> In Mallarmé’s prose translation, he borrowed Poe’s invented adjective, rendering the “scoriac rivers” as “les rivières scoriaques.” However, Mallarmé did not create a syntactic “calque”; he altered the order of the English words. In his verse translation “à premier jet,” Mallarmé rendered the “scoriac rivers” as “les fleuves enflammés.” The repeated /fl/ illustrates the flowing river: “**fleuves-enflammés.**” In his version “corrigé,” Mallarmé moved closer to a “calque”: “les rivières scoriacées” prepares his definitive choice: “rivières scoriaques.”

#### Ulalume

These were days when my heart was volcanic  
 As the **scoriac rivers** that roll –  
 As the lavas that restlessly roll.<sup>986</sup>

#### Verse translation: Premier jet

C’était aux jours où mon cœur était volcanique  
 Comme les **fleuves enflammés** qui roulent  
 Comme les laves qui sans repos roulent.<sup>987</sup>

#### Verse translation: État corrigé

C’était aux jours où mon cœur était volcanique  
 Comme les **rivières scoriacées** qui roulent –  
 Comme les laves qui sans repos roulent.<sup>988</sup>

<sup>984</sup> Mallarmé quotes the “lac d’Auber” in a letter to Besançon that he wrote on September 30, 1867. “Au revoir donc, cher ami, et à bientôt *le lac d’Auber*. Ah! Si j’avais l’édition complète de Poe, comme l’a eue Baudelaire, je traduirais les *marginalia*, les articles d’esthétique et que de surprises.” Mallarmé, *Corr*, 1: 261.

<sup>985</sup> Pollin, *Poe, Creator of Words*, 36.

<sup>986</sup> See Poe, 416. Lucie Bourassa, “Du ‘texte véridique’ au ‘fait rythmique et transitoire.’ Les rythmes du traduire et la poétique de Mallarmé,” *TTR. traduction, terminologie, rédaction* 12.1 (1999), 93, has also commented on Mallarmé’s translation of “Ulalume,” arguing that Mallarmé’s use of the “calque” often sheds light on archaic etymologies: “Les faux-amis qui semblent donc plutôt venir d’une recherche de parenté avec le signifiant de l’original, retrouve parfois en plus une signification étymologique ou archaïque.”

<sup>987</sup> Mallarmé, “Ulalume. Premier jet,” *OC*, 2:791, verses 13-15.

<sup>988</sup> See *ibid.*, 807, verses 13-15.

### Prose translation

C'était aux jours où mon cœur était volcanique comme les **rivières scoriaques** qui roulent – comme les laves qui roulent instablement.<sup>989</sup>

Mallarmé incorporated line 12 of “Ulalume” in his *Crayonné au théâtre*, juxtaposing the French “Âme” and the English “soul.” “...se rendre au spectacle avec mon Âme *with Psyche, my soul.*”<sup>990</sup> The juxtaposition of English and French visually conveys the inner theater of the soul or Psyche. The depths of the drama are deepened by the soul that folds from one language to the next.

In his poem “To Marie Louise”, Poe coined the word “unthought-like thoughts” in line 12.<sup>991</sup> The poem intertextually refers to Poe’s tale “The Power of Words” (1845) and to his Marginalia number 146 (1846), in which he affirms that all feelings and thoughts can be expressed in words. In line 5, the narrator declares that nothing is “beyond the utterance of the human tongue.” (v. 5)<sup>992</sup> However, he is soon overcome with emotion when he hears the “foreign soft dissyllables” of the melodic name Marie Louise. Her name brings forth an “unthought-like thought” he cannot articulate. While the lover’s name is of French origin, it is compared its sweet sound to Italian tones. This confusion between languages emphasizes the narrator’s inexplicable sensation and performs the unutterable.<sup>993</sup>

#### To Marie Louise

Not long ago, the writer of these lines,  
In the mad pride of intellectuality,  
Maintained the “power of words” — denied that ever  
A thought arose within the human brain  
Beyond the utterance of the human tongue;  
And now, as if in mockery of that boast,  
Two words — two foreign soft dissyllables —  
Italian tones made only to be murmured

#### Mallarmé prose translation: À. M. L. S.

Il n’y a pas longtemps, l’auteur de ces  
lignes, dans un fol orgueil d’intellectualité,  
maintenait “la puissance des mots”, — niait  
que jamais pensée surgît dans le cerveau  
humain, supérieure à son énonciation par la  
langue humaine. Et maintenant, comme par  
une moquerie de cette jactance, deux mots,  
— **des doux syllabes étrangers**, musique

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<sup>989</sup> Ibid., 738.

<sup>990</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:160.

<sup>991</sup> Pollin, *Poe. Creator of Words*, 67.

<sup>992</sup> Poe, *CW*, 1:406.

<sup>993</sup> The name “Marie” echoes with the name of his younger sister Maria, who passed away in 1857, and also with the name of his wife Marie Gerhard, who reminded him of his departed sister. To further extend these parallels, one may also observe that Mallarmé’s wife was from Germany, and her name therefore evokes the “étranger.”

By angels dreaming in the moonlit “dew  
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill” —  
Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart,  
Unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of thought,  
(v. 1-12)<sup>994</sup>

italienne, faits seulement pour être  
murmurés par des anges au clair de lune  
rêvant d’une rosée qui pend comme des  
liens de perles de la colline d’Hermon, —  
ont suscité de l’abîme de son cœur des  
pensées comme il s’en pense point et qui  
sont l’âme de la pensée<sup>995</sup>

In line 23, the “pen falls powerless” which Mallarmé translates as: “la plume tombe impuissante de ma main qui vacille.”<sup>996</sup> Much like the sentiment expressed in this poem, the inability to write haunted Mallarmé’s poetic pursuits. He often felt completely empty. Putting even one word into writing was a difficult undertaking. “...[je] pleure quand je me sens vide et ne puis jeter un mot sur mon papier implacablement blanc.”<sup>997</sup> The inexpressibility in “Marie Louise” is arises from harmony. The tuneful name is one that even “the seraph harper, Israfel” (v.14) would “hope to utter” (v.16). For Mallarmé, music was often the source of his profound feeling of artistic powerlessness. “...je me jetais en maniaque désespéré sur une insaisissable ouverture de mon poème qui chante en moi, mais que je ne puis noter.”<sup>998</sup>

### iii. *Voix vs. Voir*

La fable des *voix* reste à interpréter.  
Michel Deguy, *Sans Retour*

According to Dominique Julien, “changing ideas about translation in the nineteenth-century were closely bound with the visual.”<sup>999</sup> Since Mallarmé’s translations of Poe were paired with Manet’s illustrations, Julien identifies them as a prime example of how the act of translation exposes the connections between these different art forms. In a chapter of his *Critique du rythme* entitled “Espaces du rythme,” Meschonnic refers to Mallarmé in order to emphasize how

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<sup>994</sup> Poe, *CW*, 1:407.

<sup>995</sup> Mallarmé, *CW*, 2:759.

<sup>996</sup> Ibid.

<sup>997</sup> Mallarmé, *Correspondance. Vol. I*, 150. Letter written to Cazalis in January, 1865.

<sup>998</sup> Mallarmé, in *ibid.*, 180. Letter written to Cazalis in September, 1865.

<sup>999</sup> Dominique Julien. “Translation as illustration: the visual paradigm in Mallarmé’s translations of Poe.” *Word & Image*. 30.3 (2014): 249.

typography has the power to shape the vocal performance of a text.<sup>1000</sup> To illustrate this parallel, Meschonnic calls attention to the homonymic pair “voir” and “voix.” “Toutes l’histoire du langage poétique confirme que *voir* est dans la *voix*, des prophètes bibliques à Hugo.”<sup>1001</sup> Pierre Campion has also stressed the relationship between the vocal and the visual in Mallarmé’s works. “Lire dans Mallarmé, c’est engager l’œil et la voix, c’est engager son corps.” Campion goes on to assert:

... le texte est une structure et une sorte de tableau, il tombe sous le sens de la vue; parce qu’il est le développement d’un discours au sein duquel jouent toutes les valeurs de la langue et de la poétique, sémantiques, phonologiques, rythmiques, grammaticales, le texte fait l’objet d’un investissement vocal, et disons, pour le moment, d’une lecture à haute voix. En quelque sorte, c’est comme si chaque poème de Mallarmé relevait à la fois de la peinture et de la musique, et comme si son rapport à l’art du théâtre tentait justement de résoudre la difficulté de cette double référence. Voilà donc la première et extrême difficulté : comment peut-on lire à haute voix un texte, même bref, et le considérer en même temps comme une totalité signifiante ? Comment ce qui est l’ordre du temps pourrait-il se figurer à la simultanéité de la vision?<sup>1002</sup>

Mallarmé’s translations of Poe’s verse helped him become especially attuned to the interaction between the visual and the vocal. In the notes accompanying his translation of “Eulalie,” Mallarmé explained: “Qui peut lire l’anglais devra, les yeux sur le texte, laisser comme chanter en lui ce petit poème de la musique la plus suave; et s’arrêtera peut-être à des effets allitératifs étranges.”<sup>1003</sup>

#### iv. *Division*

Mallarmé’s translations of Poe’s poetry challenged the distinction between verse and prose. The title of Mallarmé’s verse poem “Prose (pour des Esseintes)” exposes this noticeable tension. Liesl Yamaguchi notes that “prose,” in this case, “designates the Latin hymns sung in Catholic services.”<sup>1004</sup> According to Malcolm Bowie, “Prose (pour des Esseintes)” is a prime example of the relationship between Lacan’s puns on desire and the “dressiness” of Mallarmé’s speech. Bowie shows that Lacan’s pun on the words (*séparer / se parer*) also appears in Mallarmé’s “Prose (pour des Esseintes).”:

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<sup>1000</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme*, 299.

<sup>1001</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>1002</sup> Pierre Campion, *Mallarmé. Poésie et Philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 72.

<sup>1003</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 775.

<sup>1004</sup> Liesl Yamaguchi, “Mallarmé and the Tension of Timbre,” *Hyperion* 9.3 (Winter 2015), 116.





v. *Idea*

The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, manifest;  
that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational.

Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"

In his academic lecture *La Musique et les Lettres*, Mallarmé explained that Music and Letters created a phenomenon, which he referred to as Idea.

...la Musique et les Lettres sont la face alternative ici élargie vers l'obscur; scintillante là, avec certitude, d'un phénomène, le seul, je l'appelai l'Idée.<sup>1007</sup>

*Parce que*, péremptoirement — je l'infère de cette célébration de la Poésie, dont nous avons parlé, sans l'invoquer presque une heure en les attributs de Musique et de Lettres : appelez-la Mystère ou n'est-ce pas ? le contexte évolutif de l'Idée — je disais *parce que*..<sup>1008</sup>

Il a été démontré par la lettre — l'équivalent de la Fiction, et l'inanité de l'adaptation à l'Absolu de la Fiction d'un objet qui en ferait une Convention absolue.<sup>1009</sup>

Mallarmé's work as a poet-translator helped him to develop the structural logic of his Idea. Following an existential crisis in Tournon, we argue that Mallarmé attempted to completely negate what Benjamin calls the "primary" and "spontaneous intentions" of the poet. This desire reveals that the operative function of Mallarmé's Idea is translation.<sup>1010</sup> Mallarmé used reflection, negation, and analogy to convey – and also discover – his poetic Idea: pure translation, pure derivation, pure ideation. In an oft cited quote from his "Crise de vers," Mallarmé proclaimed: "L'œuvre pure implique la disparition élucoatoire du poète, qui cède l'initiative aux mots, par le heurt de leur inégalité mobilisés..."<sup>1011</sup>

Although Mallarmé was a "poet-translator," he endeavored to distance himself from what Benjamin has called the spontaneous intentional poles of the "poet." In fact, through his attempt to abolish chance, or *le hasard*, Mallarmé tried to eliminate the spontaneous pole entirely.

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<sup>1007</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:69.

<sup>1008</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>1009</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1: 504.

<sup>1010</sup> See chapter 1, "Intentio: Spontaneous vs. Derivation," in Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Selected Writings*, 1:258-259.

<sup>1011</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:211.

Mallarmé sought to transform *all* intentions into “derivative intentions.” However, he knew that a complete removal of chance and spontaneity was ultimately unachievable. The numerous revisions that Mallarmé made to his translations and poems serve as a reminder of this impossibility, for they once again reveal the spontaneous intentions of the poet. Yves Bonnefoy refers to this profound readerly experience as “la traduction au sens large.”

J'appelle la traduction au sens large ces réactions du traducteur qui s'ajoutent à sa traduction au sens étroit et habituel de ce mot: qui s'y ajoutent ou même s'y substituent. Et je pense qu'il y a sens à considérer ces événements de la profondeur, en fait souvent inconsciente, comme le meilleur de la perception du poète autant qu'un aperçu comme tel irremplaçable sur ce qu'il est et sur ce qu'il cherche à être. S'attacher à ce second cercle du traduire, au sein des ondes qu'un poème remue dans son lecteur en une autre langue, cela ne peut qu'éclairer l'être propre de ce dernier, en rencontrant sur le vif ses convictions spontanées.<sup>1012</sup>

As a translator of Poe's verse, Mallarmé became familiar with the revisions that Poe made to his poems. In his *Scolies*, Mallarmé commented on the revisions that Poe had made to his poem “Lenore”, noting how the earlier title “Helen” to “Lenore” in order to stress the sonorous effect. “Les anciennes versions présentent, en effet, le nom d'*Helen*, au lieu de *Lénore*. ‘Le poème subit ensuite de grands changements et des améliorations dans sa structure, et l’expression, et le nom de *Lénore* y fut introduit...’<sup>1013</sup> Much like his literary master, Mallarmé endeavored to carefully orchestrate both the audible and visible effects of his poems.

#### *vi. Capitalization*

In his poetry and critical works, Mallarmé meticulously planned his use of capitalized letters.<sup>1014</sup>

As he expressed in the notes accompanying *La Musique et les Lettres*:

Le vers par flèches jeté moins avec succession que presque simultanément pour l'idée, réduit à la durée à une spirituelle propre au sujet : diffère de la phrase ou développement temporaire, dont la prose joue, le dissimulant selon mille tours.

À l'un, sa pieuse majuscule ou clé allitérative, et la rime, pour le régler : l'autre genre, d'un élan précipité et sensitif tournoie et se case, au gré d'une ponctuation qui disposée sur papier blanc, déjà y signifie.<sup>1015</sup>

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<sup>1012</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *L'autre langue à portée de la voix*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), 75.

<sup>1013</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:780.

<sup>1014</sup> Dieter Wanner. *The Power of Analogy. An Essay on Historical Linguistics*. (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006), 126.

<sup>1015</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 75.

Mallarmé found great meaning in differences such as *language* vs. *Language*, *idea* vs. *Idea*, and *alliteration* vs. *ALLITERATION*. According to Michel Murat, Mallarmé's frequent use of capitalization brings to light the allegorical network of his Fiction. Murat specifically draws attention to the capitalized word "Nombre" in Mallarmé's polytypographic poem *Un Coup de dés*: "La majuscule du mot 'Nombre': le mot constitue avec 'Abîme', 'Esprit', 'Fiançailles', qui prennent également la majuscule, un réseau allégorique intégré à la fiction; la majuscule contribue également à la hiérarchisation des concepts et au rythme graphique."<sup>1016</sup> David Evans points out that in "Hérodiade", Mallarmé vacillates between "*les vers*" and "*le Vers*." According to Evans, "[t]he capital 'V' suggests that some alexandrines approach Ideal status, and in terms of aesthetic hierarchy this implies a surfeit of harmony and symmetry."<sup>1017</sup>

## II. Language as Fiction: "Notes sur le Langage"

Mallarmé began his philological research in 1866, the year he also experienced a spiritual, philosophical, and poetic crisis that would lead to his discovery of nothingness.<sup>1018</sup> In a letter written on April 28, Mallarmé told his friend Cazalis that he had encountered two abysses:

Malheureusement, en creusant le vers à ce point, j'ai rencontré deux abîmes, qui me désespèrent. L'un est le néant, auquel je suis arrivé sans connaître le bouddhisme et je suis encore trop désolé pour pouvoir croire même à ma poésie et me remettre au travail, que cette pensée écrasante m'a fait abandonner.<sup>1019</sup>

While Mallarmé related the first abyss to the universe, he related the second abyss to himself, specifically his empty chest: "Car l'autre vide que j'ai trouvé est celui de ma poitrine."<sup>1020</sup>

Mallarmé's perception of a nonexistent self fundamentally transformed his poetic vision. In

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<sup>1016</sup> Michel Murat, *Le Coup de dés de Mallarmé: Un Recommencement de la poésie*. (Paris: Belin, 2005), 119.

<sup>1017</sup> David Evans, *Rhythm, Illusion and the Poetic Idea: Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 223. In his analysis of the scene's prosody, Evans notes that the "Scène contains 110 perfectly balanced 6+6 lines out of 134, yet this rhythmical symmetry alone is surely not enough to elevate *le vers* toward *le Vers*" (223) Evans goes on to observe that "rhyme symmetry is reinforced rhythmically by a number of isosyllabic rhymes as meter and harmony coincide." (224).

<sup>1018</sup> Mallarmé studied the works of philologists such as Müller, de Brosses, de Wallis, and Grimm; see Jacques Michon, *Mallarmé et les mots anglais* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1978), 26-58.

<sup>1019</sup> Mallarmé, *Corr.*, vol. I, 207.

<sup>1020</sup> *Ibid.*

contrast to his former beliefs, Mallarmé no longer saw himself as a subject who speaks through language but instead as a subject through which language speaks. In another letter to Cazalis from May 14, 1867, Mallarmé described the outcome of his spiritual discovery, explaining that he had become impersonal: “...je suis maintenant impersonnel et non plus Stéphane que tu as connu, — mais une aptitude qu’à l’univers spiritual à se voir et à se développer, à travers ce qui fut moi.”<sup>1021</sup> Mallarmé directly applied this new way of looking at the universe to his theories on language.

Mallarmé wrote an early account of his theories in “Notes sur le langage.” These notes have been posthumously compiled in a manuscript consisting of 29 loose-leaf pages. On the back of these papers, Mallarmé worked on rough draft translations of Poe’s verse. The genetic organization of Mallarmé’s notes indicate a parallel between his thoughts on language and his translations of Poe. In several regards, this parallel relates to the problematic nature of Mallarmé’s object of study: language. Although Mallarmé aimed to carry out a scientific study of language, he nevertheless acknowledged that his object of study could not be isolated. This raised an important question: how can language be studied methodically by using language itself? To move past this theoretical obstacle, Mallarmé developed a fictional method that he named after reading, in 1869, René Descartes’s groundbreaking philosophical work *Discours de la méthode*, written in 1637 in the French vernacular, in significant opposition to the Latin standards.<sup>1022</sup> Mallarmé’s Fiction was therefore structured by his readerly engagement with Poe and Descartes.

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<sup>1021</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>1022</sup> See Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé* (Paris: José Corti, 1988), 83-97. Joseph Chiari shows that the development of Symbolism depended on a movement away from a Cartesian understanding of time as “sequential.” “Cartesian time was sequential, now there is only the present and, for those who believe in it, eternity; those who do not call it non-being.” Joseph Chiari. *Symbolisme from Poe to Mallarmé*. (London: Salisbury Square, 1956), 35.

*i. Conversation vs. conversation*

In his notes, Mallarmé distinguished between “le Langage” and “le Verbe,” explaining that “Langage” is the development of the “Verbe” throughout time. He further identified two ways that “Langage” manifests itself: through “la Parole” and through “l’Écriture.” While speech or “Parole” creates analogies of things through sounds, writing marks the gesture of the spoken Idea; writing is therefore the reflection of speech. Later in his notes, Mallarmé asserted that “Conversation” is the privileged site through which one can study the Science of Language. In this particular example, capitalization indicates an important conceptual difference; it distinguishes between the Fiction of “Conversation” and “conversation” that takes place in real time. Through his incorporation of parenthesis, Mallarmé marked the ephemeral nature of the present of “conversation” that perpetually fades into the past:

...la Conversation; non dans une conversation, ce qu’elle est au moment (c’est fini) ni dans la partie de son Abstraction que nous voulons connaître, mais dans sa Fiction, ici telle qu’elle est exprimée par rapport à ces deux phases qu’elle réfléchit. Arriver de la *phrase* à la *lettre*, par le mot; en nous servant du *signe* ou de l’écriture, qui relie le mot à son Sens.<sup>1023</sup>

Mallarmé imagined an ideal conversation in which linguistic exchange corresponded to true and determinable meaning or “Sens.”

In the closing points of his remarks, Mallarmé noted that his Fictional Method depends on the written word and thereby involves the difference between “Conversation” and “conversation.” Gaède has explained that “conversation” corresponds to a horizontal rather than a vertical axis: while the vertical axis consists of elements used in discourse – words, grammatical and syntactical relations, tropes – the horizontal axis refers to the use of language by speaking subjects.<sup>1024</sup> In his analysis of Mallarmé’s methodological statement. “Arriver de la *phrase* à la *lettre*, par le mot,”

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<sup>1023</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>1024</sup> Edouard Gaède, “Le problème du langage chez Mallarmé,” *Revue d’Histoire Littéraire de la France* 68 (1968), 48.

Gaède notes that Mallarmé considered the phrase and the letter as the two extreme poles of language and emphasized that each of these extreme poles (phrases and letters) is underdetermined and determined at the same time: the pole of phrases is structurally undetermined since phrasal composition randomly combines elements but is also determined since each element in a phrase contributes to signification. On the other hand, the pole of letters is structurally determined but its signification is undetermined. According to Gaède, Mallarmé attempted to render every element of discourse as equally and integrally significant, thereby balancing the vacillation between the determined and undetermined poles of language. By equalizing the value of phrases and letters, Mallarmé thus sought to suspend the meaning of words.<sup>1025</sup>

*ii. Temporality and Parenthetical Statement*

Unlike the fictional “Conversation,” the meaning of words in “conversation” undergo constant change. Vocal alterations in tone further complicate these different meanings, adding layers of nuance. For this reason, Mallarmé explained that tone is the “supreme limit,” calling attention to the inevitable constraints of his Fictional Method. Mallarmé was interested in both the passing “now” of conversation and also the Conversation opened by reading written works of the past. Throughout his “Notes du Langage,” parenthetical statements suggest that Mallarmé’s Fictional Method fundamentally depends on a complex relationship to time, such as in “(Science, Pascal).” In one parenthetical statement, Mallarmé explains that “Anachronisme” provokes thought: “(comme elle la Pensée suscitée par l’Anachronisme).”<sup>1026</sup> The capitalization of both anachronism and thought suggest that the movement of anachronistic thought is Fictional.

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<sup>1025</sup> For more on this, see Gaède, “Le problème du langage chez Mallarmé,” 45-65.

<sup>1026</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

Throughout his “Notes du Langage,” parenthetical statements play with temporality in several different ways. One example, “(en nous arrêtant à la donnée du *Langage*)”,<sup>1027</sup> suggests an attempt to accomplish fixity and is shortly followed by a second parenthesis evoking writing, “L’Écriture,” which in turn contains another parenthetical statement on reading:

D’où les deux manifestations du Langage, la Parole et l’Écriture, destinées, (en nous arrêtant à la donnée du *Langage*) à se réunir toutes deux en l’Idée du Verbe: la Parole, (en créant les analogies des choses par les analogies des sons l’Écriture en marquant les gestes de l’Idée se manifestant par la parole, et leur offrant leur réflexion, de façon à les parfaire, dans le présent (par la lecture), et à les conserver à l’avenir comme annales de l’effort successif de la parole et de sa filiation: et à en donner la parenté.<sup>1028</sup>

We may note that the second parenthetical statement on writing opens but never closes. Since the second parenthesis remains open, Mallarmé’s understanding of the analogical Idea of “L’Écriture” is able to extend to the present reflection: “le présent (par la lecture).” By way of parentheses, Mallarmé portrays the present act of reading as preparing the future preservation of conversation.

In his critical essay “*Translation / Adaptation*,” Michel Deguy seems to consciously and reflectively employ Mallarmé’s fictional method to develop several of his own points. Opening a conversation with Mallarmé, Deguy uses parenthesis to designate his retrospective reading of Mallarmé’s written works: “Nous sommes d’une ‘tribu’ (disait Mallarmé), c’est-à-dire ensemble par la même langue.”<sup>1029</sup> After opening a conversation with Mallarmé via parenthesis, Deguy nuances the fictional method proposed in Mallarmé’s “Notes sur les Langages” by emphasizing the necessity of multiple points of view. To do so, he quotes Pascal in a parenthetical statement within an outer parenthesis, thereby extending the temporal dimensions of Conversation: “Penser, c’est donc une *contrariété* (non pas seulement *selon le point de vue* (Pascal) mais elle-même, *contrariété* plutôt révélée-approfondie par l’opposition des points-de-vue).”<sup>1030</sup> Deguy’s

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<sup>1027</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1028</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>1029</sup> Deguy, “*Traduction/Adaptation*”, 89.

<sup>1030</sup> Ibid., 92.



observations retrospectively expand on Mallarmé's method, presenting a different perspective on Mallarmé's own parenthesis, "(Science, Pascal)." <sup>1031</sup> For Mallarmé and Deguy, parentheses seem to typographically signal a reflection on the abysmal depths of language, recalling the runic rhythm of ringing bells in Poe's "The Bells," which Mallarmé incorporated in parenthesis in his translation entitled "Les Cloches": "(des cloches, cloches, cloches, cloches, cloches)." Similarly, in Poe's "The Haunted Palace", in lines 11-12 we hear "(This — all this — was in the Olden time long ago)" which Mallarmé renders as "(ceci — tout ceci — dans un vieux temps d'autrefois)." <sup>1032</sup>

### iii. Hours

...l'enchantement édenneé de l'âge d'or  
Mallarmé, *Symphonie littéraire*

In the final passage of his "Notes du langage" Mallarmé described his memory of an afternoon during which he perceived different temporal possibilities. Listening to the sounds of an ancient clock stimulated reflective awareness of the passing hours. The repeated "heures" builds to a conclusion that involves a negation of time. In the last phrase of his notes, a parenthetical statement stops the movement of the clock, fictionally ending moments of doubt and suffering. <sup>1033</sup>

Je n'avais jamais aussi complètement que **cette après-midi connu le bonheur** d'un ancien mobilier. Comme il réfléchit bien l'âme, habituée à une Idée fixe de Beauté, alors qu'elle est au repos par **sa magnificence ornementale**, derrière laquelle se devine **l'écho d'une sonore profondeur** ; cela à travers un luxe de miroitement irisé pareil à l'opale ou à la nacre, à l'agate ; qui n'est que le trop plein d'une exquise et élyséenne atmosphère que je compare à l'impression que me fait l'abstraction de **ce vocable d'heures**, ou, car pour moi peut-être, il est permis en **ce séjour d'être archaïque, d'heure** ; (la pluralité laissée se réfléchissant sur les meubles). Car *voici l'instant pernicieux pour moi comme pour l'horloge, ancienne et heureusement arrêtée, où d'habitude commencent les heures; l'après-midi souvent mauvaise pour moi la réalité des heures*, cette prolongation et cette limite de toute jouissance humaine, n'existant pas, je me suis fait, alors que l'absence n'en est pas un supplice, de **leur abstraction** et de la contemplation de **ce terme l'idéal du plus vrai bonheur**, répandu en moi ainsi que l'atmosphère est dans cette chambre. Derrière ces meubles, où commence le vague, où je craindrais de retrouver mon ennemi habituel, de belles tentures qui me présentent les ébauches, telles qu'elles sont sans doute dans le moment, de mes rêves, assument sur elle ce temps, que **j'ai le malheur de voir immédiatement et non plus à travers les heures humaines**. La satisfaction de vivre l'impression du jour même m'est souvent refusée, et **c'est dans l'après-midi, alors que les heures commencent** que je souffre de cette absence : mais sans doute dans

<sup>1031</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 72.

<sup>1032</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:735.

<sup>1033</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 76.

**(l'horloge arrêtée).**

Before having negated clock time, Mallarmé imagined a reflective plurality: “(la pluralité laissée se réfléchissant sur les meubles.)”<sup>1034</sup> The “ornamental magnificence” and the deep echoes of the ancient clock lead to a contemplation of a “vocabulaire d’heures.” In this way, Mallarmé extended his meditations on *Langage* to the Idea of Time: “Le Verbe, à travers l’Idée et le Temps qui sont ‘la négation identique à l’essence du Devenir’ devient le *Langage*.”<sup>1035</sup>

The parenthetical statement at the conclusion of Mallarmé’s “Notes sur le Langage” “(horloge arrêtée)” is reminiscent of the haunting refrain in Poe’s “The Raven,” which Mallarmé translated as “Le Corbeau.” In Mallarmé’s early verse translations in *Glanes*, he printed the English refrain in parenthesis underneath the title, revealing the shared grapheme “or.”

Le Corbeau  
(Nevermore...!)

In his *L’autre langue à portée de voix*, Bonnefoy questions how a translation could capture the powerful effect of the repetitive “ore” in “The Raven”:

Je pense [...] au “Corbeau”, le célèbre poème d’Edgar Allan Poe. Il est clair que cette méditation qu’il est a pour expérience originelle deux ou trois sons que Poe entendit se répercuter dans ses vers comme des échos dans des salles vides, suggérant un monde où rien ne serait que de la mort ou plus exactement du néant. Et au premier rang de ces sons il y a “-ore”, si beau d’ailleurs, et si bien placé dans ce poème pour en servir l’intuition, puisque c’est “-ore” qui résonne dans la porte qui frappe l’être inconnu, “the chamber door”, ou qui s’associe à d’antiques espérances on ne sait si toujours crédibles, celle des “volumes of forgotten lore”, ou qui incite à s’effrayer de la nuit, c’est alors “the Night’s Plutonian shore” ; et qui surtout retentit, dans le mot “nevermore”, “jamais plus”, fatidiquement répété. C’est sur ce son “ore” que tout se joue, mais que pourra-t-on en sauver dans la traduction du “Corbeau” ? Faudra-t-il, en français aussi, faire appel à des sons en “-ore”, si par chance on peut en trouver des mots qui se prêteraient aux mêmes évocations ?<sup>1036</sup>

Bonnefoy compares Mallarmé’s “Sonnet en –yx” to a “traduction au sens large” of the “The Raven,” for much like Poe’s poem, it employs words rhyming with /or/ to develop themes of

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<sup>1034</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>1036</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *L’Autre langue à portée de voix*, 39.

reflection, negation, and emptiness. As a poet-translator, Bonnefoy's own fascination with the "cor" echoes in his poetic collection *Ensemble encore*.<sup>1037</sup>

Much ink has been spilled about the prominence of the "key syllable" /or/ in the works of both Poe and Mallarmé. Derrida, Pearson, Cohn, Bonnefoy, and Marchal among others have called attention to the syllable's high frequency in the tale *Igitur* and the "Sonnet en -yx." For Cohn, the /or/ suggests a correspondence between the sonorous ("sonore") and golden sound ("son or"); it producing an "echo effect" that dominates Mallarmé's "poetic universe."<sup>1038</sup> Derrida notes that the grapheme /or/ appears in *hora*, meaning hour in Latin; this parallel between "or" and "hora" would have a profound effect on the temporal progression of Mallarmé's prose tale *Igitur*. As Derrida writes: "Or, l'ascendant d'*Igitur* vient, logiquement, *avant* la conséquence mais en marque aussi, ascendance étymologique, l'*heure* (*hora*, ce qui donne une lecture des 'heures' et des 'ors' d'*Igitur*, mais aussi de tous les *encor(es)* mallarméens, qu'ils riment ou non avec *or*..."<sup>1039</sup> One hears a salient example of the play between sonorous and "son or" in Mallarmé's first manuscript version of his "Ouverture d'Hérodiade."

Qui jettera **son or** par dernières splendeurs  
Elle, **encore**, une antienne aux versets demandeurs  
A l'**heure** d'agonie et de luttés funèbres.<sup>1040</sup>

The French title of Mallarmé's translation of the "The Raven" echoes in a riddle that sounds in Mallarmé's tale *Igitur*. "'Le **cornet** est la **Corne** de **licorne** – d'**unicorne**."<sup>1041</sup> As an ink holder, the "cornet" evokes Mallarmé's writing; it suggests the object that holds the liquid source with which his words materialize ("*Mettre l'encre dans le cornet*"). Imagining the "cornet" as an ink holder adds a new layer of meaning to the traditional interpretation of the "cornet", which identifies

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<sup>1037</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *Ensemble encore*, (Paris: Mercure de France, 2016).

<sup>1038</sup> Robert Greer Cohn, *Mallarmé: Igitur* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 85.

<sup>1039</sup> Derrida, *Dissémination*, 321.

<sup>1040</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 136.

<sup>1041</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur*, 29.

it as Igitur's dicebox ("le cornet à dés"), the container in which dice are shaken and from which they are thrown. What is more, the "cornet" might also call to mind an early wind instrument ("cornet à bouquin"), and more convincingly still, it signifies an acoustical instrument that intensifies sound's vibrations, thus leading to an echoing effect: "le cornet acoustique."<sup>1042</sup> Like a "cornet acoustique," Mallarmé's "cornet" generates its own echo through a reflection of sound: "**cornet-Corne-licorne-unicorne.**" The rapid oscillations of the "**corne**" seem to produce a noise whose reverberations move in a backward and forward direction throughout the "conte", shifting from the "corridors" to the multiple repetitions of the "encore" and "pas encore." The piercing riddle also travels beyond the "conte", opening unto an intricate intertextual and transtextual space. It recalls, for example, the horns ("cornes") of the faun in "L'Après-midi d'un faune," a title which draws attention to the unit of sound, or "phone."

Geoffrey Bennington addresses the high frequency of the grapheme /or/ in Mallarmé's works and also analyzes its frequent appearance in the marginal spaces of the printed version of *La Double Séance*, two lectures that Derrida gave on the subject of Mallarmé, literature, and truth. Bennington explains that the recurrent "or" does not have a thematic meaning, but instead, it becomes a play of letters on the page.

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<sup>1042</sup> See the entry in the Table Méthodique in the second supplement to the *Encyclopédie du Dix-neuvième siècle. Répertoire universel des Sciences, des lettres et des arts, avec la biographie de tous les hommes célèbres* (Paris, 1842), 790: "**Cornets acoustiques (méd.)** : instruments destinés à remédier à l'imperfection de l'audition en faisant parvenir aux organes chargés directement de cette fonction importante **une plus grande quantité de sons.** – Des expériences positives ont démontré que les **vibrations sonores de l'air** lorsqu'elles sont reçues en des cavités à parois solides et élastiques, déterminent, dans ces dernières, ainsi que sur l'air lui-même qu'elles renferment, **des oscillations nouvelles qui renforcent le son et augmentent son intensité** : c'est de cette manière que sembleraient agir et la conque extérieure de l'oreille et la cavité du tympan ; la chaîne des osselets, étendue de la membrane tympanique à celle qui ferme la fenêtre ovale du vestibule (*voy.* **OREILLE**) [...]. Une observation toute pratique consiste à remarquer que, si tous les **cornets acoustiques** ajoutent aux oscillations nouvelles de même nature, ils agissent, par cela même, **à la manière d'une sorte d'écho**, et qu'un certain intervalle doit nécessairement s'écouler entre l'instant où **le son frappe** leurs parois et celui où il est répété, **il en résulte donc que, si les ondulations se succèdent rapidement, il s'établira, de toute nécessité, une confusion entre le son répercuté produisant un bruit continu, au milieu duquel l'oreille perçoit qu'une sorte de bourdonnement** ; d'où la nécessité, quand on fait usage de cornets, de parler avec lenteur en accentuant fortement tous les syllabes."

“or” appears not only as a word which might be a noun or a conjunction, but *within* other words such as “dehors, fantasmagoriques, trésor,” (“outside, fantasmagorical, treasure”) etc., and in complicated plays with *son or, sonore*, (his gold, sonorous) and even with the *English* word “or.” And this leads further still to an insistence on the letter “o” or “i,” so that Mallarmé’s texts become in some sense (“ceci, un écrit”) *about* the disposition on the page of letters which in and of themselves have no meaning whatsoever, still less a *thematic* value.<sup>1043</sup>

Pearson similarly notes that Derrida used the grapheme /or/ to “demonstrate the Inadequacy of thematic criticism.” Pearson explains that Derrida’s long footnote on the “avalanches of ‘or’ in Mallarmé’s writing” comes to illustrate “dissémination” itself, “the logic of the supplement and the compelling strategy of deconstructing binary oppositions.”<sup>1044</sup>

Although “or” may not have a “*thematic* value,” it nevertheless contributes to Mallarmé’s Idea, a phenomenon produced by both music and letters. It comes to be associated with sound (“Cette salle particulièrement sonore au rêve”<sup>1045</sup>), orthography (“orthographe des antiques grimoires”<sup>1046</sup>), an orchestral memory (“une réminiscence de l’orchestre”<sup>1047</sup>), connectors and relationships (“Raccords – rapports”<sup>1048</sup>), the purifying flight of song (“l’essor purifiant du chant”<sup>1049</sup>), the cord of a musical instrument (“le son *nul* la corde tendue de l’instrument de musique”<sup>1050</sup>), and the enchantment produced by the musicality of everything (“Son sortilège, à lui, ce n’est libérer, hors d’une poignée de poussière ou réalité sans l’enclorre, au livre, même

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<sup>1043</sup> Geoffrey Bennington, “Derrida’s Mallarmé,” in Michael Temple, ed., *Meetings with Mallarmé in Contemporary French Culture* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 141.

<sup>1044</sup> Roger Pearson, “Les Chiffres et les Lettres: Mallarmé’s Or and the Gold Standard of Poetry.” *Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes* 2.1 (2004): 52. In the conclusion of his article, Pearson qualifies his own comments as supplemental: “Where I would wish to supplement Johnson, Marchal, and Compagnon is by insisting on the specifically linguistic nature of Mallarmé’s response to the political and cultural milieu and by drawing attention to the ostensive, or performative character of this response.” (55) In his conclusion, Cohn offers several examples of the “performative” of the “or” in Mallarmé’s works, several of which are drawn from Derrida’s two page long footnote in *La Dissémination*.

<sup>1045</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 70.

<sup>1046</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

<sup>1047</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>1048</sup> *Ibid.*, 561.

<sup>1049</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>1050</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

comme texte, la dispersion volatile soit l'esprit, qui n'a que faire de rien la musicalité de tout").<sup>1051</sup>

Yves Bonnefoy draws a parallel between the sad echoes of "cor" and the after effect of the Death of God in his "Mallarmé et le Musicien."

Après quoi la pensée de la mort de Dieu, ce que nous appelons la modernité, a changé cette situation mais sans l'altérer tout d'abord de façon fondamentale. Du fond de ces forêts qui, de Dante à Baudelaire, métaphorisent si naturellement la profondeur ténébreuse de l'univers ne viennent certes plus que de "confuses paroles", d'où, peut-être cette hantise des sonneries du cor – du son triste du cor "au fond des bois" – qui caractérise le romantisme, par exemple chez Weber; c'est comme si la musique s'étonnait, s'alarmait du vide qui se laissait entrevoir là où jusqu'alors son horizon absolu.<sup>1052</sup>

### III. Or

importance — valeur (d'où dorure sur tranche)  
Mallarmé, *Notes en vue du "Livre"*

In his *Divagations*, Mallarmé addressed the political economy in a critical poem entitled "Or." In this case, "or" represents the "gold standard" or the "étalon d'or," a monetary system that assigned to each unit of currency a fixed equivalent in gold. Pearson explains that "the system was first used in Great Britain in 1821, and in the 1870s it was adopted by France, Germany and the United States."<sup>1053</sup> Referring to the gold standard, Jean-Joseph Goux has argued that Mallarmé sought to create an "or-archétype" that would stress the importance of poetic value and symbolic meaning as opposed to exchange value.<sup>1054</sup> For Mallarmé, exchange value relates to the

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<sup>1051</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 65. Julia Kristeva and Caren Greenburd, "Phonetics, Phonology and Impulsional Bases," *Diacritics* 4.3 (1974), 33, note that the repetition of "phonic and semantic potentialities has two functions: 1. "it produces an effect that is foreign to the common usage of the natural language; they move *not toward a universal phoneticism*, embracing all languages, but rather toward a *pre-phonematic* [...] state, which can be observed in children who have not yet acquired the sounds of one language, but who are capable of producing all possible (non-linguistic) sounds. 2. "each of these phonemes carries semes with it, so that the morpheme or the lexeme to which these phonemes belong is dislocated, and the phoneme, acquiring semantic value in the process, tends to constitute a semantic constellation made up of all the lexemes containing this phoneme."

<sup>1052</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, "Mallarmé et le Musicien" in *Les Siècle de Baudelaire*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2014), 126.

<sup>1053</sup> Roger Pearson, "Les Chiffres et les Lettres: Mallarmé's Or and the Gold Standard of Poetry." *Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes* 2.1 (2004): 46. Pearson notes that the text "published in *Divagations* under the title 'Or' is the revision of a much longer article (entitled *Faits divers*) first published on 25 February 1893 in the *National Observer*. In that article Mallarmé addresses the current scandal surrounding the collapse of the Panama Canal Company and the subsequent conviction for financial fraud of its chairman, Ferdinand de Lesseps." (50)

<sup>1054</sup> See Jean-Joseph Goux, *The Coiners of Language*, trans. Jennifer Curtis Gage (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 98-112.

communicative aspect of language, or to what he refers to as the “universal reportage.”<sup>1055</sup> Unlike the “*commodity-money*” associated with the commercial exchange of facts reported in a “journalistic style,” the symbolic language of poetry accentuates the signifier, or the “mode of signifying”, generating a pure musical notion. While communicative language gives emphasis to the message, the essential language of poetry gives prominence to “the act of signifying.”<sup>1056</sup> As Mallarmé writes in “Crise de vers”: “Parler n’a trait à la réalité des choses que commercialement.”<sup>1057</sup> To define his own understanding of poetry, Deguy uses Mallarmé as his reference point.

La ‘poésie’ ne fait pas cavalier seul. Elle n’est pas le tout de la *littérature*, de la ressource (“dégagée”, disait Mallarmé, de la conversation commerciale ordinaire) de la pensée vernaculaire. Il y a en a deux: poésie ET prose; l’une avec l’autre; et donc “hésitation” (échange, alliage, alliance, rupture locale etc.)<sup>1058</sup>

*Le Grand Robert de la langue française* also uses Mallarmé as a reference point; the dictionary traces the introduction of the French adjective “monnayable” to Mallarmé: “ÉTYM. 1879, Mallarmé.”<sup>1059</sup> According to Bertrand Marchal, Mallarmé’s entire œuvre is, to a certain extent, a reflection on two mythologies of gold: a modern mythology (“l’or métal) and the mythology of Antiquity (“l’or solaire” and “l’or dieu”). Marchal calls attention to Mallarmé’s alliterative grouping of the consonant /g/ in his *Les Mots Anglais*, in which he draws a Fictional connection between *gold* and *god*. “Il n’y a pas de rapport étymologique repérable entre *gold* et *god*. Mais

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<sup>1055</sup> Thesis 90 of Hamacher’s *Minima Philologica*, 99, reads: “Philology fights in a world civil war for language and for the world against industrial manufacturing of language and of the world: it fights against muteness. It must therefore be prepared to fight against its own tendencies toward industrialization. One of the most fatal, most soporific, most disaffecting forms of this tendency is journalism.”

<sup>1056</sup> It is also worth considering Antoine Danchin’s remark in *La Traduction en jeu* (Paris: Seghers/Laffont, 1974), 7: “C’est pour une prodigieuse machinerie idéologique de l’illusion, maison de Houdin, que dans la société capitaliste les masses travailleuses apparaissent comme dépossédées du langage et les rhéteurs-financiers comme maître des mots et des choses.”

<sup>1057</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 210.

<sup>1058</sup> Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*, 13.

<sup>1059</sup> See the entry “monnayable” in *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, 4th digital ed. (November 2016), accessed 7 April 2017.

Mallarmé s'intéresse peu à l'origine absolue du langage."<sup>1060</sup> Marchal notes that the pairing of “*gold* and *god*” appears in close proximity to the words “*to go*” and “*good*”: “la notion d’un dieu infiniment bon n’est peut-être ainsi qu’une confusion analogue à celle de *god* et de *good*, de la même façon que la figure d’un dieu solaire peut procéder d’un simple jeu de mots, à l’image de celui qui persiste dans l’anglais moderne entre *god* et *gold*.”<sup>1061</sup> We will return to this odd pairing between “gold” and “god”, but first, let us consider the overall project of *Les Mots Anglais*, which Mallarmé worked on as a pedagogical translation project. Why might he have associated “god” and “gold”? Did he associate other words with the god /gold pair?

#### IV. *Les Mots Anglais*

Philology digs – digs out – the world.  
– Werner Hamacher, *Minima Philologica*

In the opening of *Les Mots Anglais*, Mallarmé asks, “Qu’est-ce que l’anglais?”<sup>1062</sup> Mallarmé called attention to the rising presence of the English language in the current geopolitical landscape, especially noting its importance in international economic and political exchanges. He asserted that everyone should know English: “[...] cet idiome est un de ceux du globe qu’un contemporain doit connaître.”<sup>1063</sup> Mallarmé’s observations can be extended to Samuel Weber’s remarks on the term “globe”: “[the] figure of the *globe* suggests an all-encompassing immanence in which singular differences are absorbed into a generalized whole.”<sup>1064</sup> Due to this “tendency of homogenization,” Weber asserts that the globe “exacerbates the need for differentiation.”<sup>1065</sup> To explain his understanding of “globalization,” Deguy uses Mallarmé’s poem “phénomène futur” as

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<sup>1060</sup> Bertrand Marchal., *La Religion de Mallarmé: Poesie, mythologie et religion* (Paris: J. Corti, 1988), 464.

<sup>1061</sup> Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé*, 465.

<sup>1062</sup> *Ibid.*, 948.

<sup>1063</sup> *Ibid.*, 947.

<sup>1064</sup> Weber, *Benjamin's –abilities*, 81.

<sup>1065</sup> *Ibid.*



a point of reference.” “De la nouvelle période technologique qui est la nôtre, ou de ‘globalisation,’ la traduction en général, transaction multiple, complexe, accélérée, est l’un des moyens et des buts, résultante du ‘phénomène futur’ (Mallarmé), c’est-à-dire présent, de l’imminente mondialisation en achèvement.”<sup>1066</sup> As is often the case, Deguy’s parenthetical reference to Mallarmé signals a comparable situation. In this case, Deguy suggests that Mallarmé had the power to intuit the imminent.

A key objective of Mallarmé’s philological project *Les Mots Anglais* was differentiation. Mallarmé emphasized that English is a composite language, explaining that, following the Norman Conquest in 1066, the fusion of two disparate elements formed the English language: an Anglo-Saxon element and a Roman or French element. Additionally, Mallarmé noted that English also has a classical element and a foreign or exotic element. The structural organization of Mallarmé’s study corresponds to these three different parts, which he refers to as “livres”: the first book concentrates on the gothic or Anglo-Saxon element, the second focuses on the Roman element, and the third studies the classical and foreign elements of English.

In the opening of his work, Mallarmé compared the organic development of words to geological strata. Much like the layers of sedimentary rock, the definitions of words in a dictionary evolve over time. He writes that “Les mots, dans le dictionnaire, gisent, pareils ou de dates diverses, comme des stratifications: vite je parlerai de couches.”<sup>1067</sup> For Mallarmé, language is a living organism and words flesh: “A toute la nature apparenté et se rapprochant ainsi de l’organisme dépositaire de la vie, le Mot se présente, dans ses voyelles et ses diphtongues, comme une chair: et, dans ses consonnes, comme une ossature délicate à disséquer.”<sup>1068</sup> This image of the

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<sup>1066</sup> Michel Deguy, *Sans Retour*, (Paris: Galilée, 2004), 52.

<sup>1067</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:949.

<sup>1068</sup> *Ibid.*

skeletal structure of words was inspired by Mallarmé's reading of Max Muller's study *Nouvelles leçons sur la science du langage* (1867-1868) in which the poet describes "la charpente osseuse' des mots."<sup>1069</sup> Through capitalization, Mallarmé again shifts the common understanding of words to a notion of words, "le Mot," that corresponds to his Fictional Method proper.

*i. Alliteration and Onomatopoeia*

The defining ideas in *Les Mots Anglais* can be traced back to Greek antiquity; they relate to Homer's distinction between the language of men and the language of the Gods and to Plato's *Cratylus*, in which Cratylus and Hermogenes distinguish between those who believe in the natural origin of words (*physei*), and those who believe in the conventional quality of words (*thèsei*).<sup>1070</sup> While Hermogenes argues that language is an arbitrary code, Cratylus believes it to be in harmony with the natural world. The question at the heart of the Platonic debate also resonates in Mallarmé's critical poems, most notably *Crise de Vers*, in which the French poet addresses the imperfect nature of languages. In Chapter 1, we observed that Walter Benjamin cites the following quotation in his "The Task of the Translator": "Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême..."<sup>1071</sup> Although Mallarmé yearned to side with Cratylus and thereby to discover a correlation between words and the things they signify, he nevertheless acknowledged that a perfect, universal language does not exist; different languages reveal the arbitrary nature of words. The timbres of a given language do not correlate to the words they signify. To offer an example, Mallarmé compared the French words *jour* and *nuit*, revealing how the words' timbres contradict their meaning; the word for day has an obscure timbre, and the word for night a clear one.<sup>1072</sup>

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<sup>1069</sup> See Bertrand Marchal's note in *ibid.*, 1794. Mallarmé was also inspired by the Émile Chasles, a professor of English, who published *Note sur la philologie appliquée* in 1865. See also Michon, *Mallarmé et les mots anglais*, 26-42.

<sup>1070</sup> See Gérard Genette, *Mimologiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 1-21; and Michon, *Mallarmé et les mots anglais*, 13-14.

<sup>1071</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:208.

<sup>1072</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Mallarmé, onomatopoeia is the best example of the analogical relationship between words: “Un lien, si parfait entre la signification et la forme d’un mot qu’il ne semble causer qu’une impression, celle de sa réussite, à l’esprit et à l’oreille, c’est fréquent; mais c’est surtout dans ce qu’on nomme les ONOMATOPÉES.”<sup>1073</sup> In the notes accompanying his pedagogical project *Nursery Rhymes*, Mallarmé pointed out several English onomatopoeic words: the cock-sparrows’ chirrup; the “Quack, Quack” of ducks, the “hum, hum” of bees, the “bleat, bleat” of lambs, and the “Mew, mew, mew, mew, mew, mew, mew” and “Purr-rr, purr-rr, purr-rr-rr” of kittens. In the notes accompanying Leçon 21, “The Scare-Crow,” Mallarmé explained the English onomatopoeia “Shua”: “onomatopée pour Pschit-Pscht — préféré de celui qui chasse ou effarouche les oiseaux.”<sup>1074</sup>

In addition to ONOMATOPOEIA, Mallarmé attributed special importance to ALLITERATION, explaining that poets are acutely sensitized to each letter. Poets hear the musical quality of words, which Mallarmé refers to as a “procédé, inherent au génie septentrional”:

Au poète ou même au prosateur savant, il appartiendra, par un instinct supérieur et libre, de rapprocher des termes unis avec d’autant plus de bonheur pour concourir au charme et à **la musique du langage**, ce qu’ils arriveront comme de lointain plus fortuits : c’est là le procédé, inhérent au génie septentrional et dont tant de vers célèbres nous montrent tant d’exemples, **l’ALLITÉRATION**. Pareil effort magistral de *l’Imagination désireuse*, non seulement de se satisfaire par *le symbole éclatant* dans les spectacles du monde, mais **d’établir un lien entre ceux-ci et la parole chargée de les exprimer, touche à l’un des mystères sacrés ou périlleux du Langage ; et qu’il sera prudent d’analyser seulement le jour où la Science, possédant le vaste répertoire des idiomes jamais parlés sur la terre, écrira l’histoire des lettres de l’alphabet à travers tous les âges et quelle était presque leur absolue signification**, tantôt devinée, tantôt méconnue par les hommes, créateur des mots ; mais il n’y aura plus, dans ce temps, ni Science pour résumer cela, ni personne pour le dire.<sup>1075</sup>

An important distinction is made here between “parole” and “écriture”: while “parole” refers to a spoken expression of the analogies between things and sounds, the alphabet implicit in “écriture” designates the written expression of these analogies. Mallarmé dreamt of an ideal alphabet whose

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<sup>1073</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 967.

<sup>1074</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>1075</sup> *Ibid.*, 967-968, my emphasis. See also *OC*, 2:950: “Lecteur, vous avez sous les yeux ceci, un écrit; dont l’enseignement est limité aux caractères propres à l’écrit, soit l’*orthographe* et le *sens*.”

letters would tell the history of everything that had ever been spoken. He outlined his true method of Fiction and Science in capitals: “ONOMATOPÉES” and “ALLITÉRTION.” After announcing his imaginary Science, Mallarmé transformed “la musique du langage” into “Langage,” making a distinction between “language” and Fictional Language: “ONOMATOPOEIA” and “ALLITERATION.” Using italics, Mallarmé nonetheless acknowledged that his “Science” of “ALLITERATION” is an “*Imagination désireuse*,” and he admitted that this *Imaginative Science* related not only to sacred mystery but also to risk: “[...] *établir un lien entre ceux-ci et la parole chargée de les exprimer, touche à l’un des mystères sacrés ou périlleux du Langage.*”<sup>1076</sup>

The would-be philological study *Les Mots Anglais* is not an accurate scientific investigation but instead an exercise in exploring the power of Fiction proper. In his philological study, Mallarmé analyzed words according to their functional parts, such as prefixes and suffixes, and in particular the essential component formed by a given word’s first consonant. To discover the absolute significance of each letter, Mallarmé created several different ALLITERATIVE families. But the varying definitions of the words comprising each family ultimately exposed the errors of his Fiction. For this reason, Gaède compares *Les Mots Anglais* to a “fable du langage”: “C’est bien plutôt une épopée ou une fable du langage où chaque lettre s’individualise en tant que héros d’une petite geste imaginative, ou, si l’on préfère, en tant que schéma dynamique selon lequel s’articule un ensemble d’attitudes ou d’actions.”<sup>1077</sup> Michon contends that Mallarmé’s true object of concentration is not the English language but instead the superior language of poetry, the language

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<sup>1076</sup> Ibid., 967.

<sup>1077</sup> Gaède, “Le problème du langage chez Mallarmé,” 57. See also *ibid.*, 56: “Il se propose de compléter, *fictivement*, le fouillis de données éparses qu’offrent ces dictionnaires, par une mise en série qui y introduirait une loi de continuité, donc un principe d’intelligibilité”. Catherine Mavrikakis, “La traduction de la langue pure: fondation de la littérature,” *TTR: Traduction, terminologie, rédaction: Etudes sur le texte et ses transformations* 2.1 (1989), 68, compares *Les Mots Anglais* to a “un récit fondateur”, “un récit de la traduction du français vers la langue mallarméenne pure gisant à l’intérieur du français.”

of fiction.<sup>1078</sup> For Genette, the phonic symbolism in *Les Mots Anglais* is a model of a Cratylistic dream, what he refers to as a secondary mimologism. The term “mimologique” refers for Genette to a dream of imitation or analogical relation and by extension to the emotional desire that drives one to find a motivation of language within texts that are neither entirely scientific nor entirely fictive. Since Mallarmé dreams of a foreign language instead of his maternal tongue, *Les Mots Anglais* qualifies for Genette as a secondary mimologism.

Through his fictional alliterative families, Mallarmé succeeds in subtly suggesting subdivisions of his Idea. For example, to return to the pairing of “god” and “gold”, one will not that the we also read in close proximity: “**gossamer** (GOD’S SUMMER), *fil de la Vierge*”, “**gossip** (GOD’S SIP, familier de Dieu nouvelliste), d’où *commère* et *commèrage*” and “**gospel** (GOD’S SPELL, discours de Dieu), ou l’*Évangile*.”<sup>1079</sup> The first three words in Mallarmé’s G list tie in with the theme of gossiping and commercial exchange. Gabbling and jabbering correspond to the commercial exchange of words.

**to gabble**, *criailler*

**gibberish**, *baragouin*  
**to jabber**, *bredouiller*<sup>1080</sup>

However, the Idea suggested by the alliterative G family can only be hinted at; it cannot be reported matter of factly. The Idea is virtual.

#### *ii. L’indissoluble hymen*

Although the formation of the English language bears traces of combat and struggle, Mallarmé nevertheless accentuated the literary value of the fusion between the Anglo-Saxon and French elements. He referred to this fusion as a “double alliage” or a “hymen” and listed the writers who

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<sup>1078</sup> See Michon, *Mallarmé et les mots anglais*, 26: “...la langue seconde qui obsède Mallarmé dès lors, ce n’est plus tant l’anglais, ou la langue achevée du poète, que celle qui se parle déjà dans les mots, en soi, inconsciemment, avant toute intervention du sujet et qui fonde en fait le langage supérieur, c’est-à-dire la poésie.”

<sup>1079</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 985.

<sup>1080</sup> *Ibid.*, 985.

have best diffused the beauties of this “double trésor,” Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and Byron: “[...] l’indissoluble hymen qui a fait de l’Anglais le plus singulier et l’un de plus riches entre les idiomes modernes.”<sup>1081</sup>

A brief look at the definitions of the “hymen” sheds light on its undecidable nature. The first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* (1694), defines the hymen as a marriage and restricts the term ‘to poetry: “Mariage. Il n’a d’usage qu’en Poésie. *Sous les loix de l’Hymen. le joug de l’Hyménée.*”<sup>1082</sup> Yet with the progression of time, the term also came to be related to female anatomy. The fourth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (1762), notes that, in addition to marriage, the hymen is the membrane or skin “dans le cou de la matrice des vierges et qui se rompt de leur défloration.”<sup>1083</sup> The hymen thus includes both the idea of virginity and the idea of defloration, or a loss of virginity. It is precisely due to this undecidability that Derrida uses Mallarmé’s Fictional understanding of the “hymen” to develop a concept of “in-betweenness” or “ENTRE” in his *La Double Séance*, the title of which echoes Mallarmé’s description of the “hymen” as a “double trésor” and a “double alliage.”

In *La Double Séance*, Derrida explores the relationship between literature and truth. The hymen or fold, for Derrida, is a space of indecision; it is a crack, an in-between, a space “entre,” the space between the solitary silence of the poet’s inner rhythmic cadence and the translation or materialization of the poet’s dreams (through words). Michael Riffaterre explains that for Derrida, the “hymen” is a prime example of syllepsis, the “trope that consists in understanding the same word in two different ways at the same time, one meaning being literal or primary, the other figurative.”<sup>1084</sup> Riffaterre suggests that Derrida’s construction of the “hymen” intertextually

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<sup>1081</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 961. Mallarmé used the French verb “transmettre.”

<sup>1082</sup> See the entry “hymen” in *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, vol. 1 (Coignard, Paris, 1694).

<sup>1083</sup> See the entry “hymen” in *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 4th ed. (Brunet, Paris, 1762).

<sup>1084</sup> Michael Riffaterre, “Syllepsis,” *Critical Inquiry* 6.4 (1980), 629.

informs another membrane that he analyzed: the “tympan,” the “taut membrane that receives sound vibrations and transmits them to the inner ear.”<sup>1085</sup> Riffaterre emphasizes, however, that it is only through Derrida’s marginal insertion of Michel Leiris’ autobiographical work *Biffures*, a side column in his essay “Tympan,” that such an equation between the “hymen” and “tympan” (“*tympan* = *hymen*”) becomes possible. According to Riffaterre, two images in Leiris’ work allow the hymen’s “complementary features” to transfer to the tympan: the earwig or *perce-oreille* and Persephone or *Perséphone*, the goddess of the dead in classical Greek mythology.<sup>1086</sup>

While Riffaterre expands on Derrida’s interpretation of the “hymen,” Robert Greer Cohn claims that Derrida’s concept is overly reductive and therefore “mistaken,” for it fails to recognize the hymen’s “multi-dimensional” nature.<sup>1087</sup> Cohn argues that the hymen takes part in a “tetrapolarity,” which he defines as the “*four*-polar dilemma” of Mallarmé’s *Théâtre-Idée-Héros-Hymne*, four poles which are at once the same and different.<sup>1088</sup> In the context of this “*four*-polar dilemma,” the hymen anagrammatically relates to the “Hymne.” Cohn shows the extent to which tetrapolarity reveals that “vertical and horizontal dimensions turn out to be one and the same.”<sup>1089</sup> The reversibility between these different dimensions is enabled by the mirroring of the micro or “here-now ‘event,’” by the “macro” or the “cosmos.”<sup>1090</sup> Cohn identifies the two polarities composing Mallarmé’s tetrapolarity as “Théâtre-Héros (mime)” and “Idée-Hymne (danse).” Within these two polarities, the “Théâtre” and the “Idée” refer to a “horizontal dimension, objective, total,” while the “Héros” and the “Hymne” refer to a dimension that is “vertical, subjective, fragmentary.”<sup>1091</sup> After distinguishing these different dimensions, however, Cohn once

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<sup>1085</sup> Ibid., 631.

<sup>1086</sup> Ibid., 632.

<sup>1087</sup> Robert Greer Cohn, “Mallarmé on Derrida,” *The French Review* 61.6 (1988), 884.

<sup>1088</sup> Ibid., 887.

<sup>1089</sup> Robert Greer Cohn, *Mallarmé, Igitur* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 46.

<sup>1090</sup> Ibid., 46-48.

<sup>1091</sup> Ibid., 61.

again reinforces that the dimensions remain “reversible” – in other words, they may all be understood as one and the same.

In his essay “Richard Wagner. Rêverie d’un poète français,” Mallarmé compared the hymen to a strange gift and described the two elements of its double fusion as a musical ideal and a personal drama. According to Mallarmé, Wagner used the hymen to create musical compositions and imaginative instrumental arrangements that captured multiplicity. In addition to music, Mallarmé compared the “in-betweenness” of the hymen to dance. In his *Crayonné au théâtre*, the hymen corresponds to the impersonality of a ballet dancer: “entre sa féminine apparence et un objet mimé, pour quel hymen.”<sup>1092</sup>

*iii. Wreck, write: naufrage, écrire*

Pli selon pli: No. 3, Improvisation sur Mallarmé II  
— Pierre Boulez, *The New Music Vol. 6*

Mallarmé’s alliterative families shape enigmas, such as the juxtaposed “**to read, lire**” and “**riddle, énigme**.”<sup>1093</sup> Certain transfers between French and English words open analogies that are paralleled in Mallarmé’s own works, thus inviting readers to read between languages, between translations and original creations, between homophones, between space, between multiple folds. In his “Des Tours de Babel”, Derrida coins the neologism *ammétaphore*, a combination of “amphore” and “métaphore”, to describe this space in which pleats and creases proliferate. Rainer Nägele has observed that Derrida’s neologism “describes the status of language in the echo space where everything is and is not.”<sup>1094</sup> As a symbol of both pure Language and Babel, *ammétaphore* “points at the relationship of all languages in pure Language and at the same time at the confusion of

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<sup>1092</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur. Divagations. Un Coup de dés*, 190.

<sup>1093</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:1009.

<sup>1094</sup> Rainer Nägele, *Echoes of Translation: Reading Between Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 51.



tongues in Babel.”<sup>1095</sup> Consequently, Nägele contends that the ammetaphor illustrates the task of the translator: “The work of separating, deciding, and defining, which is the work of the ammetaphor and the task of the translator, would thus arrive at an ultimate, decisive point that is neither sense nor nonsense.”<sup>1096</sup> In what follows, we will provide the reader with just a small taste of this profound echo space. To do so, we must cross the borders between words and break down the boundaries of works. We must listen to supplementary echoes and visually observe the manifold creases the form the “*ammétaphore*.”

Let us begin by reflecting on the pairing of “wreck” and “to write.” In his *Les Mots Anglais*, Mallarmé noted that /wr/ relates to twisting and the consonant /w/ generally suggests a vacillating imagination. By way of graphic analogy, the letter /w/ reinforces this fluctuating motion; /w/ is a reflective consonant, because it is formed by a doubled /v/:

Les sens d’osciller (celui-ci semblerait dû au dédoublement vague de la lettre, puis de flotter, etc.; d’eau et d’humidité; d’évanouissement et de caprice; alors, de faiblesse, de charme et d’imagination) [...]: peut-on, par exemple, dire que *wr*, authentiquement désigne la torsion, à cause de toute une famille nombreuse où règne ce digramme?<sup>1097</sup>

Mallarmé’s commentary on the written letter /w/ reinforces his attentiveness to both the visual and the auditory elements of letters, or what one could refer to as a letter’s phonic value and its hieroglyphic value. Mallarmé hypothetically associated /wr/ with torsion, or words relating to the act of turning: “**wright** (et ses composés), *artisan*, **wrong**, *tort*, **wrench**, *torsion*, **wrinkle**, *ride*, **to writhe**, *tordre*, **to wriggle**, *tortiller*, **wry** et **awry**, *tors*, [...] **wreck**, *nauffrage*, Lat. *frango*; **to write**,

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<sup>1095</sup> Ibid., 51. Derrida’s ammetaphor “produces its effect of transports and definitions, the delineation of its figures, in space. This space is to be understood, according to the law of the ammetaphor, its unmetaphorical objectivity as a space of (re-)presentation, as graphemic space of writing, as a mountain forest of language, and as echo space of the newly refracted word.”

<sup>1096</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>1097</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*,2:980.

*écrire*.”<sup>1098</sup> Prior to his alliterative configuration of English words beginning with /w/, Mallarmé noted the onomatopoeic quality of the verb “**to write**” in a parenthetical statement.

Un lien, si parfait entre la signification et la forme d’un mot qu’il ne semble causer qu’une impression, celle de sa réussite, à l’esprit et à l’oreille, c’est fréquent; mais surtout dans ce qu’on appelle les ONOMATOPEÉES. Le croirait-on; ces mots admirables et tout d’une venue, se trouvent, relativement aux autres de la langue (exceptons ceux comme **to write**, *écrire*, imité du bruissement de la plume dès le Gothique WRITH), dans un état d’infériorité.

Mallarmé’s Philological commentary on the onomatopoeic “WRITH” and the alliterative “**wreck**” and “**write**” resonates with his innovative *Un Coup De Dés*, which depicts a scene of shipwreck.<sup>1099</sup> On the right side of the poem’s first Page, the word “*nauffrage*” emerges from white space (“DU FOND D’UN NAUFRAGE”). The act of writing itself gives rise to the opening event: shipwreck. Roger Pearson observes that the “Latin *digitus*, *dé* also suggests a finger on the hand with which we write, and specifically denotes a cylindrical means of protection for the finger when it seeks to sew, to produce ‘text’ or linguistic ‘fabric’”.<sup>1100</sup>

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<sup>1098</sup> Ibid., 979-980.

<sup>1099</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1100</sup> Roger Pearson, “Mallarmé and Poetry: Stitching the Random,” in *A History of Modern French Literature: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, 497.

# JAMAIS

QUAND BIEN MÊME LANCÉ DANS DES CIRCONSTANCES  
ÉTERNELLES

DU FOND D'UN NAUFRAGE

The bolded and capitalized **JAMAIS** recalls the memorable refrain of “The Raven,” in which we hear a repetitive “Jamais plus.” In the notes accompanying his translation, Mallarmé called attention to the “imitative” nature of the “Nevermore” refrain.

Le “Jamais plus” fait un effet immense en américain: il se dit “Nevermore” qu’on prononce “Niveurmôrre.” C’est un des plus beaux mots anglais par son idée si triste, et c’est un son lugubre qui imite admirablement le croassement guttural du sinistre visiteur.<sup>1101</sup>

Let us look at the striking intratext opened by Mallarmé’s prose translation of line 8: “And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.” Mallarmé’s translation of this line shapes the sonorous texture through an alliterative /s/ as well as a parallel between the isolated ember and the ground (isolé-sol) “et chaque tison, mourant isolé, ouvrageait son spectre sur le sol.”

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<sup>1101</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2: 772.

Mallarmé's prose translation significantly diverges from his earlier verse translations.<sup>1102</sup> The verbal choice “ouvragier” acts as a reflection on the creative process as one of enrichment. Mallarmé's translation of Poe's “dying ember” as “mourant isolé” evokes his philosophical and poetic understanding of the white space of the page. In an article “Sur la Philosophie dans la poésie” published in a *Réponse à des enquêtes*, Mallarmé used the verb “isoler” to explain his understanding of the poem: “L'armature intellectuelle du poème se dissimule et tient – a lieu – dans l'espace qui **isole** les strophes et parmi le blanc du papier.”<sup>1103</sup> In this statement, it is the act of taking place that occurs in isolation : “– a lieu –”

In the sonnet “Sonnet sur les bois oubliés...,” we hear a “tison” that echoes with Mallarmé's translation of line 8 “[...] each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor,” which as we have already noted, he renders as “[...] chaque tison, mourant isolé, ouvragait son spectre sur le sol.” In line 8, a supreme tison (“Le suprême tison”) and a proper noun (“Ombre”) rhyme with midnight's vain number that the speaker refuses to hear. In the final line, the poem's narrator expresses a desire to murmur his lost lover's name on his lips.<sup>1104</sup> Resonating with this “suprême tison” is the “tison de gloire” that we hear in Mallarmé's sonnet “Victorieusement fui...” In the sonnet's quatrains, the A of the enclosed rhyme (ABBA) is “beau,” bringing forth a memory of the raven, or “corbeau” (le suicide beau – mon absent tombeau – le lambeau – sans flambeau). In addition to the rhyming “beau,” the grapheme “or” stands in isolation, conjuring up a memory of the “Corbeau.” The syllable “or” is especially significant because it receives an unexpected stress

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<sup>1102</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:796. In Mallarmé's earlier verse translation of the poem, he translated this verse as “Et chaque cendre mourant produisait des spectres sur le parquet” and “Et caque tison mourant alentour rendait son âme sur le parquet.”

<sup>1103</sup> *Ibid.*, 659.

<sup>1104</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1:67.

as the alexandrine breaks from the standard (6-6) timing and divides into irregular fragments that haunt the reading flow. Time is out of joint. “Tison de gloire, sang par écume, **or**, tempête!”

In the sonnet’s third line, the “or” drifts to “**Ô** rire si” as the reader is thrust into an intertextual tempest and thrown upon undetermined shores of syntactic ambiguity. Is the “or” a noun or a conjunction? Does it signify a temporal shift through opposition (but, yet, well, now) or could it be gold? The ellipsis in the title (“Victorieusement fui...”) seems to announce a high probability of syntactic doubt, which when coupled with the voiced “e muet” in “le suicide **de** beau” (v. 1), seems to evoke the inexorable figure of Hamlet. The spatial proximity of “pourpre” and “royal” sparks additional doubt in the reader’s mind. While it seems to invite one to imagine royal purple, the indefinite article (“une”) indicates that the “pourpre” is not the color, but instead a shell, specifically a rock snail. It is worth mentioning that Mallarmé relates the shell to his poetic ideals. Expressing his deep admiration of Frédéric Mistral’s free verse, Mallarmé compares the poet to a superb seasell (“conque superbe”), remarking: “C’est un merveilleux coquillage où se répercute et bruit le bruit des flots, les naturelles harmonies.”<sup>1105</sup> Keeping in mind these many different elements of Poe’s sonnet: its surprising rhythm, its echoes of “The Raven” (“beau” and “or”), its allusions to Hamlet, its ambiguity, and its remarkable syntax, let’s turn to a reading of the first two quatrains.

Victorieusement fui...

Victorieusement fui le suicide beau  
Tison de gloire, sang par écume, or, tempête!  
Ô rire si la-bàs une pourpre s’apprête  
A ne tendre royal que mon absent tombeau.

Quoi de tout cet éclat pas même le lambeau  
S’attarde, il est minuit, à l’ombre que nous fête  
Excepté qu’un trésor présomptueux de tête  
Verse son caressé non chaloir sans flambeau.

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<sup>1105</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1:711.

How are we to read this intertext? The isolated and stressed “or” (“**or**, tempête!”) announces a windstorm that seems to toss us into Shakespeare’s tempest while also whirling us around Poe’s maelstrom. “*Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore.*” The tempest grows even more looming in translation. The English “whether” becomes a French “si”: “...Que si le Tentateur t’envoyer ou la tempête t’échoua vers ces bords, désolé et encore indompté...” The shift from “whether” to “si” occurs at a moment in the text when the speaker is questioning the weather at sea. Mallarmé’s translated conjecture (“si le Tentateur”) thus seems to announce the dominant sea of insinuation that collapses in on itself in Mallarmé’s “Un Coup de dés.” Juxtaposing two subdivisions of Mallarmé’s Idea, we are given:

Esprit  
pour le jeter  
dans la tempête  
en reployer la division et passer fier

COMME SI

The tempest announced by these fragments relates to division and folding (“la division”), which invites us to ask an important question: Without an official count, what happens to diacesis? Should one voice the potential “si” in “di-vi-**si**-on”? To voice “si” or not to voice “si” seems to be left to the reader’s discretion.

#### *iv. The Unique Number and Chance*

One, two, three, four  
— Philip Glass, Knee Play 1, *Einstein on the Beach*

In the second chapter of *Les Mots Anglais*, Mallarmé directly wrote a passage alluding to games involving counting, such as dice games and card games: “le jeu effréné comme **chance** et **hasard**”:

Par **ace**, **deuce**, **trey**, **quart**, **cink**, **siz**, etc. comptait le jeu aux **dice** comme aux **cards**; c’est-à-dire aux *dés* comme aux *cartes*; car tout le groupe des termes dont il est question plus haut, tels qu’**Arrearage**, **devise**, **domain**, **homage**, **manor**, **rent**, **serjeant**, **traitor** et **vouchsafe**, ajoutez tout ce qui exprime le jeu effréné

comme **chance** et **hasard**: ou les vices d'un vainqueur brutal, représentés par **raven**, **pillage**, **ribald**, **villain**, **revelry**, par exemple: enfin tous les mots violents ou malins rencontrés jusqu'à Shakespeare **charity**, **faith**, **grace**, **mercy** et **peace** n'y figurant qu'une rare éclaircie.<sup>1106</sup>

Mallarmé begins by listing archaic spellings of numbers (“ace, deuce, trey”), then translates “**dice**” (“*dés*”) and **cards** (“*cartes*”). According to Mallarmé, the Norman conquest of 1066 gave rise to this game or “jeu effréné comme chance et hasard.” In addition to evoking historical conquest, Mallarmé’s passage subtly alludes to his own literary acquisition. Through the word “**raven**,” which figures below **dice** (*dés*), Mallarmé’s implicitly alludes to his own translations of Poe’s “The Raven.” By juxtaposing the “raven” with “pillage”, Mallarmé moves from the title of his translation (“The Raven”) to a verb signifying violent robbing. Despite the unpredictable and often brutal exchanges between conqueror (“vainqueur brutal”) and conquered, Mallarmé’s evocation of the proper name Shakespeare allows him to subtly suggest a desire to peacefully end games of conquest. Following Shakespeare’s name, Mallarmé writes: **charity**, **grace**, **mercy**, and **peace**.

*v. Foreign Languages and Calculation*

In “Mots Simples et Dérivations,” the first chapter of *Les Mots Anglais*, Mallarmé included several comments on the frequency of letters in the English language. In the “FAMILLE DE VOCABLES ET DE MOTS ISOLÉS: *Consonnes*,” Mallarmé noted that words beginning with the consonant /c/ are common: “Les mots en C consonne à l’attaque prompte et décisive, se montrent en grand nombre [...]”<sup>1107</sup> He explained that several words beginning with /c/ are onomatopoeic, like clap, clang, cling, clash, crow, and croak: “Nombre de ces mots très significatifs, que commande, seule ou avec une consonne, cette gutturale C sont des onomatopées faites par l’Anglais ou par l’Anglo-Saxon [...]”<sup>1108</sup> In his comments on the frequency of the consonant /t/, Mallarmé wrote that the

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<sup>1106</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:959.

<sup>1107</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1:989.

<sup>1108</sup> *Ibid.*

“T initial règne sur un grand nombre de mots...”<sup>1109</sup> Finally, Mallarmé noted the significance of the consonant /s/, observing that an “extraordinary number” of English words begin with this letter: “S, presque autant qu’r, prétend à la première place entre les consonnes. Son importance grammaticale et le nombre extraordinaires de mots, qu’elle commande...”<sup>1110</sup> In a posthumously compiled fragment written around 1895, Mallarmé expanded on the signification of the consonant /s/, noting how the letter /s/ has a special ability to circulate between different words: “S, dis-je, est la lettre analytique; dissolvante et disséminante...”<sup>1111</sup> Mallarmé stressed that the written appearance of the letter has “verbal value”: “[...] j’y trouve l’occasion d’affirmer l’existence, en dehors de la valeur verbale autant que celle purement hiéroglyphique, de la parole ou du grimoire, d’une secrète direction confusément indiquée par l’orthographe et qui concourt mystérieusement au signe pur général qui doit marquer le vers.”<sup>1112</sup>

In addition to evaluating the frequency of each letter, Mallarmé estimated the total number of words in the English language and coupled these calculations with a commentary on chance, or “le hasard”: “Peu à peu toute la langue se découvre aux yeux, dans sa symétrie et son hasard; oui, et quelques milliers de mots dûment considérés en appelant autour d’eux de 40 à 50 000, chiffre que compte la langue anglaise.”<sup>1113</sup> In another remark, Mallarmé compared the estimated total of Saxon or Germanic words to the estimated total of French words, thus making a numerical distinction between the two different elements that formed the “indissoluble hymen”:

..profiter à cette occasion pour le soumettre à quelque calcul. À quoi bon ne point dire tout de suite que lorsque le nombre de Mots Saxons ou Germaniques ne monte qu’à 13 000 et quelques cents Mots, le Vocabulaire Classique (et Français) en compte de 29 à 30 000: chiffres qui ne prouvent pas davantage en la faveur du Classique et Français que contre le Saxon ou Germanique; car l’importance des Vocables dans la Langue mieux que le nombre peut faire pencher différemment d’un côté ou de l’autre, la balance.<sup>1114</sup>

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<sup>1109</sup> Ibid., 1003.

<sup>1110</sup> Ibid., 997.

<sup>1111</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>1112</sup> Ibid..

<sup>1113</sup> Ibid., 951.

<sup>1114</sup> Ibid., 1094.



While working on his numerical calculations, Mallarmé alluded to “le hasard,” comparing the importation of foreign words to an unpredictable act of chance: “les MOTS ÉTRANGERS d’importation hasardeuse...”<sup>1115</sup> Mallarmé included a list of imported words from several different geographical regions and countries, including words from Hebrew, Arabic, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Dutch, Flemish, Occitan, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, Malay, Javanese, Turkish, Mandarin, and Japanese. Furthermore, Mallarmé also called attention to newly coined words, noting that Shakespeare charitably enriched the English language with coinages such as “unsex” and “unseaworthiness”:

À la faveur du don merveilleux de Composition, rajeunissement de toute heure tiré de sa provenance germanique, l’Anglais, en effet, par le génie de Shakespeare qui crée **to unsex** (*dissexer*) où la hâte du journal demandant hier qu’on décrétât d’**unseaworthiness** les vaisseaux *incapables de supporter la mer*, peut infiniment accroître le trésor de son lexique.<sup>1116</sup>

Through the “indissoluble hymen” or “double treasure,” Shakespeare invented a word that corresponds to the effect of writing and shipwreck: Mallarmé defines the term “unseaworthiness” as ships that are unable to support the sea, or “*la mer*.”

#### *vi. Crossing the English Channel*

In a letter written to Cazalis on January 10, 1863, Mallarmé described his foreign language studies in England. As he crossed the sea, a heavy fog surrounded his boat, protecting it from wreckage and Mallarmé safely arrived in London thirteen hours later than expected. Mallarmé emphasized his luck, noting that just a day before his arrival, the wind had sunk five hundred boats along the coast of England:

Grâce aux brouillards qui nous ont enveloppés, à l’embouchure de la Tamise, et au vent qui nous a secoués à rendre l’âme, sur mer, nous avons eu treize heures de retard. La veille le bateau avait été cinq jours en, et le vent avait détruit cinq cent bateaux sur la côte d’Angleterre.<sup>1117</sup>

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<sup>1115</sup> Ibid., 1074.

<sup>1116</sup> Ibid., 1025.

<sup>1117</sup> Mallarmé, *Corr*, 1:68.

Mallarmé was frightened by these horrible circumstances. Contemplating this risk of shipwreck provoked a fear of his own death: "...depuis ce matin, nous sommes dans une inquiétude mortelle."<sup>1118</sup> Four days later, Mallarmé described his "horrible trajet" in further detail in another letter to Cazalis. As the boat rocked in the waves, Mallarmé moved around like a drunkard as Henri, the convoy, whistled twice for help. Mallarmé explained that the whistles' echoes still haunted him. To illustrate his experience of darkness, he alluded to a "mer d'encre":

Pendant cet horrible trajet qui fut mon calvaire, je l'ai entendu siffler deux fois. J'ai encore ce sifflet-là dans la tête, il me harcèle. Oh! J'ai senti alors pour la première fois, devant cette ombre immense du ciel et cette mer d'encre, moi, pauvre enfant abandonné par tout ce qui fut ma vie et mon idéal, combien était vaste ce mot seul.<sup>1119</sup>

Like a black sea of ink, this circumstantial "mer d'encre" forms a complex and immeasurable connection between travel, foreign language studies, phonic symbolism, chance, risk, probability, and "le temps," as both weather and time. Mallarmé's circumstantial encounter with a wreck correlates to the words chosen for the /w/ Family, such as whistles, waves, water, wet, and weary, and as we have already seen, Mallarmé concludes this ALLITERATIVE grouping by juxtaposing the noun "wreck" with the verb "to write."

Contrary to what one might expect, Mallarmé does not translate "sound" as "son" in his *Les Mots Anglais*. Instead, he reinforces the geographical signification of the English term "sound, *détroit*, a French term that not only incorporates the syllable "dé" (calling to mind *Un Coup de dés*). The geographical translation of the English word "sound" was thus a means by which Mallarmé drew an analogy between the syllable "dé" and the sea. In geography, a "sound" designates "a relatively narrow channel or stretch of water, esp. one between the mainland and an island, or connecting two large bodies of water."<sup>1120</sup> In his ALLITERATIVE family for the letter S,

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<sup>1118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1119</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>1120</sup> See "sound, n," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2016), accessed March 12, 2018.

Mallarmé incorporated vocabulary terms signifying sounds made by water, such as “**to swash**, faire *clapoter* de l’eau”, “**to splash**, éclabousser”, and a term rhyming with “**to swash**” and also ending in “-ash”: “**to wash**, *laver*.”<sup>1121</sup> In *Un Coup de dés*, we hear a form of “*laver*”: (caressée et polie et rendue et lavée/ assouplie par la vague et soustraite/ aux durs os perdus entre les ais)<sup>1122</sup> and also a form of “*clapoter*” (“inférieur clapotis quelconque comme pour disperser l’acte vide”)<sup>1123</sup>

caressée et polie et rendue et lavée  
 assouplie par la vague et soustraite  
 aux durs os perdus entre les ais

The “durs os” evoked is reminiscent of what Mallarmé refers to as “‘la charpente osseuse’ des mots” in his *Les Mots Anglais*.<sup>1124</sup> Further on in his poem, the reader hears and sees an analogous “prismatic division” of Mallarmé’s Idea.

dans ces parages  
 du vague  
 en quoi toute réalité se dissout

Although pairing these prismatic subdivisions together (albeit by way of performative distortion) gives form to Mallarmé’s poetic Idea, it also exposes that this Idea lacks fixity and it therefore cannot be accounted for or measured. The shift from the feminine to the masculine form of the noun “vague” shows how the segments of the poem sweep into one another as do the

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<sup>1121</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 997.

<sup>1122</sup> Mallarmé, *Igitur. Divagations. Un Coup de dés*, 428.

<sup>1123</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>1124</sup> See Bertrand Marchal’s note in *ibid.*, 1794. Mallarmé was also inspired by the Émile Chasles, a professor of English, who published *Note sur la philologie appliquée* in 1865. See also Michon, *Mallarmé et les mots anglais*, 26-42.

properties of words. The feminine wave (“la vague”) seems to break, revealing that its constituent elements, or segments, are indistinct: the feminine noun (“la vague”) moves to the masculine noun “du vague.” As one attempts to grasp, or understand Mallarmé’s Idea, it dissolves: “dans ces parages/ du vague/ en quoi toute réalité se dissout.”

Like Poe who carefully planned the theatrical “points” of his tales’ “plots,” Mallarmé deeply reflected on the significance of Poetic “lieu”, or spot: “**spot**, *lieu*.”<sup>1125</sup> And yet nevertheless, Mallarmé’s carefully planned “lieu” (RIEN N’AURA EU LIEU QUE LE LIEU) only fixes itself in order to act out the perpetual error of calculated language and place. Music and Letters generate a timeworn vacillating wave that eternally builds in size and dimension as its letters, such as the liquid and doubled l (“aile”), as in “spell” and “spill” touch and interweave. All sense (“or senses”) of orientation breaks down. The constituent elements of each point, or “lieu”, splice together as verse splits.

**to spell**, *épeler*

**to split**, *fendre*

**to spill**, *verser goutte à goutte*<sup>1126</sup>

**to splice**, *épisser* (marine).

**to splint**, *faire éclater et se briser*,  
et **to — er**, —<sup>1127</sup>

The dashes and the comma surrounding “er” in “**to — er**, —” serve as a visual indication (“indice”) of its definition. The typography suggests that the word “er” could function as both an interjection signifying “the inarticulate sound or murmur made by a hesitant speaker”<sup>1128</sup> and the verb “to err”, which in the case of “**to — er**, —”<sup>1129</sup> exposes a potential misspelling. The space

<sup>1125</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 994.

<sup>1126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1127</sup> *Ibid.*, 945.

<sup>1128</sup> See “er, int,” in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2016), accessed March 12, 2018. notes that the etymology of this interjection is imitative.

<sup>1129</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, vol. II, 995.

around the words (structured by the dashes and comma) “split” “to er” into “**to — er, —**”, suggesting uncertainty, wavering doubt, and the chance of error. In his ALLITERATIVE family for the vowel A, Mallarmé seems to tell a Fictional story of error and sin. Words such as “addle” and “apple” evoke man’s fall from Paradise and the fall of the Tower of Babel. These words figure after the opening term **Ache**, *mal*.

**Ache**, *mal*; **adder**, *vipère*; **addle**, *putride*; **adze**, *doloire*; **to ail**, *faire mal ou souffrir*; **ait**, *ilot*; **alder**, *aune*, Lat. *aldus*; **ale**, *bière*; **all**, *tous*; **I am**, *je suis*; **and**, *et*; **anger**, *colère*, Lat. *ango*; **to angle**, *pêcher à la ligne*; **answer**, *réponse*; **ape**, *singe*; **apple**, *pomme*.<sup>1130</sup>

The Idea of Language that Mallarmé staged in *Les Mots Anglais* revealed not only the Ideal crisis of French verse, but also of letters and literature. By placing “**to — er, —**” directly underneath “**to splint**, *faire éclater et se briser*”, Mallarmé’s pedagogical translation project arguably attempted to critique the rapid break from traditional French verse and the fast-paced production of educational textbooks on the subject of foreign language instruction. In his *Les Mots Anglais*, Mallarmé put the Ideal crisis of letters on display, opening a space for significant political, economic, poetic, and linguistic debate and conversation. “Plus de livres, plus d’écouliers; dans les classes on ne saurait presque point composer en une langue, trop vague et trop mobile encore pour vrai dire pour que la fixe l’écriture.”<sup>1131</sup> In his *Réouverture après travaux*, Deguy calls attention to a similar crisis, using Mallarmé as his reference point.

La formation de l’adolescent et de l’adulte, la pédagogie en général et ce qui remplace *la culture* ne s’intéressent guère à la beauté-en-langue ni au ‘mystère dans les lettres’ (Mallarmé, *Quant au livre*). Pas davantage sérieusement à une efficace des poèmes à échelle de communauté.<sup>1132</sup>

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<sup>1130</sup> Ibid., 970.

<sup>1131</sup> Ibid., 959.

<sup>1132</sup> Deguy, *Réouverture après travaux*, 144-145.

## Conclusion : Bloc Pur

Mallarmé's reverence of his two literary Masters, Baudelaire and Poe, may be heard in his two sonnets "Tombeau d'Edgar Poe" and "Tombeau de Baudelaire." The poem "Tombeau d'Edgar Poe" was written in 1876 more than twenty-five years after the American poet's death in 1849. Mallarmé composed the poem as part of a "Memorial Volume" under the direction of Sarah Sigourney Rice; the volume accompanied Poe's funeral monument erected in Baltimore that same year. In a letter to Sarah Sigourney Rice, Mallarmé included an English translation of his own sonnet along with notes explaining his lexical choices. On November 27, 1875, Mallarmé's letter was published in the *New York Daily Tribune*. In the letter, he explains that although French citizens may not be physically present at the memorial, they are nevertheless there in spirit.

Tombeau d'Edgar Poe

Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change  
Le Poète suscite avec un glaive nu  
Son siècle épouvanté de n'avoir pas connu  
Que la mort triomphait dans cette voix étrange!

Eux, comme un vil sursaut d'hydre oyant jadis l'ange  
Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu,  
Proclamèrent très haut le sortilège bu  
Dans le flot sans honneur de quelque noir mélange.

Du sol et de la nue hostile, ô grief!  
Si notre idée avec ne sculpte un bas-relief  
Dont la tombe de Poe s'éblouissante s'orne

Calme bloc ici-bas chu d'un désastre obscure  
Que ce granit du moins montre à jamais sa borne  
Aux noirs vols du Blasphème épars dans le futur.

In his "Tombeau d'Edgar Poe", Mallarmé paints an image of the writer's immortal genius following his tragic death, through which the poet experiences a metamorphosis. In the first line of the sonnet, Mallarmé expresses that Eternity has finally changed the poet, allowing him to reclaim his soul: "Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change / Le poète suscite avec un glaive

nu.”<sup>1133</sup> The poet’s existence as a perpetual death is driven by societal exclusion and by his status as a “guignon”. This conflict between Poe and the masses takes on a mythical dimension through the comparison between the angel and the Hydra. In lines 5-6, we hear: “Eux, comme un vil sursaut d’hydre ayant jadis l’ange / Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu.”<sup>1134</sup> Eternity here not only symbolizes poet’s timeless existence but also his perceptive consciousness of time’s changing image. Through death, Poe moves beyond his formerly excluded and alienated identity, becoming an angel. The image of Poe as an angel purifying the words of the tribe corresponds to Mallarmé’s frequent comparisons between Poe and purity, whom he describes, in one example, as a pure diamond: “...pur comme le diamant...”<sup>1135</sup>

In the final line of Mallarmé’s sonnet “Tombeau d’Edgar Poe,” we clearly hear the consonants /c/ and /b/ as Poe’s granite tombstone is likened to a “calme bloc”; v.12 “Calme **bloc** ici-**bas** chu d’un désastre **obscur**.” While the “calme bloc” signifies Poe’s tombstone (v. 11 Dont la tombe de Poe éblouissante s’orne), on a metatextual level, it suggests Mallarmé’s own critical writing process and endeavors.<sup>1136</sup> The French term “bloc,” such as in “bloc-notes,” designates a group of folded pages which have been attached together, and which may nevertheless be easily separated. Mallarmé frequently refers to the “bloc” in his *Notes en vue du “Livre”* as he ponders its ideal width and dimensions.

sa largeur quand, en **bloc**

devient son épaisseur – et si l’on trouvait

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<sup>1133</sup> *OC*, 2:727. Sarah Helen Whitman’s *imitation libre* of the poem translates this verse as “Even as eternity his soul reclaimed”; see *OC*, 2:766.

<sup>1134</sup> *OC*, 2:196.

<sup>1135</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 2:770.

<sup>1136</sup> To highlight its meaning as a literary metaphor, *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* cites this verse under its definition of “bloc.” “**Par métaphore littér**” See “bloc.” *Le Grand Robert de la langue française. Version numérique 4*, November 2016. Web. 7 April 2017.

une disproportion en le **bloc**, debout ou  
couché,  
qui s'équivaut

ce ne serait que

dans ce manque de la largeur<sup>1137</sup>

Additionally, much like the twelfth line of his sonnet “Le tombeau d’Edgar Poe” (v 12. “Calme **bloc** ici-bas chu d’un désastre obscur”) in which the past participle of the verb “choir” (“chu”) suggests that the tomb has dropped or fallen from an obscure disaster or catastrophe (“chu d’un désastre obscur”), the *Notes en vue du “Livre”* uses a similar lexical field. Following his notes on the “bloc,” Mallarmé uses the past participle “chu.”

ou de sa valeur. montré que soi, si **chu**

du ciel et répondant à tous<sup>1138</sup>

Similar to the “Calme **bloc** ici-bas **chu** d’un désastre obscur,” Mallarmé imagines that his “Livre” has fallen from the sky (...si chu/ du ciel...). The “désastre obscur” in “Le Tombeau d’Edgar Poe” thus comes to have celestial overtones, especially if one observes the presence of “astre” (“star”) in “désastre”: dés-astre. Reading Mallarmé’s “désastre” as a “dés-astre” combines the images of

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<sup>1137</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1:968.

<sup>1138</sup> Mallarmé, *OC*, 1:970.



dice (“dés”) with a star (“astre”). Much like Poe who purifies the words of the tribe, Mallarmé aspired to purify language. To do so, he played with different modalities of writing, which in turn, allowed him to develop new modalities of reading. By experimenting with the latent possibilities of syntax and space, Mallarmé not only challenged the reader’s preconceived understanding of literature, he challenged the relationship between language and reality, between silence and orality, between words and things, between the past and the present, between space and time, and between life and death. In his *Notes en vue du “Livre,”* Mallarmé writes:

et le livre est pour ce lecteur **bloc pur** —<sup>1139</sup>

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<sup>1139</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion: Literary Afterlives: Nerval, Baudelaire and Mallarmé

### I. Avatars of Nerval

Nerval has lived several literary afterlives. The Italian literary critic, and semiotician Umberto Eco translated Nerval's novella *Sylvie*. Eco made a detailed account of his experience as a translator; he noted setbacks and challenges, questioned his choices in diction, and reflected on the meaning of punctuation. The New American poets Robin Blaser and Robert Duncan were also translators of Nerval. They each translated the twelve sonnets of *Les Chimères*.<sup>1140</sup>

In the *Je suis le ténébreux. 101 avatars de Nerval*, the sonnet "El Desdichado" is transformed using several different constraints advanced by the Oulipo: "Versions reprenant les seuls mots du poème de Nerval", "Hybridations", "Formes Poétiques", "Genres", "Parodies et Pastiches", "Avatars Sémantiques", "Idiomes", "Homophonies Thématiques", "Contraintes sur les mots", "Lettres Interdites ou Imposées", "Ordre ou Position des lettres", and "Symétries."<sup>1141</sup> The sonnet transforms into an optimistic version entitled "The Cheerful" (Le Réjouï) in which each word is changed to its opposite meaning, such that the first line "Je suis le Ténébreux, — le Veuf, — l'Inconsolé" becomes "Tu es le lumineux, — le jeune époux comblé."<sup>1142</sup> One avatar combines "El Desdichado" with the French children's song "Pirouette, cacahouète": "Je suis le ténébreux,/ Pirouette, cacachouète."<sup>1143</sup> Another avatar combines the sonnet with the "Chanson de l'Auvergat" by George Brassens and signs the chimerical mixture as "Georgéard Brasseval."<sup>1144</sup> In a Québécois avatar, the first line reads: "Je suis un importé, dans l'iginr' non accoté."<sup>1145</sup> In the "Patois" avatar,:

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<sup>1140</sup> Andrew Mossin, "In the Shadow of Nerval: Robert Duncan, Robin Blaser, and the Poetics of (Mis)Translation," *Contemporary Literature* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 673-704.

<sup>1141</sup> Camille Abaclar, *Je suis le ténébreux. 101 avatars de Nerval*, (Paris: Éditions Quintette, 2012), 139-140.

<sup>1142</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>1143</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>1144</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>1145</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

“Jo seus lo tónóbroex, — le voef, — l’uncansaló.”<sup>1146</sup> The sonnets’ avatars are signed with several different transformations of Nerval’s name, including “Dégrader Verlan”, “Rare de Val”, “Gerval”, “Gébert de Charleval”, “Gaspard Carnaval”, “Georgeard Mousterval”, and “Nerlovide.” A circular caligramme avatar of the sonnet is appropriately signed Jérôme Appollinerval and finally, a “mallarméen” imitation of the sonnet is fittingly signed “Stéphard Mallarval.”

## II. Echoes of Baudelaire

Baudelaire too has lived several literary afterlives. Among his many translators, one thinks of the American poet Robert Lowell, or the South African poet Roy Campbell, as well as the German poet Stefan George.<sup>1147</sup> In the section devoted to “Baudelaire” in *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin traces a history of the translations of Baudelaire’s works. Benjamin first cites from André Saurès’s *Trois Grands Vivants* (1938): “Among all the books in the world today, the Bible being the sole exception, *Les Fleurs du mal* is the most widely published and the most often translated into other languages.”<sup>1148</sup> In another comment on translations of Baudelaire’s poetry, Benjamin notes that the translation into Russian made by Merezhovski transforms the poem “L’invitation voyage” into a gypsy romance entitled “Holubka moïa.”<sup>1149</sup>

In the foreword to a bilingual edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*, Willis Barnstone notes that the translator Norman Shapiro succeeds in letting “Baudelaire sing.”<sup>1150</sup> “[...] the poem must work in

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<sup>1146</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>1147</sup> The German translation of *Les Fleurs du mal* made by George first appeared in 1901. In considering George’s work as a translator, it is noteworthy to consider Meschonnic’s observation in his *Poétique du traduire*. Meschonnic calls attention to a ‘word-concept’ (‘mot-concept’) that George used to describe his translations: *Umdichtungen*. “Stefan George appelait ses traductions *Umdichtungen*, des poèmes transformés, des trans-poèmes.” Henri Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire* (Paris: Verdier, 1999), 65.

<sup>1148</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 286.

<sup>1149</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>1150</sup> Charles Baudelaire. *Selected Poems from Les Fleurs du mal*. trans. Norman R. Shapiro. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), xxvii.

English with all the force, meaning, and formal beauty of the original. It must work in *sound* as well as denotation. If the poem's music is ignored, the reader should put the translation down."<sup>1151</sup>

James McGowan asks:

Can there be too many translations of a poet of central importance like Charles Baudelaire? Perhaps so, but will there ever be enough good ones: accurate and poetic? Each translator necessarily brings himself into the equation, so that in each new version Baudelaire will be found transmuted, not only presented in an alien language, but alloyed with an alien sensibility, no two translations ever being alike.<sup>1152</sup>

In the preface to the *The Flowers of Evil*, composite bilingual edition of English translations of Baudelaire's poems made by several different translators, the editor Jackson Mathews explains his decision to present two different translations of the opening poem "Au Lecteur."

We have decided to present, side by side, two versions of the first poem, *To the Reader*, by Robert Lowell and Stanley Kunitz. It is not only that the two poems seem equally fine — which they do — but we wish to express in this way our view that there can be many good translations of a single poem.<sup>1153</sup>

One may also consider the English poet Nicholas Moore. In 1968, Moore sent thirty-one different translations of the same poem — Baudelaire's "Je suis comme le roi" — to the *Sunday Times* translation competition judged by George Steiner, author of the seminal study *After Babel* (1975). Finally, Richard Howard should not be left unmentioned. Howard has translated numerous French authors, poets, and theorists (Barthes, Cioran, Robbe-Grillet among many others). In an interview with Howard held in 1982, Paul de Man asked the poet-translator how and why he chooses to translate certain works. Howard's response is poignant. He explains that "ideally love" inspires his translation projects.<sup>1154</sup>

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<sup>1151</sup> Ibid., xxvi.

<sup>1152</sup> Charles Baudelaire. *The Flowers of Evil*. trans. James McGowan. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), liv.

<sup>1153</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>1154</sup> Richard Howard, "The Translator's Voice" (An interview by Paul de Mann), *Translation Review* 9 (1982): 5-15 (online). This interview was included in the reading list for the NEH Summer Institute: "What is gained in translation?"

### III. Adaptations of Mallarmé

One of the most striking illustrations of Mallarmé's memorable forms is found in Michel Deguy's adaptations. Deguy continues to throw the dice into new eternal circumstances or "le bel aléa de la circonstance.": "[I]a donne des dés est passée par ma main."<sup>1155</sup> Deguy transforms Mallarmé's phrase "RIEN N'AURA EU LIEU QUE LE LIEU" into "Rien n'aura eu lieu qu'un *fiat*" and also "Rien n'aura eu lieu que l'équivocité."<sup>1156</sup>

car il est vrai que la *vision poétique* consiste à **dé**-signifier les choses – reconifiant un *étant* à son vide, à son indétermination, en le **dé**-nommant, en disjoignant les choses et leurs noms, en reconduisant aux chaos les significations d'un 'qu'est-ce que c'est' qui le refait *rien*, "perd" l'étant dans l'être; *pour* le re-signifier, l'hétronymiser, (syn. Homo; pseudonymiser) en la **nouvelle circonstance** où son être-comme avec d'autres le fait recomparaître dans la gloire de la *com*-paraison; mais il est non moins vrai que la vision imaginaire qui perd la conscience du jeu, du jeu du *comme* imageant, du **coup de dés de la nomination** qui n'abolit pas l'arbitraire de la signification, et fige tout dans l'identification, est "la folie" à conjurer.<sup>1157</sup>

Une fleur sans pétals à qui manquent les tiges...  
C'est le bouquet!<sup>1158</sup>

...l'abnégation paradoxale de Mallarmé...<sup>1159</sup>

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<sup>1155</sup> Michel Deguy, *Comme si Comme ça. Poèmes 1980-2007*. (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 130.

<sup>1156</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>1157</sup> Deguy, *Donnant, Donnant*, 102.

<sup>1158</sup> Deguy, *Comme si, Comme ça*, 188.

<sup>1159</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

## LA TÂCHE DU TRADUCTEUR

Traduire ? Le jeune traducteur plonge. Ce sont ces mots qui conviennent puisqu'il restera toujours jeune et que cette page sous son regard, c'est un océan, de l'eau close. Des soleils couvrent bien de menues étincelles presque gaies la houle légère de la surface, mais il sait, lui, que par en dessous c'est l'abîme : d'abord au vert, un vert-bleu on ne peut plus sombre, bientôt un noir.

Il a plongé. Et autour de lui c'est d'un seul coup un peu de vague clarté en divers lieux de laquelle il perçoit ce qui lui semble des vies. Qu'est-ce que celle-ci devant lui ? Il nage dans cette direction, il regarde : c'est sphérique, c'est agité d'une vibration, d'une lumière pâle est dedans, est-ce une ampoule vieillie qui prend fin au-dessus d'une table chargée de livres ? De fait, c'est un étudiant qui est assis là, le front sur ses cahiers, les bras autour de la tête. Il semble endormi. Et bien fermées les fenêtres de sa chambre mais l'eau du dehors bat furieusement contre les vitres. Quel silence !

Se déplacer, d'un mouvement souple des bras s'éloigner de cette méduse.

Et cette autre, un peu moins brillante ? Mais c'est le même jeune homme ! Il pousse des cris, se débat, tente de se libérer de deux sbires sinistres qui vont le maîtriser, c'est clair, l'emporter où ? Rosencrantz et Guildenstern, de toute évidence.

Ainsi, à diverses distances, ces existences, ces feux. Dois-je les décider organiques, des méduses, disais-je, des poulpes, immobiles, un de leurs regards filtrant sous quelqu'une de leurs paupières, ou puis-je y reconnaître ces beaux nuages, arrêtés dans ce ciel d'en bas avec d'incroyables couleurs ni de matins ni des soirs ? Peut-être ne sont-ce que des mots, que de la pensée ? Rien d'autre que des amas d'images privées de sens mais que ni mémoire ni volonté ne dissipent ? Nœuds de fumées qui font spirale dans l'eau maintenant bien plus bleue que verte, vouîtes que le nageur ne voit plus au-dessus de lui quand, souplement, il descend, il cherche.

Mon enfant, où es-tu ? Ne te cache pas !

Difficile, en effet, la traduction. On ne sait si on a le droit d'imaginer.

Et plonge encore, plonge plus avant, plus bas, plonge encore toujours plus bas, le traducteur. Plus rares et de moins en moins lumineuses se font ces vies de l'abîme, il ne sait si douées ou non de conscience. Polonius passe en courant, essoufflé, geignant, c'est trop pour ce gros homme, il va s'écrouler là-bas, où il aura droit de se croire sur une plage de sable noir devant une aurore noyée de brumes.

Descendre, oui, par saccades. Du tout de ses yeux questionner l'immensité de la nuit. Que faire de ce mot, par exemple, dans cette phrase ? Elle a un rythme, je la croyais de l'anglais et c'en est peut-être, mais ce mot-là, non, ce n'est pas de l'anglais, il n'est d'aucune langue connue, d'aucune de ce monde. En ce vers de Shakespeare c'est le silence, à briller vaguement comme font les pierres.

Descendre. Il faut maintenant des années avant qu'on n'aperçoive un de ces êtres, si c'est bien là le mot pour le dire.

Le traducteur comprend qu'il n'accédera jamais au sol dont il a rêvé. Il s'avoue que jamais, trouvant enfin sous son pied sur quelque sable clair, il ne se redressera, ses yeux emplis de lumière. Qu'il eût été beau pourtant, et rassurant, bénéfique, de toucher de ses mains la grande épave. Elle est là, brisée. Rien ne reste debout des mâts immenses. Des coffres de livres se sont ouverts, des feuillets restent-ils à traîner encore alentour, non, même pas. Une phrase peinte à la proue serait toutefois visible. On la ferait surgir de la nuit, au moyen de la torche électrique que l'on a préservée pour ce grand moment, on pourrait rêver la traduire dans quelque autre langue que ce parler d'ailleurs, de nulle part, qui est au plus profond de chacun de nous.<sup>1160</sup>

- Yves Bonnefoy

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<sup>1160</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, *Ensemble Encore*, (Paris: Mercure de France, 2016), 93-96.

## Appendix : Chronology of Translations

### I. Nerval

#### Consulted Editions

Nerval's translations of German poetry are compiled in Nerval, Gérard de. *Lénore et autre poésies allemandes*. Edited by Jean-Nicolas Illouz. Paris: Gallimard, 2005.

Nerval, Gérard de, trans. *Faust*. By Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Edited by Albert Béguin. Porrentruy: Portes de Frances, 1946.

Nerval, Gérard de. *Oeuvres complètes. Les deux Faust de Goethe 1828-1840. Texte établie et annoté avec des introductions par Ferdinand Baldensperger*. Edited by Ferdinand Baldensperger. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1932.

#### Chronology of Translations

*Faust, tragédie de Goethe, nouvelle traduction complète en prose et vers* (1827)

*Mercure de France au XIXe siècle* traductions de poètes allemands (Körner, Schubart, Bürger, Goethe) (1829)

*Poésies allemandes. Klopstock, Goethe, Schiller, Bürger. Morceaux choisis et traduits par M. Gerard* (February 1830)

*Aventures de la nuit de Saint-Sylvestre* in *Le Mercure de France au XIXe Siècle* (17-24 September 1831)

*Faust de Goethe, suivi du Second Faust et suivi du Choix de Ballades et de Poésies de Goethe, Schiller, Bürger, Klopstock, Schubart, Körner, Uhland* (1840)

*Poésies de Henri Heine* in *Revue des deux mondes* (15 July 1848 and 15 September 1848)

### II. Baudelaire

#### Consulted Edition

Baudelaire's translations of Poe are compiled in Poe, Edgar Allan. *Œuvres en prose traduites par Charles Baudelaire*. Edited by Y. G. Le Dantec. Paris: Gallimard "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 1951.

#### Chronology of Translations

*Le Jeune Enchanteur*, in *L'Esprit Public* (February 1846), and translated from *The Young Enchanter*, by Rev. Croly.

"Révélation magnétique" (Poe) in *La Liberté de penser* (15 July 1848); *Le Pays* (30 July 1854). *Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages*, in *La Revue de Paris* (March and April 1852).



“Philosophie de l’ameublement” (Poe) in *Le Magasin des familles* (October 1852); *Le monde littéraire* (27 March 1853); *Journal d’Alaçon* (21, 28 May 1854); *Le Pays* (14 September 1854).  
 “Bérénice” (Poe) in *L’Illustration* (17 April 1852); *Le Pays* (2 August 1854).  
 “Le Puits et le pendule” (Poe) in *Revue de Paris* (October 1852); (3, 4 August 1854).  
 “Les Souvenirs de M. A. Bedloe” (Poe) in *L’Illustration* (11 December 1852); *Le Pays* (25, 26 July 1854).  
 “Le Cœur révélateur” (Poe) in *Paris* (4 February 1853).  
 “Le Corbeau” (Poe) in *L’Artiste* (1 March 1853).  
 “Entretien d’Eiros avec Charmion” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (27 July 1854).  
 “La Barrique d’Amontillado” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (3 September 1854).  
 “Puissance de la Parole” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (5 August 1854).  
 “L’Ombre” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (5 August 1854).  
 “Mort ou Vivant, le cas de Mr. Valdemar” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (26 September 1854).  
 “Le démon de la perversité” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (14 September 1854).  
 “Metzengerstein” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (17 September 1854).  
 “Le Diable dans le beffroi” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (20 September 1854).  
 “Petite Discussion avec une momie” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (11, 12 December 1854).  
 “Manuscrit trouvé dans une bouteille” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (21, 22 January 1855).  
 “Colloque entre Monos et Una” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (22, 23 January 1855).  
 “Le Roi Peste” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (22, 26, 27 January 1855).  
 “L’Homme des foules” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (27, 28 January 1855).  
 “Le Portrait ovale” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (28 January 1855).  
 “L’Ile de la Fée” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (28, 30 January 1855).  
 “Le Canard au ballon” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (31 January–2, 3 February 1855).  
 “Ligeia” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (3, 4 February 1855).  
 “Une Descente dans le Maelstrom” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (3, 6, 7 February 1855).  
 “La Chute de la Maison Usher” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (7, 9, 13 February 1855).  
 “William Wilson” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (14, 15, 18, 19 February 1885).  
 “Être un lion, contre moral [Lionnerie]” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (19, 22 February 1855).  
 “Le Silence” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (22 February 1855).  
 “Le Masque de la Mort Rouge” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (22, 23 February 1855).  
 “Hop-Frog” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (23, 24, 25 February 1855).  
 “Doubles Assassinat dans la Rue Morgue, Facultés divantaires d’Auguste Dupin, I” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (25, 26 February–1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 March 1855).  
 “La lettre volée, Facultés divantaires d’Auguste Dupin, II” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (7, 8, 12, 14 March 1855).  
 “Aventure sans pareille d’un certain Hans Pfaal” (Poe) in *Le Pays* (14, 15, 16, 22, 27, 31 March: 1, 2, 14, 17, 20 April 1855).  
*Histoires extraordinaires* published by Michel Lévy (12 March 1856).  
*Les Aventures d’Arthur Gordon Pym* (Poe) in *Le Moniteur* (25 February–18 April 1857).  
*Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* published by Michel Lévy (8 March 1857).

### III. Mallarmé

Consulted Edition

Mallarmé's translations and pedagogical works are compiled in Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Œuvres complètes*. Vol. 2. Edited by Bertrand Marchal. Paris: Gallimard "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 2003. Unless otherwise indicated, I refer to this edition.

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*L'étoile des fées* (C.W. Elphinstone Hope). Paris: Charpentier, 1881. (in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2: 857-894).  
"Mariana" (Alfred Tennyson). *La Dernière Mode* (18 October 1874). (in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2: 857-894).  
*Le "Ten O'clock" de M. Whistler. La Revue indépendante* (May 1888). (in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2: 837-851).  
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## Jena Whitaker

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### EDUCATION

- 2011-2018     **The Johns Hopkins University, Ph.D**, French section  
Department of German and Romance Languages and Literatures.  
Dissertation: “Poet-Translators in Nineteenth Century French Literature: Nerval,  
Baudelaire, Mallarmé”  
Dir. Jacques Neefs
- 2015, June     **NEH Summer Institute: What is Gained in Translation?** Kent State University.  
Institute for Applied Linguistics.
- 2014-2015     **Ecole Normale Supérieure**, Paris, France
- 2009-2011     **Florida State University, Master of Arts**, French Language and Literature
- 2005-2009     **Rollins College, Double Bachelor of Arts, French and Music**, *Magna Cum Laude*

### COURSES TAUGHT

#### Johns Hopkins University

Listening In : The Sounds of French poetry  
Advanced Writing and Speaking in French I and II  
Presence and Absence in Modern French poetry (intersession 2014)  
Intermediate French I and II  
Elementary French I and II

#### Florida State University

Intermediate French I and II  
Elementary French I and II

### AWARDS & HONORS

- 2018            **Marion Frances Chevalier Dissertation Completion Award**, Johns Hopkins University
- 2016            **Dean’s Teaching Fellowship**, Johns Hopkins University, Fall 2016. Designed and taught  
an upper level seminar based on my research. “Listening In: The Sounds of French Poetry”.
- 2015-2016     **Denis Family Graduate Curatorial Fellowship**. Exhibition Title : *Edgar Allan Poe in  
Baltimore and Beyond : Highlights from the Susan Tane Collection*.
- 2015            **NEH Summer Institute Grant Participant**. “What is Gained in Translation? Learning  
How to Read Translated Texts.” Kent State University. Institute for Applied Linguistics.
- 2015            **Marion Frances Chevalier Award**, Johns Hopkins University

- 2014           **F. Millard Foard Fellowship**, Johns Hopkins University
- 2011-2016     **Gilman Graduate Teaching Fellowship**, Johns Hopkins University
- 2009-2011     **Winthrop King Graduate Teaching Fellowship**, Florida State University
- 2011           **Nominee for Outstanding Teaching Assistant**, Florida State University

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

19th century French poetry ; Translation ; Modernity ; Printing and Publishing ; History of the Book ; Intersections of Philosophy and Literature

## PUBLICATIONS

### Articles

“Roland Barthes: Désir de lire, désir de traduire.” *MLN*. 132.4 Ed. Jacques Neefs.

### Book Chapters:

Forthcoming. “Les parenthèses – un temps d’écriture, un temps du dehors: Blanchot, Derrida, Mallarmé.” *Résonances de Blanchot*. Ed. Alain Milon

“*Histoires Extraordinaires*: World-Wide Fame.” *Edgar Allan Poe In Twenty Objects*. Eds. Gabrielle Dean and Richard Kopley.

### Book Reviews:

*Beckett et Descartes dans l'enf*: *Aux sources de l'œuvre beckettienne de Whoroscope à Godot* by Edward Bizub, (review) *MLN* Vol. 129.4. (September 2014)

*Écrivains contemporains lecteurs de Flaubert* Herschberg Pierrot, Anne. *Ceuvres & Critiques XXXIV* Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, (review) *Nineteenth Century French Studies* (2013)

*Les infortunes de l'imagination : Aventures et avatars d'un personnage conceptuel de Baudelaire aux Postmodernes* by Claude Pierre Perez (review) *MLN* Vol. 128. 4. (September 2013)

*Clandestine Encounters : Philosophy in the Narratives of Maurice Blanchot* by Kevin Hart (review) *MLN* Vol. 127.4. (September 2012)

### Encyclopedia Entry:

"Gérard de Nerval". *The Literary Encyclopedia*. Ed. Nigel Harkness. First published 27 July, 2015. <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=3322> <last accessed 9/25/2017>

### Other:

“Détour par Blanchot”. Short text for *Maurice Blanchot quelque chose nous lie. Témoignages de Lectures*. March 2017. Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne. Ed. Thibault Ulysse Compte.

Contributor as a poète-sonore to *Paalabres* in 2015 (Pratiques Artistiques en Actes, LABoratoires de REchercheS) <http://www.paalabres.org/lab/liste-des-contributeurs/> <last accessed 9/25/2017 >

## CONFERENCES

### Paper Presentations:

“Loss and Translations’ Literary Afterlives: Poe’s Lenore”. Roundtable: *Edgar Allan Poe in Transit*. Johns Hopkins University Special Collections Lecture Series. Baltimore, MD. October 25, 2016.

“Désir de traduire”. Atelier Barthes: Roland Barthes “To Write: An Intransitive Verb?”. International Colloquium for the 50th Anniversary of the 1966 Conference “The Structuralist Controversy. The Language and the Sciences of Man”. Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, MD. April 8, 2016.

“Armand Godoy’s Symbolist translation of Poe’s ‘The Raven’.” Global Poe. American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. March 17-20, 2016. (Paper circulated).

“Les parenthèses – un temps d’écriture, un temps du dehors: Blanchot, Derrida, Mallarmé.” Colloque International: Bataille-Blanchot-Klossowski: la question de l’expérience limite. Université Paris Ouest Nanterre. January 21-22, 2016.

“The Legacy of Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Les Mots Anglais*.” La Science du mot. University of Victoria, Victoria, BC. October 16-17, 2015.

“Marcel Proust et Maurice Blanchot : à la recherche du dehors du temps.” Traces, Fragments, Remains : 20th and 21st Century French and Francophone International Colloquium. Atlanta, GA. March 28-30, 2013.

### Conference Panels

Moderator: “Religion and Textual Conflicts in the Early Modern Age”. Versus: German Romance Languages and Literature. Hopkins Graduate Student Conference. Baltimore, MD. September 16-17, 2016.

Panel Chair, “Ecologies of Contamination: Money, Poison, and Celebrity.” 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Nineteenth- Century French Studies Colloquium: Contamination. Princeton University. Princeton, NJ. November 5-7, 2015.

Panel Chair, “The Grammar of Philology,” Counterphilologies: German Romance Languages and Literature. Hopkins Graduate Student Conference. Baltimore, MD. September 21-22, 2012.

### Conference Organization

Conference Co-Organizer and Closing Speaker, “Between Friends and Enemies”: Fourth Biennial Hopkins French Graduate Conference. Baltimore, MD. October 25 – 26, 2013.

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Assistant Curator:** George Peabody Library, Baltimore, Exhibition of *The Enigmatic Edgar Poe in Baltimore & Beyond* with Highlights from the Collection of Susan Jaffe Tane. October 3, 2016 – February, 7, 2017.

**Member of the Curatorial Team for the Digital Exhibition** *The Enigmatic Edgar Poe in Baltimore & Beyond* <http://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/exhibits/show/enigmatic-edgar> <last accessed 9/12/2017>

**Compiled an inventory of JHU's holdings in rare and ephemeral pamphlets from the French Revolution** for the "French Pamphlet Planning Project: An International Collaboration for Improvement of Collection access." <http://blogs.library.jhu.edu/wordpress/2013/12/french-pamphlet-project/> <last accessed 9/25/2017>

## SERVICE

French Representative, German & Romance Language and Literatures Graduate Student Forum, 2016-2017  
Secretary, German & Romance Language and Literatures Graduate Student Forum, 2015-2016.

Committee Member, Tournée Festival of Contemporary Cinema at Johns Hopkins University, 2013.

French Tutor at the Thomas P. Johnson Student Resource Center at Rollins College. 2005 -2007.

**LANGUAGES**            English (native), French (fluent), German and Italian (reading knowledge)