

# Xanthos

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French or Francophone: Postcolonial Immigrant Identities and Literature in Contemporary France

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'A Thousand Violins in the Palm of My Hand': The Suitability of Federico García Lorca's Poetry for Musical Adaptation





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# Welcome from the Editors-in-Chief

And from beneath the yoke Xanthos spoke back,  
Hooves shimmering, his head bowed so low  
That his mane swept the ground, as Hera,  
The white-armed goddess, gave him a voice [...]

— *The Iliad*, Book XIX

Xanthos is the name of Achilles' immortal horse who defied the Furies by daring to speak. This story, part of a wider mythological tradition we have inherited from ancient Greece, does not seem foreign to us. Foreign literature is a problematic concept, and what is meant by 'foreign' is not altogether obvious. Literature created beyond the borders of the Anglophone world is, for academic purposes, foreign. Yet, where would our literature be without Homer, Virgil, Dante, or Perrault? Can these various figures, whether famous or anonymous, who sang or composed in languages which were certainly not English, truly be regarded as 'foreign'? It is difficult to say. Literature composed in the English language is the inheritor of Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Old Norse writings and cultures, among others — cultures which have become so prevalent, so ubiquitous, so ingrained, embracing our language and our thinking so completely, that they have long ago ceased to be foreign and have become our own. We have, in short, assimilated them.

Significantly, there is something distinctly *less foreign* about the poetry of Verlaine than there is about the poetry of Si Mohand ou-Mhand, who is regarded as the 'Berber Verlaine' and whose poetry is translated in this volume. The difference is that the French Verlaine has been assimilated, while the Berber Verlaine has not. *Xanthos: A Journal of Foreign Literatures and Languages* was begotten partly by the desire to present in English for the first time writing such as that of ou-Mhand, and a theme throughout this first issue is the translation of texts that do not form part of the accepted story of English literature. However, today, when English is the official language in more than 70 countries and over 40% of known languages are defined as 'vulnerable', 'endangered' or 'extinct' by UNESCO, there seems to be a sort of violence at the heart of translating those more foreign writers, who still exist beyond the reach of Western influence.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps we are ethically bound to leave this literature of the other undisturbed, untranslated, and unknown. This, then, becomes the challenge for *Xanthos* and all academic ventures which work at the tense intersection of language and culture: to translate foreign writing and yet permit it to remain foreign, to permit it to continue existing in its irreducible otherness.

Much has been written in recent years on the 'crisis' in languages within the United Kingdom, from the slump in the number of students studying languages to the concomitant impact of a lack of trained linguists on commercial exports; more recently, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages has gone so far as to propose a 'national recovery

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, 'Towards World Atlas of Languages' <<https://en.unesco.org/news/towards-world-atlas-languages>>. All sites cited in this introduction were accessed 16 April 2019.

programme' to remedy this decline.<sup>2</sup> The case for languages and intercultural awareness, however, must be about more than economic imperatives. As Gerda Wielander rightly noted in her visionary editorial to the first issue of the *Modern Languages Open* journal,

[...] the discipline of Modern Languages and Cultures is not just about enabling conversation between people who already know they want to talk to one another. Rather, it is the cultural knowledge produced by academics working in language-based areas studies, translation studies and intercultural communication which helps bring people together in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

It is in this spirit that *Xanthos* was born. As Modern Languages departmental budgets are slashed all across the country, there is an ever-greater need for platforms which are uniquely positioned to explore the intersection of language and culture, and as such we aim to publish literary-critical and theoretical approaches to foreign literature, comparative literature, classical reception, translation, and linguistics.

Our inaugural issue begins in France, first through an analysis of the place of so-called 'immigrant' literature in the modern French publishing landscape and the need to 'destabilise the self / "Other" binary'. Also concerned with literature perceived as marginal, our second article deals with the writings of Madame du Châtelet and how the materiality of her texts is a witness to both the importance and success of her contribution to the largely male-dominated world of the sciences in the eighteenth century. Looking even further back in time, the following article offers a translation of an excerpt from *Perceforest*, a fourteenth-century French romance whose increasing significance in the field of medieval studies calls for broader reach. This naturally transitions into the second translation in this volume, of the medieval Spanish *Crónica particular de San Fernando*, which is accompanied by a methodological analysis. Our presentation of translations continues with a rendering of a selection of Berber poems by Si Mohand ou-Mhand. Through its final contributions, *Xanthos* then reflects upon the nature of translation itself, and the issues inherent to its practice. An investigation into translating *Luuanda* 'explore[s] the ways in which cultural difference can be mediated and recreated through translative practices', offering some measure of insight into the never-ceasing questions raised in this introduction. Our final piece moves beyond traditional literary-critical boundaries. It features a practising composer interpreting translation in the broadest possible sense to embrace the multimodal dialogue between musical and written language, demonstrating the hermeneutic potential of music when it communes with the poetry of Federico García Lorca.

The articles in our first issue attest to the values of Modern Languages research writ large: an appreciation of difference, a search for sensitivity, and a desire to engage on equal terms with linguistic and cultural frameworks that are both familiar and unfamiliar to us. Gerda Wiedlander, in her introduction to *Modern Languages Open*, champions this approach, noting that 'The study of another culture [...] will invariably be extremely limited if English is the only linguistic and cultural framework through which such study is approached [...]' . We are proud, through both our commitment to Open Access and the range of languages

<sup>2</sup> Branwen Jeffreys, 'Language learning: German and French drop by half in UK schools', *BBC News*, 27 February 2019 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47334374>>. 'MPs and Peers in urgent call for a National Recovery Programme to revolutionise language skills in the UK', <<https://www.britishcouncil.org/contact/press/mps-and-peers-urgent-call-national-recovery-programme-revolutionise-language-skills-uk>>.

<sup>3</sup> Gerda Wielander, 'In defence of Modern Languages', *Modern Languages Open*, 1 <<http://doi.org/10.3828/ml0.v0i1.40>>.

considered in our first issue, to echo this statement, and to make the case for an active, engaging, and welcoming Modern Languages.

Harold Bloom famously balked at the approach to literature as an epiphenomenon, as a product of political or historical circumstance. Bloom is correct to point out that literature, whether it is Madame du Châtelet's scientific writings or Si Mhand ou-Mhand's poetry, is not simply or solely an object of knowledge; it is a source of knowledge, too. Thus, the potential violence we commit by the process of translation is explained (not justified, but explained) by our pursuit of a wider cultural scope, a keener eye, and a more sensitive ear, exemplified by those narratives which, in their foreignness, will make us better readers, better writers, better translators, and, hopefully, better people.

ALISON MARMONT

# French or Francophone: Postcolonial Immigrant Identities and Literature in Contemporary France

In the last half-century, many immigrants from France's former colonies have made the hexagon their home and have contributed to the country's literary output. However, these immigrants and their offspring are often deemed as 'Others'. This kind of 'othering' is made manifest in the literary sphere through the labelling of their works as 'francophone,' rather than French, by the publishing industry. The first section of this article proposes a definition of (immigrant) identity that challenges this kind of exclusionary and essentialist discourse with reference to the concepts of hybridity, cultural identity and uncanniness propounded by Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and Julia Kristeva respectively. This article then examines the *littérature-monde* manifesto to argue that its rejection of the term 'francophone' is not sufficient to dissolve this particular self/'Other' binary. In light of this, this article proposes that Edward Said's humanistic approach to reading, when accompanied by a Segalanian respect for the irreducibility of the individual, reflects the proposed conception of identity and so allows scholars to challenge, rather than reinforce, the marginalisation experienced by ethnic minority authors in France.

France, like many prosperous countries in a globalised age, has become not just the transitory destination, but also the home for many different people from all over the world, particularly from its former colonies. The immigrants that France has welcomed, or tolerated, in the last half-century have made their mark on the country and contributed to its economic, political and cultural development. In spite of this, many people with foreign origins in France are deemed as 'Others' and, as a result, experience socio-political and economic marginalisation.<sup>1</sup> This kind of 'othering' also exists in the literary sphere and is made manifest in the labelling of the works of immigrant authors or their children as 'francophone,' rather than French, by the publishing industry and sometimes even by well-intentioned scholars.<sup>2</sup> This labelling not only risks being exclusionary, but may foment the kind of essentialist conception of these 'others' as a homogenous group which occurs in increasingly prevalent right-wing political discourses. In light of this, it is essential that

<sup>1</sup> The terms 'Other' or 'othering' are used in reference to the process outlined by Sara Ahmed, in which a person is fetishised as a figure of difference, whether this difference is interpreted as positive or negative. This fetishism results in a levelling of difference between various 'others', as the particular histories and power relations determining each individual are not taken into consideration. See Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Transformations, 1 (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Young, 'Postcolonial Remains', *New Literary History*, 43 (2012), 19-42 (p. 36).

postcolonial scholars challenge these reductive conceptions of identity and reveal the asymmetrical power relations which allow them to be perpetuated. Hence, this article aims to reframe our theoretical understanding of (immigrant) identity and explore how this might be reflected in our analysis of the literature of immigrant authors in French. Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the 'Third Space' have been of significant influence in postcolonial theory because of their subversion of essentialist conceptions of identity.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, this article will argue that, whilst hybridity is an important concept for understanding the experiences and identities of ethnic minorities, references to the 'Third Space' risk overlooking the unequal power relations individuals are caught up in. With reference to Stuart Hall's concept of 'cultural identity' and Julia Kristeva's idea of uncanniness in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, this article will propose a conception of immigrant identity which takes various social hierarchies into account and destabilises the self/'Other' binary.<sup>4</sup> The following section will examine how this can be reflected in literary analysis and the extent to which the *littérature-monde* manifesto, which rejects the term 'francophone' in an attempt to dissolve the French/francophone dichotomy, succeeds in dissolving this particular binary.<sup>5</sup>

In order to contextualise these arguments, it is first necessary to outline the socio-political environment shaping the experiences of those who are classed as 'immigrant' authors. The increasing attention paid by francophone postcolonial scholars to authors classed as 'immigrants' in France reflects the burgeoning creativity and literary output of these communities. No longer limited to token chapters in general postcolonial reader journals, studies such as Ireland and Proulx's edited collection *Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France* are dedicated entirely to immigrant writers from a wide range of social, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, whose works are equally diverse. There has been particular interest in the works of so-called *beur* or *banlieue* writers who come from the most significant immigrant community, namely of North African descent, such as Reeck's *Writerly Identities in Beur Fiction and Beyond*. However, the term 'immigrant' is, in itself, problematic for many reasons. Firstly, and as will be explored shortly, it is sometimes applied to people who are deemed foreign because of their ethnic background, even though they were born in France. Secondly, far from being a neutral expression, it is often accompanied by negative connotations, particularly when mobilised in right-wing, exclusionary discourses. Thirdly, it amalgamates an extremely heterogeneous group of people whose experiences as immigrants are incredibly diverse because of their multifarious countries of origin, ethnicities, cultures, classes, religions, languages, genders and sexualities. Any discussion of 'immigrant identity' must, therefore, take these disparate experiences into account to avoid reinforcing the same reductive conceptions and labels which allow them to be 'othered'.

The first challenge when examining immigrant authors and their literatures in France is understanding who, exactly, falls under this classification. As Reeck points out, the republican model of integration in France, in contrast to the multiculturalist model of countries like the United States, identifies only two kinds of identities: French or foreign.<sup>6</sup> The integration

<sup>3</sup> See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> See Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-37.

<sup>5</sup> See Michel Le Bris, 'Pour une « littérature-monde » en français', *Le Monde*, 15 March 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Reeck, *Writerly Identities in Beur Fiction and Beyond* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011). p. 3.

policy envisages French society as a melting pot into which all immigrants, regardless of ethnicity, religion, origins or culture, must dissolve in order to access full citizenship.<sup>7</sup> Thus, from a political perspective, ethnic minorities ‘remain a statistical absence and a linguistic conundrum’ because the application of ethnic or racial categories to communities in France is seen as a threat to its republican values.<sup>8</sup> This is the case for the arrival of immigrants from countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal who came to replenish the French workforce after the Second World War as well as the considerable although varied influxes of citizens of France’s former colonies to the *métropole*.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the social reality faced by different immigrant communities is more complex as not all foreigners are viewed in the same way. Many scholars have identified the disparate treatment of immigrants as a direct legacy of colonialism, whereby the ‘colonial relationship is relived and rewritten, this time on France’s home territory’.<sup>10</sup> For Reeck, this results in an ‘internal periphery’ and, in a similar vein, it is described as a ‘fracture coloniale’ by Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire in their edited collection of the same name. For the latter, one of the most evident manifestations of this ‘fracture’ within the immigrant communities is the fact that the children of European workers who have remained in France are accepted as fully French, whereas the offspring of immigrants from the former colonies continue to be seen as foreigners, even when they were born in France and have French citizenship:<sup>11</sup>

Aujourd’hui, plus de sept millions de personnes, immigrés postcoloniaux ou Français d’« origine immigrée » -dénomination qui en dit long sur la transmission d’un statut spécifique d’« éternels étrangers » pour les descendants d’immigrés extra-européens-, vivent concrètement les métissages postcoloniaux, mais aussi des situations de relégation, de discriminations quotidiennes (à l’embauche, à l’emploi), dont nous peinons à nous expliquer l’ampleur [...] la fracture coloniale est née de la persistance et de l’application de schémas coloniaux à certaines catégories de population (catégories réelles ou construites), principalement celles issues de l’ex-Empire.<sup>12</sup>

It is evident, furthermore, that some groups are marginalised to an even greater extent than others, such as immigrants of North African origin who, for Jean-Marie Le Pen and others to the far right of the political spectrum, ‘are not only inassimilable, but could never

<sup>7</sup> See Pascal Blanchard, ‘La France, entre deux immigrations’, in *La Fracture coloniale : La société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), pp. 173-82 (p. 178).

<sup>8</sup> Reeck, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Ireland, and Patrice J. Proulx, ‘Introduction’, in *Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France*, ed. by Susan Ireland and Patrice J. Proulx (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 1-6 (p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Blanchard, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup> Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Sandrine Lemaire, ‘Introduction. La fracture coloniale : une crise française’, in *La Fracture coloniale : La société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), pp. 9-30 (p. 26). ‘Today, more than seven million people, postcolonial immigrants or French citizens of “immigrant origin” – a denomination which says a lot about the transmission of the status of “eternal foreigners” to the descendants of non-European immigrants –, experience the reality of postcolonial hybridisation, but also situations of relegation, of daily discrimination (in recruitment, at work), the extent of which is hard to convey [...] the colonial fracture arises from the persistence and application of colonial schemas to certain categories of the population (real or constructed categories), principally those from the former Empire’. Translation my own.

become French'.<sup>13</sup>

It is unsurprising that this particular climate should have reverberations in the literary sphere. Speaking of minorities of North and sub-Saharan African origin in France, although relevant to the literatures of most immigrant communities, Alec Hargreaves identifies two particularly important factors which impact whether their works are seen as part of French culture. Firstly, the greater the number of generations living and born on French soil increases the chance that their work is recognised as French and, secondly, some cultural or religious differences are perceived as less compatible with French values than others, Islam as the most notable example.<sup>14</sup> Whilst there are many other elements impacting how the literary works of authors of foreign origin are received, such as education, gender and class, another of note is the extent to which they are deemed to be compatible, thematically or stylistically, with French literary ideals. As Hargreaves notes, the orality of many works by authors of Maghrebi origin, in which colloquialisms and informal language abound, means they are often viewed by French scholars as ‘fall[ing] not only outside the national field of French literature but also below the threshold of literature “tout court”’.<sup>15</sup>

In this way, an ethno-racial hierarchy, which can be traced back to the Orientalist rhetoric of French colonialism, is being produced and applied not just to immigrants from former colonies, but often to their offspring and their literary works. The way in which these groups are classed as perpetual foreigners, even when they are French citizens, can be seen as an ‘implicit attempt to keep them marginalized’.<sup>16</sup> One of the main reasons why immigrants continue to be discriminated against, in France and around the world, is because their different cultures, values, beliefs and customs are perceived as a threat and as inferior to those of the host nation. This is based on an essentialised conception of cultural identity, which sees foreign cultures as potential contaminants of the country’s pure, ‘originary’ essence. In order to challenge this kind of marginalisation, it is necessary to re-evaluate the concepts of foreignness and identity which impact how we conceive immigrants and their *œuvres*. As such, this article will analyse two of Bhabha’s most influential and simultaneously controversial concepts of hybridity and the ‘Third Space’, Hall’s two-fold conception of identity, and Kristeva’s psychoanalytical theories on foreignness.

## Culture, Identity, and the Uncanny

In *The Location of Culture*, classed as one of the founding texts in postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha contends that universalist frameworks propound essentialist conceptions of culture and identity unable to accommodate the cultural difference characterising the modern nation ‘marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference’.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Amar Acheraïou, *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> Alec G. Hargreaves, ‘The Contribution of North and Sub-Saharan African Immigrant Minorities to the Redefinition of Contemporary French Culture’, in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). pp. 145-54 (p. 147).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>16</sup> Ireland and Proulx, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Bhabha, p. 212.

Bhabha proposes instead that culture and identity are constructed through cultural difference and hybridity; in so doing, he rejects that there is a pure, authentic, original state to which they can be traced back:<sup>18</sup>

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘inbetween’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, privileging relationality, Bhabha removes identity, individual or communal, from the ‘reified, pedagogical realm’ to define it as a continuum; a process based upon ‘negotiation, remaking, performance and enunciation’.<sup>20</sup> The fact that cultures are constantly in a process of hybridity, open to transformation and translation, allows for anteriority in cultural identity, but never an essence, meaning that the ‘original’ is never whole or finished; it has never had ‘a totalised prior moment of being or meaning’.<sup>21</sup>

To describe the interstitial location in which this hybridity takes place, Bhabha coins the term ‘Third Space’, which, with links to the concept of slippage in Derridean deconstruction, ‘names the gap in enunciation between the subject of a proposition and the subject of the enunciation’.<sup>22</sup> In order to illustrate this slippage, he compares hybridity and the ‘Third Space’ to a stairwell:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy...<sup>23</sup>

The ‘Third Space’ is, therefore, a site of enunciation and hybridity, which, rather than being the outcome of the exchange between different cultures, is the space which allows new positions to emerge. For Bhabha, the transformation which can take place in the ‘Third Space’ is the result of cultural translation (both as representation and reproduction) which involves ‘a self-othering process, one in which cultural sameness and difference are translated to allow for new and wider modes of personal and collective cultural identifications’.<sup>24</sup> It is

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Rutherford, ‘The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha’, in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-21 (p. 220).

<sup>19</sup> Bhabha, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Fetson Kalua, ‘Revisiting postcolonial theory: Continuities and departures in the twenty-first century’, *English Academy Review*, 31.1 (2014), 66-76 (p. 71).

<sup>21</sup> Rutherford, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Hiddleston, *Understanding Postcolonialism* (Stocksfeild: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2009), p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> Bhabha, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Acheraïou, p. 92.

this aspect of the ‘Third Space’s’ hybrid nature which leads Bhabha and many postcolonial scholars to see it as a potentially resistant as well as transformative space. The hybridity which arises from the encounter of different cultures allows the authority and discourse of the dominant culture to be questioned and subverted. As Childs has pointed out, in a postcolonial context this means that, in contrast to Said’s concept of ‘orientalism’, the colonised, or in this case the immigrant, is not completely determined by the discourse of the coloniser and the latter’s authority is ‘reinforced, split, syncretized, and to an extent menaced, by its confrontation with its object’.<sup>25</sup> In a deconstructionist vein, Bhabha contends that the liminal and hybrid nature of the ‘Third Space’ means that essentialist discourses, such as those of nationhood, language and culture, based upon reductive, hierarchical binaries, can be subverted and rejected.

Nevertheless, whilst hybridity and the ‘Third Space’ are seen by Bhabha and many postcolonial scholars as the ‘conduits of a revolutionary politics of identity and cultural relationships’, several aspects of these concepts remain problematic.<sup>26</sup> Anthony Easthope notes that Bhabha’s adoption of the Derridean presence/difference binary perpetuates the same failure to define presence, which in this case is the identity which hybridity is capable of undermining. Instead of deconstructing this binary, he merely inverts it; privileging difference to the extent that hybridity is seen as a ‘transcendental signified’, difference becomes synonymous with non-identity in the face of an absolute, Cartesian self-consciousness. Thus, Bhabha fails to provide a relativised identity which accounts for the ‘coherence which is necessary for anyone to be a speaking subject’ within the framework of a continuum.<sup>27</sup> The necessarily emancipatory nature of the ‘Third Space’ is brought into question not only by this failure but also Bhabha’s suggestion that this site of cross-cultural/interracial exchange is neutral when, as Amar Acheraïou points out, it is subject to power relations operating ‘in the guise of a universal ethics of cultural exchange and solidarity’.<sup>28</sup> By extracting individuals from the socio-political discourses shaping their experiences, reference to the ‘Third Space’ may unwittingly reinforce the essentialist discourses Bhabha seeks to undermine when conceiving of identity as a continuum.

The explicit or implicit relationship that always exists between translation and power structures means that the ‘Third Space’ cannot be seen as a site in which power is simply destabilised and polarities are collapsed:

the third space is underpinned by an insidious totalizing drive that inscribes translation in a subtle struggle for meaning and construction of cultural identities. Moreover, for all its theoretical significance the third space of translation does not collapse the politics of polarity into a flat, disempowered narrative of equivalence and entropy. It merely reshapes the terms of the binary same-Other and, in so doing, it masks the will-to-power and hegemonic impulse inherent in cultural translations.<sup>29</sup>

In light of this, Acheraïou proposes that the ‘Third Space’ be abandoned altogether so that

<sup>25</sup> Peter Childs, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997). p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> Acheraïou. p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Easthope, ‘Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity’, *Textual Practice*, 12.2 (1998), 341–48 (p. 345).

<sup>28</sup> Bhabha, p. 56; Acheraïou, pp. 92–93.

<sup>29</sup> Acheraïou, pp. 92–93.

hybrid subjectivity can be integrated into the ‘realm of the possible’ where, ‘integrated as an equal part into the dominant archive of collective and individual identifications’, it can be conceived as an active agency which can (re)define its own identity.<sup>30</sup> Stuart Hall’s conceptualisation of identity as not just a continuum but also ‘production’ makes this kind of agency possible to envisage: ‘Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, and not outside, representation’.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, the second of Hall’s two conceptualisations of ‘cultural identity’ brings to light the role of unequal power relations in the formation of identity and how they can be undermined. The first definition of cultural identity he proposes is an essentialist understanding based upon the idea of a group culture and collective ‘oneness’ arising from shared historical experiences. This provides people with ‘stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history’. However, in contrast to Bhabha, Hall believes that this conception of identity is of value because of its central role in the ‘recovery’ of identity fundamental to, for example, ‘Caribbeanness’, black diaspora and post-colonial struggles throughout the world. The second definition of cultural identity is, according to Hall, more useful for analysing the traumatic nature of colonialism for those whose identities were produced for them by the colonisers. Its emphasis is not on the similarities between the past and the present but the many fissures which develop between them. As such, whilst acknowledging that its formation is within discourses of culture and history and that it is ‘subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power’, this second type of identity refuses to be fixed in an essentialised past. For Hall, identity in this sense is not just about ‘being’ but also of ‘becoming’, as it undergoes constant transformation, and a politics of ‘positioning’: ‘identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past’.<sup>32</sup>

The emphasis of this second definition upon the historical and social contingency of identity can elucidate how discourses inherited from French Imperialism ‘produce’ immigrants as a homogenous mass, and the traumatic impact of this ‘positioning’: ‘Le vécu de la discrimination et de la ségrégation, et peut-être plus encore le sentiment d’être défini par un déficit permanent de “civilisation” dans les discours du pouvoir, d’être soumis à des injonctions d’intégration au moment même où la société vous prive des moyens de la construire, évoquent directement la “colonie”’.<sup>33</sup> This conception of cultural identity can, therefore, illuminate not only how some people are ‘positioned’ and the potential violence of representation, but also the hierarchies which give some the authority to ‘produce’ some others in such a way as to maintain their own privilege within the system. Nonetheless, as

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.188.

<sup>31</sup> Hall, p. 222.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 223-25.

<sup>33</sup> Ian Hussey, ‘Note on Stuart Hall’s “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”’, *Socialist Studies*, 10.1 (2014), 200-04 (p. 200); Didier Lapeyronnie, ‘La Banlieue comme théâtre colonial, ou la fracture coloniale dans les quartiers’, in *La Fracture coloniale : La société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial*, ed. by Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), pp. 209-18 (p. 214). ‘The experience of discrimination and of segregation, and perhaps even more of being defined by a permanent deficit of “civilisation” in discourses of power, of receiving orders to integrate into society at the same time as it deprives you of the very means to achieve this, directly evokes the “colony”’. Translation my own.

previously mentioned, the produced nature of identity also allows for internal resistance to these exteriorising discourses. In this way, analysing the ways in which immigrants in France are speaking out through literary texts, and also other mediums such as films and music, can reveal not just how they are challenging representations of themselves in, for example, politics or the media, but also how they are producing their own identities through self-representation.

However, it is necessary to look elsewhere to fully destabilise the self/‘Other’ dichotomy. Julia Kristeva’s *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* is concerned with the way in which immigrants in France are represented as a threatening, homologous group and the question she aims to answer in the text is how we can ‘intimement, subjectivement, vivre avec les autres, vivres autres, sans ostracisme mais aussi sans nivellement?’.<sup>34</sup> The solution which Kristeva proposes is based on Freud’s semantic analysis of the German words ‘heimlich’ and its antonym ‘unheimlich’ in *The Uncanny*. Freud points out the ambivalence of the former as its meaning overlaps with that of its antonym so that it can, at once, recall ideas of the familiar and the uncanny.<sup>35</sup> The presence of the uncanny within the familiar undermines the assumption that the uncanny arises only from the unknown and is therefore considered by Freud and Kristeva to be ‘une preuve étymologique de l’hypothèse psychanalytique selon laquelle “l’inquiétante étrangeté est cette variété particulière de l’effrayant qui remonte au depuis longtemps connu, depuis longtemps familier”’.<sup>36</sup> In this way, foreignness, normally attributed to the ‘Other’, becomes integral to the self through the unconscious:

Avec la notion freudienne d’inconscient, l’involution de l’étrange dans le psychisme perd son aspect pathologique et intègre au sein de l’unité présumée des hommes une *altérité* à la fois biologique *et* symbolique, qui devient partie intégrante du *même*. Désormais, l’étranger n’est ni une race ni une nation. L’étranger n’est ni magnifié comme *Volksgeist* secret, ni banni comme perturbateur de l’urbanité rationaliste. Inquiétante, l’étrangeté est en nous: nous sommes nos propres étrangers – nous sommes divisés.<sup>37</sup>

According to Kristeva, if this definition were to be widely accepted, the destabilising effect which it has on the self, whether individual or communal, could lead to a reorienting of approaches to foreignness, integration and difference in (French) society whereby the question becomes ‘non plus de l’accueil de l’étranger à l’intérieur d’un système qui l’annule, mais de la cohabitation de ces étrangers que nous reconnaissions tous être’.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), p. 10; ‘intimately and subjectively, able to live with the others, to live as others, without ostracism but also without leveling?’ This, and all further translations, quoted from Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Léon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), here p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘The ‘Uncanny’’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 217-256 (here p. 224).

<sup>36</sup> Kristeva, p. 270; ‘an etymological proof of the psychoanalytic hypothesis according to which “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar”’ (p. 183)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 268. ‘With the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings an otherness that is both biological and symbolic and becomes an integral part of the same. Henceforth the foreigner is neither a race nor a nation. The foreigner is neither glorified as a secret *Volksgeist* nor banished as disruptive of rationalist urbanity. Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided’ (p. 181 in translation).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11: ‘no longer that of welcoming the foreigner within a system that obliterates him but of promoting the togetherness of those foreigners that we all recognize ourselves to be’ (pp. 2-3 in translation).

Whilst at first glance Kristeva's assertion of solidarity through the uncanniness of the unconscious working within all of us may seem to fall into the trap of offering the kind of universal concept for understanding cultural diversity against which Bhabha warns, this conceptualisation of identity in no ways precludes the difference which exists between people(s) or the ways in which their 'cultural practices construct their own systems of meaning and social organisation'.<sup>39</sup> In fact, it underlines the 'incompréhensibilité éternelle' of other people because the self necessarily also eludes understanding and pinpointing.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Kristeva's focus on the unconscious also undermines the Orientalist discourse denounced by Said, which purports to 'know' the 'Other' and uses this 'knowledge' to justify the West's acting upon and exerting power over the Orient.<sup>41</sup>

In *Postcolonial Remains*, Robert Young denounces the way in which, by an irresponsible approach to and use of the concepts of self and 'Other', some postcolonial scholars are inadvertently perpetuating the very dichotomy they should be subverting: 'Tolerance requires that there be no "other", that others should not be othered. We could say that there can be others, but there should be no othering of "the other".'<sup>42</sup> By dissolving the self/'Other' binary, Kristeva's psychoanalytical approach offers a solution to avoid this 'othering' as she calls on citizens (and scholars) to avoid 'turning the otherness of the foreigner into a fascinating and also terrifying thing, in order to deny their own alterity'.<sup>43</sup> Thus, she proposes an ethico-political conception of foreignness which does not attempt to level out difference as, along with Bhabha, she believes that 'the time for "assimilating" minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has dramatically passed'.<sup>44</sup>

One of the weaknesses of *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, to which Woodhull calls attention, is the privileging of the 'foreigners within' to the 'foreigners without'. Kristeva falls into the trap of levelling the varied experiences of immigrants by not taking into account fundamental differences between them such as class, sex and ethnicity.<sup>45</sup> However, she is aware that her conception of identity cannot do away with the problems which do arise from cultural difference and cohabitation, and her own oversights do not preclude the application of her theory in literary analysis in a way which takes into account the unique environment in which each writer and text evolves.

Bhabha and Hall's theories highlight the ways in which an essentialised understanding of identity justifies and masks the unequal power relations played out on national territories between those who consider themselves to be native citizens and those they perceive as foreigners. However, the integral nature of relationality to identity and the possibility of resistance do not completely escape the reductive self/'Other' binary which Kristeva uproots in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. By bringing together these concepts, it is possible to make up for the elisions of each and to propose a general conception of identity which avoids essentialism and consequently allows for cultural difference without either demonising it as

<sup>39</sup> Rutherford, p. 209.

<sup>40</sup> Victor Segalen, *Essai sur l'exotisme, une esthétique du divers* (Fontfroide: Bibliothèque artistique & littéraire, 1995), p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. xiii.

<sup>42</sup> Young, p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> Winnie Woodhull, 'Review: *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* by Julia Kristeva', *SubStance*, 19.2/3 (1990), 199-201 (p. 199).

<sup>44</sup> Bhabha, p. 251.

<sup>45</sup> Woodhull, p. 201.

a threat or overlooking the challenges which arise from hybridity. Furthermore, the polarities by which foreigners are deemed to be either completely knowable or wholly ‘Other’ are subverted by the natural uncanniness of the self which leads to an acknowledgement of the irreducible nature of every individual and the impossibility of anyone being completely alien.

The next question that must be asked is how theory and practice can come together. How can this understanding of identity as an irreducible continuum, produced within a complex nexus of power relations, be reflected in, and illuminate, the way scholars approach the literary works of so-called immigrant authors writing in French? Indeed, analyses which lose sight of this, however well-intentioned, risk reinforcing essentialised conceptions of identity and masking the inequalities faced by those labelled as ‘Others’. Given the importance of labels in the ‘positioning’ of the self or others, the next section will analyse the debate surrounding the contentious terms *francophone* and *francophonie*. The 2007 *littérature-monde* manifesto proposes a new approach to literature in French as it rebukes the use of these terms by publishers and scholars as exclusionary and hierarchical.<sup>46</sup> The extent to which this new approach, along with Edward Said’s concept of humanistic reading, allows for literary analyses which respect and illuminate the conception of identity outlined above will now be considered.

## ‘Immigrant’ Literature: Postcolonial theory versus *Littérature-monde*

Given the aim of francophone postcolonial studies to identify and subvert the (lingering) imperialist discourses from which power relations based on violence, domination and inequality emerge, it would seem to be a fruitful avenue through which immigrant literature in France could be explored.<sup>47</sup> However, one of the debates which often arises in this field is the use of the terms *francophonie* and *francophone*. One of the most evident legacies of France’s colonial empire is the fact that French is either the native language or widely spoken in thirty-four countries around the world, excluding Europe. This linguistic and cultural phenomenon is conveyed in the term *francophonie*. However, some theorists argue that the terms *francophonie* and *francophone* are problematic because they can be seen to perpetuate the exclusion and inequality intrinsic to colonial centre/periphery discourses: ‘La francophonie, émanation de la politique coloniale d’assimilation, relègue les locuteurs non français à une catégorie “autre”, marginale, impure, parasite’.<sup>48</sup> As Forsdick and Murphy highlight, when used to refer to all literature written in French except that coming from the *métropole* (or, indeed, written only by those considered to be autochthonous), ‘francophone literature [...] suggests a neo-colonial segregation and a hierarchisation of cultures’.<sup>49</sup> This

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<sup>46</sup> Le Bris, ‘Pour une « littérature-monde » en français’, *Le Monde*, 15 March 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Young, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, ‘Introduction: the case for Francophone postcolonial studies’, in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 1-16 (p. 7); Isabelle Constant, Kahiudi C. Mabana, and Philip Nanton, ‘Postface’, in *Antillanité, créolité, littérature-monde*, ed. by Isabelle Constant, Kahiudi C. Mabana, and Philip Nanton (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 149-52 (p. 149). ‘Francophonie, emanating from the colonial policy of assimilation, relegates speakers who are not French to the category of a marginal, impure, parasitical “other”’. Translation my own.

<sup>49</sup> Forsdick and Murphy, p. 3.

segregation is made particularly salient when the term ‘francophone’ is applied, as it often is, to the works of immigrants and their children, even if they are French citizens.

The maintenance of an exclusionary, nation-centred approach to literature is a concern for postcolonial studies generally because it not only perpetuates the imperialist self/‘Other’ binary, but also prevents the acceptance of the ‘worldliness of literature’.<sup>50</sup> Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o suggests that applying national boundaries to literature is like ‘trying to contain a river’s flow within a specific territory’ and, thus, it is a counterproductive and unnatural task which impedes our ability to comprehend the ways in which literature can transcend national borders.<sup>51</sup> In light of these issues, Forsdick and Murphy, among others, propose that it is time to ‘decolonise’ the term ‘francophone literature’ by expanding its reference to include France and French culture as well.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, others theorists, such as Michel Beniamino, call for the abandonment of ‘French literature’ or ‘Francophone literature’ in favour of ‘literatures in French’ to draw attention to the multiplicity and diversity of these literatures.<sup>53</sup>

Beniamino’s position is echoed by the proponents of the *littérature-monde* movement, including Gary Victor, who states: ‘Donner une nationalité au sens strict à la création, c’est la fossiliser, l’exclure de certains lieux et l’empêcher de déployer librement ses ailes’.<sup>54</sup> This concern is at the heart of the movement launched in 2007 with the *Pour une littérature-monde en français* manifesto which had forty-five renowned French speaking signatories from all around the world and was shortly followed by a collection of essays. Given that ‘Personne ne parle le francophone, ni n’écrit en francophone’, they call for the term ‘francophonie’ and the reductive conception of literature it entails, to be replaced by the more outward-looking and transnational *littérature-monde*.<sup>55</sup> They hope to liberate the French language from its ‘pacte exclusif avec la nation’ and also counter the difficulties faced by authors who are labelled as francophone when it comes to getting their work recognised and published.<sup>56</sup>

This call for the uprooting of neo-colonial power structures and the valorisation of authors and literatures proceeding from the ‘peripheries’ would seem to make *littérature-monde* a plausible and attractive solution to examine the difficulties faced by immigrant authors in marginalised communities within the metropole. However, whilst some theorists have praised the movement’s attempt to dissolve the French/francophone hierarchy, it has been criticised as overly simplistic in asserting that abandoning the term ‘francophone’ ‘ferait magiquement disparaître le mépris ou la condescendance que manifeste une partie

<sup>50</sup> Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 47.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>52</sup> Forsdick and Murphy, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ching Selao, *Le Roman vietnamien francophone : orientalisme, occidentalisme et hybridité* (Montreal: Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2011). pp. 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> Gary Victor, ‘Littérature-monde ou liberté d’être’, in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), pp. 315-20 (p. 315). ‘Applying a nationality to the creation fossilises it, excludes it from certain places and prevents it from fully spreading its wings’. Translation my own.

<sup>55</sup> Le Bris (2007); Jane Hiddleston, ‘*Littérature-monde* and Old/New Humanism’, in *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), pp. 178-92 (p. 178).

<sup>56</sup> Hiddleston (2010), p. 178.

de l'institution littéraire parisienne à l'égard des écrivains dits francophones'.<sup>57</sup> Two of the main critiques of *littérature-monde* made by francophone postcolonial scholars are that it is oblivious to both the 'impact of colonialism and decolonisation on literary history' and the importance of 'deep structures of national belonging and economic interest contouring the international culture industry'.<sup>58</sup> The former continues to shape and inform the literatures of immigrant authors with origins in the former empire and the latter has a significant impact on how their works are received. As such, the movement's apolitical stance risks overlooking aspects which are key to the experiences and artistic works of individuals from ethnic minority or immigrant communities in France.

Moreover, in spite of nods to writers winning prestigious literary prizes in 2007 such as Marie NDiaye, sometimes wrongly labelled as an immigrant author because her father is Senegalese, their assertion that the French métropole is part of a constellation, a 'centre relégué au milieu d'autres centres', neglects sections of the internal periphery inhabited by ethnic minority writers.<sup>59</sup> Although Le Bris is interested in the work of authors he considers to be 'à cheval entre plusieurs cultures' and their potential to give new life to literature, it is interesting to note that the manifesto does not have a single 'beur' or 'banlieue' signatory.<sup>60</sup> Le Bris' disregard for literatures emerging from France's disadvantaged banlieues is particularly conspicuous in an interview conducted by Laura Reeck in which, when asked about the views of the manifesto's signatories regarding the 2005 riots, he asserts that it was not their concern. For Reeck, this illustrates the exclusion of writers from the banlieues from the supposedly inclusive *littérature-monde* movement and emphasises the fact that 'No one sees the second-generation ethnic minority authors in France as their own. When they are not overlooked, they are misrepresented, ghettoised, or oversimplified'.<sup>61</sup> In this vein, *littérature-monde*'s partisanship means that it fails to meet the needs of an important part of France's internal periphery and, in fact, reinforces the reductive, hierarchical self/'Other' binary which it aims to subvert by rejecting the term 'francophone'.

As the *littérature-monde* movement fails to destabilise essentialist binaries or account for the real socio-political and economic inequalities shaping the experiences of those positioned as foreigners on French soil, it cannot provide postcolonial scholars with the means to effectively analyse their *œuvres*. Whilst labels must be interrogated, a more general framework is required to bring the particular and unique nature of the novels and the contexts informing them to light and, thus, avoid reductive conceptions of either. Said's concept of humanistic reading, based on two phases, 'reception' and 'resistance', encourages this kind of analysis. Said intends this approach to be a 'model of coexistence' which would allow societies to acknowledge and deal with the various forms of injustices and disparities

<sup>57</sup> Selao 'would make the disdain or condescension which part of the Parisian literary institution manifests towards so-called francophone authors magically disappear.' (p. 40) Translation my own.

<sup>58</sup> Emily Apter, 'Afterword: The "World" in World Literature', in *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, Francophone Postcolonial Studies, 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), pp. 287-95 (p. 288).

<sup>59</sup> Le Bris, 'Pour une « littérature-monde » en français', *Le Monde*, 15 March 2007. 'A centre relegated in the middle of other centres.' Translation my own.

<sup>60</sup> Michel Le Bris, 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), pp. 23-53 (p. 35). 'Straddling multiple cultures.' Translation my own.

<sup>61</sup> Laura Reeck, 'The World and the Mirror in Two Twenty-First-Century Manifestos: 'Pour une "littérature-monde" en français' and 'Qui fait la France ?'', in *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde*, ed. by Alec G. Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, Francophone Postcolonial Studies, 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), pp. 258-73 (pp. 269-70).

present in multiculturalist societies. This model of coexistence integrates his concept of ‘wordliness’ (which refers to the way in which all texts and representations are informed by the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they are written and, also, interpreted).<sup>62</sup> Hence, the first element of humanist reading — that of reception — involves a close reading in which the theorist must aim to put themselves in the author’s shoes in order to ‘locate the text in its time as part of a whole network of relationships whose outlines and influence play an informing role *in the text*’.<sup>63</sup> For Jane Hiddleston, this attentive reading is characterised by ‘an ethical openness to the complexity of cultural difference’ and its integrative nature would, as such, ‘offer resistance to the great reductive and vulgarising us-versus-them thought patterns of our time’.<sup>64</sup> The second, resistance stage in Said’s model focuses on the wider horizon of the context in which a work is interpreted. For Said, the interpretative framework, the societal, institutional, educational or other limitations which impact the reader, must be understood so that, in a humanistic vein, these confinements may be challenged.

Both of these stages are indispensable for an effective analysis not just of the texts but also of the latent power structures informing their creation and consumption. The highly self-reflexive nature of the field of francophone postcolonial studies, whereby it constantly questions issues like its use of labels or the position from which a scholar is analysing a text, is evidence of its engagement in this resistance stage. However, Said’s warning against rushing too quickly from the close reading of reception to the wider horizon of resistance is worth reiterating. This reception stage is vital if scholars hope to undermine othering and homogenising discourses in contemporary France and also to reveal the authors’ agency when their texts represent a form of self-production. Two complementary examples upon which we can draw are Auerbach’s literary analyses in *Mimesis* and Segalen’s approach to writing. For Said, Auerbach’s seemingly ‘infallible interpretive skill for elucidating relationships between books and the world they belonged to’ is the kind of close reading to which all scholars in the humanities should aspire.<sup>65</sup> Said’s assertion that, in order to achieve this, it is necessary to try and live the reality of the author, to be able to see through their eyes, is suggestive of Segalen’s approach to his novels on foreign peoples such as the Polynesians. Segalen’s respectful affirmation of the impossibility of fully knowing or representing ‘un hors soi-même’ is reminiscent of Kristeva’s call for us to respect the individual’s irreducibility. As a result, Segalen’s in-depth studies, so thorough that his novel *Les Immémoriaux* was often classed as an ethnographic text, allow him and his reader to draw closer to people from different cultures without ever essentialising this difference or their identities.<sup>66</sup>

Literary scholars must also maintain this precarious balance between a hopeful, ethical proximity to, and respectful distance from, the cultural difference they encounter within and beyond the novels. Describing this paradox, Said asserts that ‘the intellectual’s provisional home is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions. But only in that precarious exilic realm can one first truly

<sup>62</sup> Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>64</sup> Hiddleston, p. 189; Said (2004). p.50.

<sup>65</sup> Said (2004), p. 87.

<sup>66</sup> Segalen, p. 25 ; Henry Bouillier, *Victor Segalen* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986). p. 127.

grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped and then go forth to try anyway'.<sup>67</sup> Only through serious close-reading paired with perceptive self-reflexivity can scholars hope to do justice to the diversity of the texts being written by the multifarious so-called immigrant authors in France and illuminate the relationship between these works and their environment. The varying degrees of marginalisation which writers originating from former colonies face are merely a symptom of reductive, discriminatory conceptions of foreignness. This means that their works are recognised as French only with great difficulty. It is, therefore, with urgency that postcolonial scholars must turn their attention to these works and, with the non-essentialising, relational and irreducible conception of identity proposed, reveal and subvert the prevailing exclusionary and hierarchical discourses and power structures which impact these authors and their texts.

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<sup>67</sup> Said (2004), p. 144.

- versity Press, 2003), pp. 1-16
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BENJAMIN SHEARS

# The Science of Success: Madame du Châtelet's Scientific Corpus in University of Oxford Collections

This article examines the scientific texts written by Madame du Châtelet, one of the most well-known female scientists of the eighteenth century. It uses the material texts that are available in the University of Oxford collections to craft an intimate portrayal of a woman who managed to attain her intellectual apotheosis in a world dominated by the *Hommes de Lettres*. The article is concerned with the materiality of her texts, rather than their contents, thus exposing a raw look at detail often missed in scholarly practice. In so doing, what follows is a systematic chronology of how du Châtelet's works were received physically. It is this focus on the exchange of physical objects that shows not just du Châtelet's endeavour (in, for example, rivalling the prodigious Voltaire), but her success, too. Additionally, the article argues that du Châtelet constructed a stage from which to publicise her achievement and rigour, mainly through the translation of one of the century's most prolific texts. Ultimately, Madame du Châtelet is shown to be an author and scientist whose works engaged in and shaped the great discourse of epistemology that defined the Enlightened age.

## Fashioning an Image: Introduction

Émilie, Marquise du Châtelet<sup>1</sup> (1709-1749) was a French scholar, and one of the few well-recognised female scientists of the eighteenth century, along with the likes of Laura Bassi and Caroline Herschel. In France, du Châtelet is perhaps the most well-known and successful women scientist of the eighteenth century. As has been duly noted, '[d]e son vivant', du Châtelet enjoyed '[une] réputation scientifique européenne'.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, to assume that she was immediately successful is to underestimate the importance of her own extraordinary commitment. She was detailed and methodical in her approach to scientific endeavour, and this is evident in her texts. Indeed, she was recognised for her excellent contributions to the field in numerous ways, including when the Académie des Sciences de Paris published some of her work.

<sup>1</sup> From hence referred to as 'du Châtelet'.

<sup>2</sup> 'throughout her lifetime'; 'a Europe-wide scientific reputation' (all translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated). *Émilie du Châtelet, 1706-1749 : Une femme de sciences et de lettres à Créteil. Catalogue de l'exposition*, ed. by Mirielle Touzry and Geneviève Artigas-Menant, p. 92 <[http://bibliotheque.u-pec.fr/servlet/com.univ.collaboratif.utils.LectureFichierw?ID\\_FICHIER=1259766018095](http://bibliotheque.u-pec.fr/servlet/com.univ.collaboratif.utils.LectureFichierw?ID_FICHIER=1259766018095)> [accessed 15 March 2019].

However, the focus of this article is not du Châtelet's general approach to scientific conjecture and discourse, but rather what her physical texts – namely the production and reception thereof – can tell us about how successful she was. This essay will examine the *Dissertation sur la nature et la propagation du feu* ('Dissertation on the Nature and Propagation of Fire') and the *Institutions physiques* ('Foundations of Physics'), which are often seen as her crowning achievements in the field of science, as physical objects, rather than from the perspective of their content. By investigating when and where these texts were produced and published, it will be shown how du Châtelet attained notoriety. By analysing the contemporary reception of her texts, the article will characterise how her reputation became solidified as she went on to broaden her scientific pursuits. Other texts by du Châtelet (and held in Oxford collections) will be examined, such as the *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton* and her translation of Newton's *Principia Mathematica*; this will uncover how her reputation grows as she uses translations to augment her international standing during the eighteenth century.

In terms of a theoretical approach to this topic, as far as is possible, the communications circuit that Robert Darnton draws with respect to the book trade will be followed.<sup>3</sup> The key components of the circuit that will be explored are: the publishers, the printers, and (wherever possible) the booksellers. The texts will be viewed in the same way as D.F. McKenzie observes, as objects upon a journey, and not from the point of view of their content.<sup>4</sup> This approach will frame the journey, whether materially or symbolically, in terms of the success or failure of du Châtelet. Unfortunately, because 'we have no best-seller lists or statistics on book "consumption" for the early modern period' in broad terms, it is very difficult to consider the economic implications of du Châtelet's texts.<sup>5</sup> However, The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe Project covers the period between 1769 and 1794 from this angle, helping to situate this writer's texts within the larger network of more well-known French writers in the eighteenth century, such as Voltaire.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there are very detailed reviews of her texts, which show that her texts were well-received at the time they were published.

## **Igniting the Fire: *Dissertation sur la nature et la propagation du feu***

Chronologically, in the main texts under consideration, the *Dissertation sur la nature et la propagation du feu* comes first, initially published in 1739.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the only edition available in the University of Oxford is that of 1744, held in the Weston Library.<sup>8</sup> In 1736, the *Mercure de France* and the *Gazette de France* purportedly used Isaac Newton's work on

<sup>3</sup> Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), pp. 9-26 (p. 12).

<sup>4</sup> D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Robert Darnton, 'Reading, writing, and publishing in eighteenth-century France: A case study in the sociology of literature', *Daedalus*, 100.1 (1971), 214-56 (p. 219).

<sup>6</sup> Simon Burrows and others, 'The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe Project, 1769-1794' <<http://fbtee.uws.edu.au/stn/>> [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>7</sup> Beatriz Wallace and others, 'Du Châtelet (1706-1749)' <<http://projectvox.library.duke.edu/du-chatelet-1706-1749>> [accessed 25 March 2019], section 2.2. Hereafter 'Wallace'.

<sup>8</sup> Émilie du Châtelet, *Dissertation sur la nature et la propagation du feu* (Paris: Prault, 1744). The edition held in the Weston Library has the classmark 'Meerm. 713 (1)', forming part of the Meerman Collection.

fire to devise the following competition question: what is fire? We know that ‘Du Châtelet and Voltaire embarked on this project together’, but they also reached a point when they intensely disagreed with each other’s views.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most fundamental disagreement in this regard was the fact that, whilst Voltaire believed that ‘fire had weight, was subject to gravity, and, as Newton asserted, was “matter”’, du Châtelet did not believe the same.<sup>10</sup> Their disparate opinions on the subject matter likely led to du Châtelet to articulating what she thought to be the correct argument regarding the nature and propagation of fire in the *Dissertation*.

The 1744 edition of du Châtelet’s *Dissertation* in the Weston Library is given the ‘Approbation & Privilege du Roi’, which was the government approval for manuscripts in France during the eighteenth century; though not strictly necessary to publish a text, most well-recognised texts at this time have this approval. Like most of Voltaire’s texts that were published in Paris, du Châtelet’s text was published by Prault. As well as the royal approval, the fact that her publisher was the same as Voltaire’s (indubitably one of the century’s most prolific and successful authors) may show her favourable position in the field. The *Dissertation*’s bibliographic information is as follows:

[6] pages of introductory matter (n.b. [] = unnumbered pages)  
 139 numbered pages, the main *Dissertation*  
 38 numbered pages, Lettre de M. De Mairan  
 37 numbered pages, Réponse par Du Châtelet  
 Title vignette  
 1 full-page image, on p.54  
 19.5cm format – height  
 Octavo (8°)<sup>11</sup>  
 Printed Commentary: Comments summarising argument on each paragraph/ new point  
 Author: published anonymously  
 Bibliography/References: none

This copy of the *Dissertation* is a typically-bound text of the period.<sup>12</sup> The *Dissertation* has full leather binding with a panel design and a red label on the spine, although this is much harder to identify colour-wise, given that the text seems to have been well-handled, and the colour has somewhat faded on the binding; the gold hand-sewn end bands look to be well-worn, too.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Judith P. Zinsser, *La Dame d’Esprit: A Biography of the Marquise Du Châtelet* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 154.

<sup>10</sup> Zinsser, p. 157.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Octavo’ means that the book comprises one or more full sheets on which 16 pages of text are printed; then they are folded three times, leaving eight leaves. Hence, a book printed in octavo represents 1/8 of the size of the original sheet.

<sup>12</sup> ‘History of Binding. 18th Century: Elaboration and Simplicity’ <<https://lib.msu.edu/exhibits/historyofbinding/18thcentury/>> [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>13</sup> As mentioned above, this version of the *Dissertation* belongs to the Meerman book collection in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. Gerard Meerman was a wealthy book collector who died in 1815, and his son, John Meerman, sold his father’s collection at a large sale in The Hague, from which the Bodleian Library purchased around 1500 volumes of different texts in 1824. Du Châtelet’s *Dissertation* was sold for Fl. 1 St. 16, which was the eighteenth-century Dutch currency, ‘Fl.’ for guilder – derived from fl. (Florin), an ancient currency – and ‘St’ for Stuiver. *Catalogue of books purchased for the Bodleian Library at the sale of M. Meerman at the Hague, June 8-July 4, 1824 : with a statement of expenses attending the purchase* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1824), p. 6, under ‘Chastelet’.

In terms of the detail of the physical edition, from the opinion of the librarian (written in 1744, when the text was published), it is clear that, originally, the *Dissertation* was composed in 1738 for the Académie des Sciences; the librarian notes that du Châtelet did not win the prize, but that – rather extraordinarily for the time – the *Dissertation* was nevertheless published in the *Recueils de l'Académie*.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the *Dissertation* is included in the compendium of essays, the *Recueil des Pièces qui ont Remporté le Prix de l'Académie Royale des Sciences en 1738*.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the fact that it was printed by the ‘Royal Printer in Paris’ offers more evidence that her essay had rapidly gained recognition in scholarly scientific circles. Moreover, in the 1739 edition of the *Journal de Trévoux*, the editors allude to the works by both Voltaire and du Châtelet on the nature of fire, suggesting the former is ‘d'une [...] de nos premiers Poëtes’, and the latter is from ‘un [...] jeune Dame d'un haut rang’.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, Voltaire and du Châtelet – as well as sharing a publisher – are referenced together. This portrays du Châtelet as a credible and intelligent woman scientist in eighteenth-century France. In fact, until this point, ‘the Académie had never published a dissertation by a woman.’<sup>17</sup>

In the eighteenth volume, letter CCLXIII of the *Observations sur les écrits modernes*, the pieces by Voltaire and du Châtelet are discussed in further detail by contemporary reviewers. The advertisement for each dissertation notes that both ‘ont paru des meilleures de celles qui ont été envoyées’ to the judges of the competition.<sup>18</sup> It is probable that du Châtelet being named in the *Observations* makes her work well-known to learned readers. Regardless, it is surprising that du Châtelet is explicitly mentioned, given she wanted to maintain anonymity. The *Observations* praises du Châtelet’s text for its ‘érudition physique [...] Que de remarques savantes, que d’observations fines, que d’expériences qui embrassent presque toute la Physique, que de vues, que de principes !’<sup>19</sup> This review was published during the same year that du Châtelet’s *Dissertation* appeared in the *Recueil des Pièces*, which was in 1739. Thus, the quick, congratulatory reviews that du Châtelet received upon the publication of the *Dissertation* reflect the strength of her position as an eighteenth-century French scientist. Furthermore, as Elisabeth Badinter argues, du Châtelet was trying to distance herself from Voltaire’s idea of the nature of fire, and it is this disagreement that ultimately led her to publish her own *Dissertation*. Yet, as Badinter maintains, throughout ‘tout cet été 1737, Émilie regarde Voltaire faire ses expériences et s’acharner à découvrir la nature du feu.’<sup>20</sup> Voltaire provided du Châtelet with the spark of enthusiasm to challenge his conjectures: she writes in a letter to Maupertuis on the 21st June, 1738 that ‘L’ouvrage de M.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace, section 1.3.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Collection of the Pieces that have Won the Royal Academy of Sciences Prize in 1738’; Wallace, section 2.2.

<sup>16</sup> ‘one of our foremost poets’; ‘a lady of high rank’, [Anon.], ‘Nouvelles Littéraires’, *Mémoires pour l’Histoire des Sciences & des beaux Arts* (May 1739), 1109-136 (p. 1135). Repr.: *Journal de Trévoux; ou, Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des sciences et des arts*, vol. 39 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), pp. 282-88 (p. 288) <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k30671r/f280.item>> [accessed 25 March 2019]. The article errors in these citations reflect apparent errors in the original.

<sup>17</sup> Zinsser, p. 169.

<sup>18</sup> ‘appeared among the best of those that were sent in’. [Anon.], ‘Lettre CCLXIII’, *Observations sur les écrits modernes*, 18 (1739), 169-92 (pp. 169-70). Repr.: Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines, *Observations sur les écrits modernes, 1735-1743. Volume III, comprenant les tomes XVII à XXIV* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967), pp. 138-44 (pp. 138-39) <<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015014811486?urlappend=%3Bseq=142>> [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>19</sup> ‘full of spirit, of erudition in physics.... what learned remarks, what fine observations, what experiences that encompass almost all of physics, what views and principles!’ *Ibid.*, p. 170 (repr.: p. 139).

<sup>20</sup> ‘All the summer of 1737, Émilie watches Voltaire perform his experiments and strive to discover the nature of fire.’ Elisabeth Badinter, *Mme du Chatelet, Mme d’Épinay ou l’Ambition féminine au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), p. 304.

de Voltaire, qui était presque fini avant que je n'eusse commencer (sic) le mien, me fit naître des idées et l'envie de courir la même carrière me prit.<sup>21</sup> In fact, she questioned ‘toutes ses idées dans [s]on ouvrage’, and so projected her own voice in the battle for the prize, which, ironically, neither of them would win.<sup>22</sup>

## Foundations of Fame: *Institutions de physique*

However, du Châtelet’s failure to win the Académie prize for her *Dissertation* pushed her to test further the boundaries of scientific discourse. Often considered her ‘Magnum Opus on Natural Philosophy’, the *Institutions de physique / Institutions physiques* was a project for du Châtelet from even the early months of 1736, when she is said to have first considered writing about Newtonian physics, in all likelihood due to Voltaire’s 1738 publication of the *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton* (in which du Châtelet was named as co-author).<sup>23</sup> Their difference of opinion and consequent friendly rivalry propelled both Voltaire and du Châtelet to produce scientific texts; these were derived from long-standing scientific principles upon which the world was based. The first edition of the *Institutions* text was published in 1740 by Prault in Paris, the same publisher as the *Dissertation*. Although the royal approbation was conferred on the text on September 18th, 1738, du Châtelet did not have it published until 1740, owing to the various changes and modifications she made to the text before publication. At the University of Oxford, both the Taylor Institution Library and Christ Church College Library have an edition of the text. The former has the first edition, published in 1740, and the latter has the second edition, published in 1742.<sup>24</sup> The bibliographic information for the first edition of 1740 is as follows:

- [6] pages of introductory matter (n.b. [] = unnumbered pages)
- 450 numbered pages
- [28] pages, end papers
- [12] unnumbered full-page plates (11 folded) - illustrations
- Title vignette
- 20cm format – height
- Octavo (8°)
- Printed Commentary: Comments summarising argument on each paragraph/ new point
- Author: published anonymously
- Bibliography/References: included
- Catalogue: Bookseller’s catalogue, pp. 473-476
- Errata: last [2] pages of book (pp. 477-478). Errata was only used in cases where errors were detected too late to be corrected in the normal way, but before the finished book was distributed.

<sup>21</sup> ‘The work of Mr. Voltaire, which was almost finished before I had started my own, sparked ideas within me and I was seized by the desire to embark upon the same profession.’ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>22</sup> ‘all his ideas in my work’. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>23</sup> Karen Detlefsen, ‘Émilie du Châtelet’ (2014), in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emilie-du-chatelet/#NewAtt>> [accessed 17 March 2017]; Voltaire, *Elémens de la Philosophie de Neuton* (London: [n. pub], 1738) <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8622062t>> [accessed 3 April 2019].

<sup>24</sup> The first edition, held in the Taylor Institution (classmark ZAH.III.B.65), is [Émilie du Châtelet], *Institutions de physique* (Paris: Prault, 1740). The second edition, held in Christ Church College Library (classmark ZO.7.12) is Émilie du Châtelet, *Institutions physiques* (Amsterdam: Compagnie d’Amsterdam, 1742).

The bibliographic information for the second edition of 1742 is as follows:

- [8] pages of introductory matter (nb. [] = unnumbered pages)
- 542 numbered pages
- [36] pages, end papers
- [11] leaves of plates at end (some folded) - illustrations
- Title vignette, frontispiece of du Châtelet (full page)
- 20cm format – height
- Octavo (8°)
- Printed Commentary: Comments summarising argument on each paragraph/ new point
- Author: ‘Madame la Marquise du Chastellet’
- Bibliography/References: ‘Tables des Matières principales contenues dans ce volume’
- Includes Index
- Errata: last [2] pages of book.

Besides the fact that the 1740 edition is titled *Institutions de Physique*, and the 1742 edition is titled *Institutions physiques*, the first difference to note is that the 1740 edition is published anonymously, whereas the 1742 edition names ‘Madame la Marquise du Chastellet’ on the title-page. The text is addressed to ‘Mr. son Fils’; there is also a sub-title: ‘Nouvelle édition, corrigée & augmentée, considérablement par l’Auteur’.<sup>25</sup> This tells that us that, within two years, du Châtelet might have had a change of heart about her anonymity in her published works. Perhaps the success she enjoyed with the *Dissertation* precipitated a new-found pride in her work, which she wanted to make known. Du Châtelet may have wanted to claim the work, which received widespread recognition as a fundamental discussion of the foundations of the physical world, and solidified her growing reputation. The other important difference between these two texts is that the second edition of 1742 was printed in Amsterdam, whereas the first edition was printed in Paris, by the same publisher as the *Dissertation*, Prault.<sup>26</sup>

The 1742 edition was printed ‘À Amsterdam Aux dépens de la compagnie’ (in Amsterdam at the expense of the Compagnie d’Amsterdam). In the eighteenth century, Amsterdam was a place for the publication of books which might have scandalised France; the same is true of London. Both countries had numerous French publishers, many of them Huguenots. Indeed, the text was also printed in London in 1741.<sup>27</sup> The Taylor Institution edition is markedly less damaged than the one held in Christ Church Library. The black-and-white illustrations are clear and well-preserved. There is precise detail of geometrical analysis through diagrams, and the spine is decorated with gold tooling. Although clearly not a Cambridge panel design (due to its relative lack of detail and ornateness on the spine, as well as the dull colour), it is a typical eighteenth-century design for an original text.

This 1742 edition was acquired by Christ Church, Oxford in 1904 from Charles Lloyd (1784-1829), whose signature can be found on the inside of the front cover: ‘C. L Lloyd’.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> ‘addressed to Mr, her son’; ‘New edition, corrected and considerably expanded by the author’.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Dominique Mellot and Élisabeth Queval, *Répertoire d'imprimeurs/libraires (vers 1500-vers 1810)* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2004), p. 457.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace, section 2.2.

<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the same edition can be found at the British Library, under the shelf mark ‘General Reference Collection DRT Digital Store 8704.bbb.30’: see <<http://explore.bl.uk/BLVU1:LSCOP-ALL:BLL01017014338>> [accessed 17 March 2017].

There is a title-page in red and black, with a full-page vignette of the typical portrait of du Châtelet, which is the famous depiction of the author at 44 years old. The binding of the text is very loose, and it looks to have been bound in eighteenth-century wrappers. The illustrations inside the text sometimes cover full pages, and some of them are folded; they mostly depict mathematical/geometrical analysis and diagrams, which correspond to a particular chapter or paragraph of the text. The book itself is falling apart, and looks to have been damaged heavily by water. This may point to either its frequent usage, or to a careless owner.

In terms of the dissemination of the *Institutions*, the large variety of translations that were quickly produced indicate the text's influence. More specifically, it is clear that both German and Italian translations of the *Institutions* were published in 1743; the former in Halle/Leipzig, and the latter in Venice.<sup>29</sup> Of particular significance to the 1742 edition is that it includes du Châtelet's exchange with Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan, along with his 1728 dissertation on the proper measure of the dead force of bodies, translated into Italian. The inclusion of this exchange illustrates the contemporary reception of du Châtelet's text in the world of the Republic of Letters.

## In the Limelight: Contemporary Reactions to the *Institutions*

The *Journal des Savants* was the major French government publication specialising in "Philosophy, Science, and the Arts".<sup>30</sup> It was one of the earliest and most influential academic journals published in early-modern Europe – first appearing in 1665, and still published today.<sup>31</sup> The remarkable fact that du Châtelet had sent copies of the *Institutions* to the 'most important of Europe's Republic of Letters' and that the *Institutions* appeared in the *Journal* 'placed the author among the *savants* by definition'.<sup>32</sup> The short pamphlet by de Mairan that also appeared as a review separately was his first public act as the newly-elected perpetual secretary of the Académie royale des sciences.<sup>33</sup> This pamphlet addressed to du Châtelet provided validation of her scientific mind, and demonstrated that a woman could produce leading research in eighteenth-century scholarly circles.

Unfortunately, the review by de Mairan was not positive, instead criticising the foundations upon which du Châtelet's *Institutions* were based: 'living forces'. He objected to du Châtelet's disagreement with Newtonian principles.<sup>34</sup> The main question that started the debate between de Mairan and du Châtelet was the following: 'Was the force of moving bodies equal to the mass times the velocity squared, as Leibniz claimed, or to the mass times the simple velocity'? Du Châtelet held the former view, and de Mairan held the latter, more traditional, view.<sup>35</sup> In his critique, de Mairan drew upon gender stereotypes to emphasise du Châtelet's femininity: he abhorred her constant 'changement' and inability to embark

<sup>29</sup> Wallace, section 2.2.

<sup>30</sup> Zinsser, p. 167.

<sup>31</sup> Wallace, section 2.5.

<sup>32</sup> Zinsser, p. 167

<sup>33</sup> Zinsser, p. 191.

<sup>34</sup> Zinsser, p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Walters, 'Du Châtelet-Lomont, Gabrille-Émilie (1706-1749)', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Descartes to gender and science*, ed. by Edward Craig (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1998), pp. 131-33 (p. 132).

upon a fixed and direct course.<sup>36</sup> However, this criticism was ostensibly tempered by his final remarks in the letter: ‘Je me flate, madame, que vous regarderez toutes ces réflexions comme une preuve du cas que je fais de vos lumières, & de ce bon esprit qui ne sçauoit vous permettre de résister au vrai, quand il se présentera à vous sans nuage.’<sup>37</sup>

Despite this denigration of du Châtelet’s work, de Mairan’s review does not match the general reception of the text. It is possible that de Mairan, after his newly acquired role, wanted to use his critique of du Châtelet merely to establish his importance to the Republic of Letters. For example, although the December 1740 review of the *Institutions* starts by outlining that, historically, ‘L’esprit philosophique [...] se trouve plus communément parmi les hommes que les femmes’, the review praises du Châtelet’s scholarly practice in the *Institutions*.<sup>38</sup> More specifically, that ‘[I]es sciences lui [à du Châtelet] auront la double obligation de contribuer à leur avancement par ses lumières & par son exemple’ clearly glorifies the author of the *Institutions*, citing her as a valuable asset to the eighteenth-century French academic community.<sup>39</sup>

There was renewed praise of the *Institutions* in the *Journal de Trévoux*, an influential publication printed by the Jesuits on a monthly basis in France (1701–1782). The journal served to publish critical reviews of scholarship.<sup>40</sup> In the May review, the stylistic devices employed in the *Institutions* are praised, particularly ‘[I]e ton de l’instruction familière, aisée, intelligible & cependant noble & pleine de bienséance’, and the reviewer embraces that ‘[I]’auteur des Institutions nouvelles, pense fort modérément sur Descartes, que d’autres veulent trop rabaisser’, giving more weight to Cartesian observation.<sup>41</sup> However, the review also invites reader opinion and discrimination on the question of ‘les forces vives’, the subject of the dispute between du Châtelet and de Mairan: ‘C’est au Public de décider. En un mot, ces nouvelles institutions de physique, nous paroissent un bon Recueil de physique moderne, fait, selon les intentions de l’Auteur, pour un jeune Seigneur, qui doit en sçavoir jusqu’à un certain point.’<sup>42</sup>

Whilst the previous month’s review does not mention du Châtelet by name, the June issue does, even though the London edition of the *Institutions* of the same year (1741) was

<sup>36</sup> ‘changing mind’. Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan, *Lettre de M. de Mairan [...] à Madame \*\*\* [la marquise du Châtelet] sur la question des forces vives, en réponse aux objections qu’elle lui a fait sur ce sujet dans ses ‘Institutions de physique’* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1741) <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k73081z>> [accessed 25 March 2019], p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> ‘I flatter myself, Madame, that you will regard all of these reflections as a proof that I attach great importance to your knowledge & your good mind, which would not know how to permit you to resist the truth when presented to you without clouds.’ Ibid., p. 37; see also Zinsser, p. 192.

<sup>38</sup> The philosophical spirit is more commonly found among men than women’. [Anon.], ‘Institutions de Physique’, *Journal des Scavans* (1740), 737–54 (p. 737). <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56589d/f715.item>> [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>39</sup> ‘the sciences have a two-fold duty (to Madame du Châtelet), at once to contribute to their advancement through her wisdom, and to lead by her example’. Ibid., p. 737 [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>40</sup> Wallace, section 2.5.

<sup>41</sup> ‘The tone is one of familiar instruction, at once graceful, understandable, yet most noble and seemly”; ‘the author of the new Foundations, thinks most sensibly on Descartes, whom many seek to belittle excessively’. [Anon.], ‘Institutions de Physique’, *Mémoires pour l’Histoire des Sciences & des beaux Arts* (May 1741), 894–927 (pp. 895, 897). Repr.: *Journal de Trévoux; ou, Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des sciences et des arts*, vol. 41 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), pp. 228–36 (pp. 228, 229) <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k30673f/f226.item>> [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>42</sup> ‘It’s up to the public to decide. In a word, these new Foundations, seem to us to be a good collection of modern physics; one made, according to the author’s intentions, for a young master who is expected to know a certain amount about it.’ Ibid., p. 927 (repr.: p. 236).

still published anonymously. The reviewer describes du Châtelet as displaying ‘[I]a vivacité & la finesse du style’, which led readers to the conclusion that the text was written by ‘une Dame fort versée dans ces matières & pleine d'esprit; c'est-à-dire, Madame la Marquise du Ch...’.<sup>43</sup> It is not the abundant praise and recognition du Châtelet receives in this issue that points to her success as much as it is her work being described as ‘sçavant’.<sup>44</sup> As well as an indication of her intelligence, the term simultaneously assimilates her with the Savants of the Republic of Letters in eighteenth-century France and alludes to the *Journal des Savants*, which (as previously shown) had already published a glowing review of her *Institutions*. Thus, the author of this review in the *Journal de Trévoux* drew readers’ attentions to the achievements of this young female scientist. During 1741, the *Journal des Savants* also published their consecutive review, which was subsequently published in Amsterdam.<sup>45</sup> The international reach of du Châtelet’s *Institutions* mirrors the success she achieved in pursuing such great intellectual heights.

## Legacy Left Through Translation: du Châtelet's *Principes mathématiques*

In 1738, Voltaire had credited du Châtelet as co-author of the *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*, the frontispiece of which had a very flattering image of du Châtelet, portraying what has been described as Voltaire’s “Minerva of France”<sup>46</sup> Newton’s *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* was, and still is, a notoriously difficult text to interpret and translate.<sup>47</sup> Hence, du Châtelet’s translation of Newton’s text conveys her commitment to the subject. Christ Church Library has the two volumes of du Châtelet’s translation in its Special Collections holdings.<sup>48</sup> The bibliographic information for this text (both volumes) is as follows:

Title vignette (half-page) on title-page and on introductory page, featuring geometrical objects  
 Illustrated – folds out to full page  
 Quarto (4°)  
 Printed Commentary: Comments summarising argument on each paragraph/ new point  
 Author: ‘Par feu Madame la Marquise Du Chastellet’  
 Bibliography/References: ‘Table alphabétique des matières contenues dans les principes mathématiques de la Philosophie naturelle’; Préface historique by Voltaire, p. [v]-xiii

Du Châtelet died on 10th December 1749, due to complications in childbirth; therefore, she never saw the published editions of her *Principes mathématiques*. There was a 1756

<sup>43</sup> ‘the vivacity and finesse of the style’; ‘that it belonged to a young woman, well-versed in these matters, and spirited’; ‘that is to say, Madame the Marquise du Ch...’ [Anon.], ‘Dissertation sur l’Estimation et la Mesure des Forces Motrices des Corps. Par M. de Mairan ...’, *Mémoires pour l’Histoire des Sciences & des beaux Arts* (June 1741), 1073-1101 (pp. 1099-100). Repr.: *Journal de Trévoux; ou, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des sciences et des arts*, vol. 41 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), pp. 272-79 (p. 279) <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k30673f/f272.item>> [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>44</sup> ‘scholarly’. Ibid., p. 1099 (repr: p. 279) [accessed 25 March 2019].

<sup>45</sup> Wallace, section 2.5.

<sup>46</sup> Voltaire (1738), p. 3; Zinsser, p.164.

<sup>47</sup> Zinsser, p. 242.

<sup>48</sup> Isaac Newton, *Principes mathématiques de la philosophie naturelle*, trans. by Émilie du Châtelet (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, 1759), 2 vols. In Christ Church Library, these texts have the classmarks ZO.5.9a (vol. 1) and ZO.5.9b (vol. 2).

edition of the text that was incomplete, published by Desaint & Saillant.<sup>49</sup> The texts in Christ Church Library, however, were published in 1759, and they include the royal approbation and privilege; they were published by Desaint & Saillant in 1759, and the bookseller was Lambert.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the ‘Exposition Abégée du Système du Monde, et Explication des Principaux phénomènes Astronomiques Tirée des principes de Mr Newton’ is also present in this 1759 edition.<sup>51</sup> From the second volume, it is shown that the text came into Christ Church, Oxford in 1903, as there is a visible bookplate before the introductory matter in the text. This bookplate is similar to the one below and displays the college crest of Christ Church. In terms of other physical details, the binding of both volumes is noted as being vellum (from a calf), the most common kind of leather binding, even today. The text has title ornaments, and comprises half titles, too. The first volume of the text is a translation of Newton’s original *Principia*, and includes a review by Alexis Clairault; the second volume is a commentary on Newton’s principles, and their relationship to the workings of the world.

There is, however, not a single image of du Châtelet in the volumes. Yet, there is detail of the printer and the bookseller, as previously mentioned. As well as this, in the draft version of the manuscript, held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the text has later additions, including: writing over paragraphs; cutting phrases; crosses in the margin; abbreviations; lack of finesse, particularly with regards to the drawing of Halley’s comet, which she did not have enough time to finish.<sup>52</sup> Du Châtelet intended the *Principes mathématiques* to be finished and published soon after the royal privilege was given, on the 7th March, 1746, but this was not to be. Due to complications with printing, it would only be after her death that her work would be recognised more publicly, for what d’Argenson called its elegant, neat and strong translation.<sup>53</sup> As Badinter and Muzerelle have shown, ‘nous lui devons, aujourd’hui encore, la seule traduction française complète des *Principia* de Newton, et cette traduction est toujours valable en regard des progrès accomplis depuis par l’historiographie scientifique’.<sup>54</sup> As a scientist, she changed the landscape of scientific enquiry for ever, showing that women could understand and interpret (just as well as men) the most challenging conceptual ideas present in the eighteenth century.

## Conclusion

This essay has taken some major works of Madame la Marquise du Châtelet and explored their significance as objects in terms of her scientific reputation in the eighteenth century. The essay first examined the *Dissertation sur la nature et la propagation du feu*; using the 1744 edition, held in the Weston Library, Oxford, the detail of the text was shown, and it was clear how du Châtelet established herself as a valuable member of the

<sup>49</sup> Wallace, section 2.3.

<sup>50</sup> Mellot and Queval, *Répertoire d’imprimeurs/libraires (vers 1500-vers 1810)*; Lambert is listed as being born ‘1722?; died 31 July 1787’, p. 336.

<sup>51</sup> Abridged exposition of the system of the world, and explanation of the principal astronomic phenomena, drawn from the principles of Mr. Newton’, Ibid [accessed 17 March 2017].

<sup>52</sup> The text can be found on shelf mark Ffr.12266; Zinsser, p. 243.

<sup>53</sup> Zinsser, p. 243.

<sup>54</sup> ‘We owe to her what is still, even today, the only complete French translation of Newton’s *Principia*, and this translation is still useful in light of the progress since made by scientific historiography.’ Elisabeth Badinter and Danielle Muzerelle, *Madame Du Châtelet: La femme des Lumières* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2006), p. 92.

scientific community through her association with Voltaire. Although neither Voltaire nor du Châtelet won the prize for which both dissertations were submitted, the latter received wide praise for her submission. The essay then moved to discuss her *Institutions de physique / Institutions physiques*, analysing the 1740 edition, held in the Taylor Institution Library, and the 1742 edition, held in Christ Church College Library. The contemporary reviews of this text highlighted du Châtelet's extraordinary success in scientific research, simultaneously proving that a female author could have as much — if not more — credibility as her male counterparts. Du Châtelet's final contribution to scholarship was her translation of Newton's magnum opus, the *Principia Mathematica*. Her reputation grew along with her confidence, tackling one of the most challenging discourses on scientific method ever written. Her translation was brave and unique: she still stands as the only author to have translated the entire *Principia Mathematica* into French. In summary, the trajectory of du Châtelet's academic career began simply by answering a question posed by the Mercure de France and the *Gazette de France*; it ended by leaving an indelible mark upon scientific endeavour. Thus, du Châtelet died as an emblem of unprecedented progress in eighteenth-century France, and she worked hard to prove her worth amongst the other – mostly male – literary élites.

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COLINE BLAIZEAU

## Battered and Bruised: A Translation of the 'Fish-Knights' Episode from *Perceforest*

This paper offers a translation (from Old French to modern English) of an excerpt from the late-medieval romance *Perceforest*, in which the protagonist, Béthidès, finds himself on an island populated by what appear to be four-legged, chivalric fish. While this particular episode has (perhaps understandably) elicited a significant degree of scholarly interest, it is yet to receive an unabridged translation. The excerpt in question encompasses the entirety of the 'fish-knights' episode, from the protagonist's arrival to the island to the moment of his escape. The translation is preceded by a brief discussion offering some context both for the chosen passage and the text as a whole, as well as providing some insight into the translator's motivations and commenting on how issues encountered during the translating process were resolved.

Still relatively unknown despite its outstanding potential, the *Roman de Perceforest* is a late-medieval text in French exploiting the concept of a pre-Arthurian time as it recounts the adventures of the heroic knights who founded civilisation, chivalry, and monotheistic faith on the British islands, before they fathered a long line of descendants resulting in the births of such iconic figures as Tristan, Merlin, and Arthur himself. Perhaps debilitated by its own monumental size in the process of transmission, *Perceforest* only survives in four known manuscripts: A (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 345-348), B (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 106-109), C (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal 3483-3494), and D (London, British Library, Royal 15 E V, 19 E III, and 19 E II), of which only C is complete with all six parts of the whole work. Dating back to the second half of the fifteenth century, the texts contained in those manuscripts are considered to be the amended versions of an earlier narrative which was likely composed in Hainaut between 1330 and 1350 and is now lost.<sup>1</sup>

Eclectic and ambitious by nature, *Perceforest* is composed of several storylines; this gives its author the opportunity to try his hand at a great variety of genres and tones, alternating prose with verse as the text switches from lyrical lays to comical, *fabliau*-like episodes, epic battle scenes, or wonderful quests of supernatural essence. The chosen extract below relates the adventures of Béthidès, son of king Perceforest, after he is abducted by a flock of devilish spirits and released by Zephyr the imp on what appears to be a desert island. Béthidès, also known as the White Knight, is left there to fend for himself and soon meets the inhabitants

<sup>1</sup> *Le Roman de Perceforest, Première partie*, ed. by Jane Taylor (Geneva: Droz, 1979), pp. 26-9; *Le Roman de Perceforest, Quatrième partie, vol. I*, ed. by Gilles Roussineau (Geneva: Droz, 1987), pp. ix-xiv.

of this not-so-desert island, a people of fish-knights and their king, with whom he socialises in the most chivalrous way possible – gaining their respect in battle. This allows the author to expand on the meaning of chivalry, as he gives in to a slight touch of didacticism while also indulging in the exploration of a theme which he particularly favours: the marvellous.<sup>2</sup>

With the recent completion of Gilles Roussineau's edition of the *Roman de Perceforest* (2015) and the rapid growth of *Perceforest*-focused studies, it seems both timely and appropriate to give a broader audience access to the riches of such a literary masterpiece. A translation into Modern English is already available in Nigel Bryant's excellent book, *Perceforest: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain*, but it was abridged.<sup>3</sup> If the choice made by Bryant to translate some passages and summarise the rest is perfectly justified by his aim to offer an overview of a text which is otherwise 5500 pages long, it also means that his work is severely limited in how much of the original writing it actually reflects. His translation of the fish-knights episode, for example, alternates translated sentences with paraphrases, failing to provide an accurate rendition of the text's continuity and style. The purpose of the present translation, on the contrary, is to convey a more authentic 'flavour' by preserving its linguistic subtleties, rhythm and logic, even when they seem flawed. In doing so, I hope to present the reader with a more detailed approach to the text which should suitably complement the general perspective adopted by Bryant in his own translation.

*Perceforest*'s overwhelming tendency to repeat itself illustrates that point well: where Bryant tends to erase repetitions in the interest of brevity, I have endeavoured to maintain as many of them as possible, except where they did not contribute to any stylistic and / or narrative effect. What could at first be perceived as a clumsy habit is arguably one of the literary tools most skilfully used by the author, as Noémie Chardonnens's work admirably demonstrates.<sup>4</sup> In this particular excerpt, the constant reference to verbs of sight may appear monotonous, especially the verb 'to see' which occurs no less than 37 times. Such is the case in the following sentence, for instance: 'As he was cutting through he saw four fish come onto him, as tall as hunting dogs.' It seems almost natural to remove 'he saw' and write instead: 'As he was cutting through four fish came onto him, as tall as hunting dogs.' Yet, here, I have chosen to keep it, and again every time it made sense to do so throughout the passage, simply because *Perceforest* is a text which plays with points of views and the subjectivity of characters to a meaningful extent. The fact that the narrative voice insists on the scene being perceived through the eyes of its protagonist, the White Knight, is an element I wanted to save despite its consequential ponderousness. It is actually doubly important, since verbs of sight hold particular significance in episodes involving the marvellous such as this one, as Christine Ferlampin-Acher contends in her study of late medieval romances, where she explains that marvels are rarely presented objectively and thus always retain some level of ambiguity.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The original Middle French version of this episode, on which this translation is based, is located in the third Book of *Perceforest*, and is edited in *Le Roman de Perceforest, Troisième partie*, vol. 2, ed. by Gilles Roussineau (Geneva: Droz, 1991), pp. 273-84. For an in-depth analysis of this particular episode, see: Cécile Le Cornec-Rochelois, 'Des poissons mythiques à l'ichtus divin dans *Perceforest*', in 'Perceforest': Un roman arthurien et sa réception, ed. by Christine Ferlampin-Acher (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012), pp. 133-48, and Karl Steel and Peggy McCracken, 'The Animal Turn: Into the Sea with the Fish-Knights of *Perceforest*', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 1.2 (2011), 88-100.

<sup>3</sup> Nigel Bryant, '*Perceforest*: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain' (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), pp. 362-65.

<sup>4</sup> Noémie Chardonnens, *L'autre du même : emprunts et répétitions dans le Roman de Perceforest* (Geneva: Droz, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Christine Ferlampin-Acher, *Merveilles et topique merveilleuse dans les romans médiévaux* (Paris: Champion, 2003), p. 122.

This is not to say that all manner of idiosyncrasies were kept in the present translation, especially when it was deemed they would excessively disrupt the reader. Some sentences were split that would otherwise go on to lengths that hinder the text's legibility. Connecting words such as *et*, *adont*, and *mais* were cut out when they did not bring sufficient meaning or style to the sentence. Tenses were harmonised. Personal pronouns that did not refer to a subject clearly enough were replaced by the actual noun, and modern principles of punctuation and capitalisation were adopted. All changes were nonetheless made with a mind to impact as little as possible on the original wording. More often than not, the passage from one language to another necessarily implies losing some of the source's subtleties. Sometimes, however, the exercise of translation allows the text to reveal a new aspect of itself. Here, the fact that the English language can translate with two words – 'he' and 'it' – what French expresses with one – 'il' – allows for the introduction of an interesting nuance. So I chose to designate fish-knights with the neutral pronoun 'it' at first, before switching to 'he' in a second time in order to underline the gradual humanisation of the fish-people. Given that the main theme of this episode is the parallel between the fish-knights and the White Knight, it seems interesting that this should find an echo in grammar.

## Translation

The true story of old tells that, when the spirit named Zephyr parted from the White Knight – as you have heard previously – the unfortunate knight remained there weary and sore until the sun had risen and he had collected himself to some degree. Then he stood up and looked around searching for a city, town, castle or dwelling that he could walk to. It was in vain though, as he did not see any abode or building. Indeed, he climbed up to the highest spot that he could make out and did not discern any town or castle. There was not a trace of civilisation. So, he came down and walked towards the sea. It was almost winter. As soon as the knight reached the shore, he saw marvellous fish jumping out of the water onto the dry land. Among them was a fish whose head was as that of an ox with one long horn, and it was covered in hair. It had four feet, and four legs which were no more than two feet high; yet it had a body as large as an ox's, as well as a tail. There were several fish resembling horned sheep which were also covered in hair but for their fish-like tails. Other fish resembled stags, and there were many in the shape of bears, yet they only had short legs. All these fish came out of the sea and, in the White Knight's presence, went on to eat grass, roots and tree leaves, each according to their nature. Once they were satiated, they thrust themselves back into the sea to the young knight's great astonishment. When they had thus returned to the sea, he started searching along the shore for a living soul. It was all for nothing though, as he did not find any man, woman, or beast, whether wild or tamed.

When the young knight saw that he was alone and that there was nothing to eat but roots, grass, and tree leaves as it was not the season for fruit, he became very worried, and not without cause, as he felt extremely hungry. Still, he fasted until the next day, when he became so assailed by hunger that he no longer knew what to do or say. Had he had a raw leg of venison, he thought, he would eat it to his heart's content. At that point he saw a great many fish coming out of the sea, just as he had done the day before, some so terrifying to look upon that he was afraid of them. However, hunger gripped him so that he was forced to draw his sword and pounce on the fish, putting several of them to death. As he was cutting through, he saw four fish come onto him,

as tall as hunting dogs although they only had two feet. On their wide and sturdy torsos sat helmets like heads, each topped with a nine-foot-long, pointed horn, similar to a sword. On their backs, a sort of shield covered their whole spine from their heads to their fish-like tails. When the White Knight saw that these four fish were coming at him as boldly and fast as their way allowed, he was filled with wonder. When they got closer, one of them stood on its legs and gave the knight such a blow with its horn that he lost his balance. The knight marvelled at how the fish could have given him such a blow. Then he raised his sword and went to strike the fish on its head. He barely did it any harm though, as the fish stooped down causing the sword to hit the thick of its back shield, which was so hard that the sword could do it no damage. The fish lifted its head up slightly and struck the knight with its sword in such a way that it would have cut through half of the shield had the sword been sharp. Still the knight was so overwhelmed that he had to bend a knee. Realising he would have to apply himself, he held his shield tight and gave such a blow of his sword on the fish's head that the fish fell down. Then he struck again and, in another blow, cut the fish's feet off. No sooner had he struck this blow than one of the other three fish came closer to meet him in combat and brought its sword down onto the top of his helmet, stunning the knight greatly. However, the fish was unfortunate enough that its sword broke off where it joined to its head. When the fish felt that its sword was broken it retreated to the sea, whilst the knight seized his shield again. The third fish was soon upon him, attacking him vigorously and striking his shield with a blow from its sword. The knight struck the fish on its head with his sword, splitting it over three inches before the fish dropped onto the sand.

When the fourth fish saw its companions dealt with in such a manner, it hit the knight off guard in a blow that would have sliced the knight's thigh had it not been for his hauberk. The knight was so overwhelmed that he had to put a hand on the ground. He stood back up as fast as he could, and dealt a furious side-blows to the fish with such strength that its head fell to the ground. Once he was rid of those four fish, he looked around and saw no living fish remained at all. Hunger started tormenting him again, so he used his sword to lift the shield from the fish's back and found that it was whiter than snow underneath. He sliced a piece off along its spine, ate some, and found it so delicate and appetising that he thought he had never eaten such good meat. Once he had eaten from the fish as much as he cared to, he took enough flesh to sustain him for three days and put it on the fish's shield, which he placed on a rock where a clear fountain sprang. That done, he sat down worried and wondered what would become of him, given that no one lived on the island. Indeed, no one would settle there for fear of the fish that the White Knight had killed, for they, or others like them, were always around.

The valiant knight thought hard about ways to escape the island, and he thought for a long time about the fish that had attacked him so boldly, whose nature was so noble that they had not deigned to assail him all at the same time. He ended up spending both day and night there, until the sun rose the next day. At that moment, he saw the fish coming out of the sea in the distance, as they had done the day before. Among them, he discerned a great many fish looking similar to the ones which had attacked him and which he had slain. Now you must know that they were coming in such orderly ranks that they looked like a column of soldiers heading towards the fountain where the knight stood. The knight feared that they might attack all at once, and therefore equipped himself with his sword and shield, and turned his back against the rock so

they would not attack him from behind. Leaning against the rock, the knight looked around and saw that a battalion of fish was parting from the column whilst the others stopped advancing. The battalion ran towards the knight and charged at him, hitting his shield violently with their swords. Blocking their assaults with his shield, the knight swung his sword left and right so powerfully that he killed plenty of them in a short amount of time. He slew so many that he found himself surrounded by bodies, to the point that the fish which were still alive could no longer reach him. When the fish which had previously stayed behind saw that their fighters could not reach the knight, another battalion parted from the column in tight rows. Soon, those which had fought at length drew back while the fresh and newly-arrived fish started to drag away their dead companions with their teeth in order to ease their way to the knight. When the White Knight saw that these fish had the sense to pull away their dead with their teeth in order to reach him, he hit them with his sword while they were busy dragging, and hit them on the very uncovered spot where he thought it would hurt them most. Doing so he put many to death. They did not mind as they aspired only to kill the knight, but when they realised that dragging the dead away was greatly detrimental to their goal, they gave ground and stood motionless all round him. However, they were unable to stay out of the water for more than two hours. When this battalion felt the need to return to the sea, another one appeared. Thus, one battalion after another came and attacked the knight, who was so hard pressed that he did not dare leave his ground. As soon as he saw the ways of those fish-knights, who pressed him so hard that he dared not leave his position, for he could see that there were many and that some were so strong that they would kill him if they could breach his defence, however good it was, indeed you can understand that he became very worried and feared he should die there. In the end, the fish kept the knight so well pinned down that he could not leave his ground for three days. In the early morning of the fourth day, the valiant knight sat on a boulder, his back still against the rock, wondering what could be done as he saw the fish all around, bold and determined to harm him if they could get a hold of him. The knight felt himself dying of thirst. He hesitated over whether he should expose himself to the fish by going to the fountain for a drink. However, his thirst was too strong and he chose to go quench it, searching for a side where the fish looked the weakest. Once he had found the way he would escape, he grabbed his shield and drew his sword, then jumped swiftly over the dead and pushed through the fish where they had less power, striking left and right and slaying a great many. Even so, he received over a hundred blows before he could get through and was fortunate not to be attacked from behind. He passed beyond them and ran towards the fountain. The fish followed him immediately. They could not go as fast as the knight though, because their legs were short and their feet were like those of a swan.

When the fish saw that the knight was making his way to the fountain, they felt great grief. Before the knight had drunk his fill, the quickest fish had caught up with him and twenty of them leapt into the fountain, splashing about and blowing water out of their nostrils in spurts taller than men. When the knight saw this, he stood up swiftly and found himself already surrounded by fish coming closer to hit him. So he raised his sword and struck them, and they him, with such mighty blows that it often seemed as if they would drive him to the ground. As he himself later related, they would have killed him had he not repeatedly thrust his blade at them, as they did not know how to parry that move. Thus, the knight soon found himself enclosed by dead fish, but it had taken such a toll on him that he could scarcely make another movement. When he saw

himself surrounded, he sat on a fish, tired and tremendously battered. He stayed there and rested until the next day when he looked at the sea and saw coming a countless number of those fish which are called sea-knights. They were even taller and stronger than those he had seen thus far. Then he knew in his heart that he was lost beyond doubt, for they were extraordinarily big. Once the sea-knights had exited the water, they arranged themselves into tidy rows, as soldiers would have done, and headed towards their companions in an orderly fashion. When they were within bowshot of the knight, the king of the sea-knights called a halt and walked alone towards the fish who had been besieging the White Knight. He uttered a marvellous cry. All the fish who were there immediately lifted siege and returned to the sea. The king went out to meet the White Knight and uttered a new cry.

The White Knight gazed at the fish with astonishment, as he was taller and bigger than any other and wore on his helmet a skilfully-made crown which instantly made him think that he was the king of the fish. He saw in his cries and behaviour a request to duel. Once he had heard it all, he came closer to the king and indicated that he wished to drink before the fight. The fish king had a noble heart and lowered his head to show that he was content, before sitting on his tail. The White Knight drank at the fountain. When he was as refreshed as he wished to be, he came back to the fish king, grabbed his shield, and drew his sword. All the other fish sat on their tails in the back. The king stood on his feet and held before him a long stake made of bone whiter than ivory which had rested on his back, and placed it as a unicorn's. The sword was six feet long and stood straight on top of his helmet. When the knight saw the king thus armed, he feared his stake greatly. Seeing him come onto him vigorously, he protected himself with his shield. The king hit him with such strength that he pierced through it as well as his hauberk, and the knight was lucky this time around that it did not pierce his flesh. With that, the king pulled out his stake faster than any knight in the whole of Great Britain would, and hit again with such power that his stake pierced both shield and hauberk to enter the thigh so deep that blood ran down in profusion. When the knight felt himself wounded so, he realised he was not dealing with the same kind of combatant he had previously fought against, and went to strike the king on his head with all his might. However, the king stooped down and the sword hit the thick of the shield which covered his back. I must tell you the blow made as much noise as if it had hit a slab, yet the shield remained unscathed, although the king did have to lean on his tail with the violence of the blow. The king, who was soon back on his feet since he did not have long legs, swung his sword at the upper half of the knight's shield in such a powerful blow that the knight had to bend a knee. Even so the noble knight sprung back up at once and, with the sharp edge of his sword, slashed the king across his right side near his shield, cutting through three inches deep of flesh, blood jetting out.

When the king felt himself wounded so, he was upset, though not downcast, and engaged in battle once more against the knight, who did not back away from the fight, and they hit each other fiercely until they could no longer. They had kept this first pass going for so long that even the healthier of the two was wounded in several places, and they had lost so much blood that they were in more need of resting than fighting. In the end, let me tell you, they were so tired that each withdrew to his own corner to take some rest, and the knight felt sorely sorry that the king could not speak. Once they had rested a little, the king stood up and attacked the knight, striking him with his sword so badly that he pierced his shield. However, the knight was deft and agile, and he turned

his shield so suddenly that he snapped the stake in its middle, causing the king to fall down on his right side involuntarily. The king stood back up nimbly and hit the knight with his sword, and the knight defended himself bravely. Then started such a terrible combat that the whole place resounded with it. Be aware that the king was so tall and strong, and struck such mighty blows to the knight that, had his sword been as sharp as his enemy's, he would have killed him several times. Still, the knight received so many blows on his helmet that he felt quite dazed, and his arms and shoulders were bruised all over. The two champions fought so much that even the stronger was unable to harm his enemy, for all strength had gone from them. Lacking strength and compelled by necessity, the king lay down, and the White Knight, who could not go on either, sat next to him. At that point, all the fish-knights, who had been watching the fight, set themselves in motion as if to come and slay the White Knight. Upon seeing their behaviour, the knight resolved to defend himself to death and stood up with great difficulty due to his wounds. When the fish king saw that they were ready to attack the knight, he raised his head high up and made various wonderful sounds. Then all but two fish left and returned to the sea.

When the White Knight saw that the fish had gone back, he regained hope and sat back down as he was so exhausted and weak that he could scarcely support himself. The fish king began to make strange faces and gestures as a sign of humility and peace, and the knight, eventually recognising his intention, sheathed his sword once more. The king placed his stake back onto his back in friendship and approached the knight in an obliging manner. There they rested for a long while, until the king could no longer stay out of the water. He stood up with effort, went to a pit full of sea water close to the fountain, and drank. The knight, who was also in need, followed him. Once he had drunk, he started eating one of the fish that he had killed. While the king and the knight were at the fountain in peace, one of the two sea-knights who had stayed behind with the king went into the sea and came back shortly afterwards. He found the king sitting on the edge of the fountain, and brought him a small fish the size of a tortoise and as bright red as blood. The king snapped it with his teeth and ate some. All his wounds were immediately healed. He presented it to the White Knight and signalled him to eat some. When the valiant knight saw that the king was healed thanks to the fish he had eaten, and understood that the king was presenting it to him to restore his own health, he decided to eat some. He took the fish and, as soon as he had eaten some, he felt as well and healthy as he had been before the fight, which amazed him greatly and made him say that the fish was of great efficiency and value. Once the king was healed and saw that the White Knight was in good shape, he gave him another sign of humility and returned to the sea. You should know that the White Knight accompanied him to the shore's edge, and I assure you that the king walked alongside him as courteously as if he had had the intelligence and behaviour of a man. Thus, should the Sovereign God be praised for his works, for it pleased him to gift these creatures and he showed his powers in doing so. Indeed, when the fish-king reached the sea-shore, he stopped by the knight's side and invited him to acknowledge his qualities, an assent which the knight gladly gave.

Once the noble knight had understood the signs of the king, he looked at the sea and saw countless fish-knights whose sword-topped heads were out of the water, and whose bodies protruded enough that their shields could distinctly be seen. They formed tight ranks and occupied at least half a league. It was an extraordinarily beautiful thing

to behold, for their swords held upright were like a forest over the water. As soon as the young knight saw those fish, the king gave a sign of humility and went back to the sea, where all his subjects immediately made way for him. He swam away, faster than a crossbow bolt, and his knights followed him with such power that they looked like a tempest. The knight did not see them until the next day, around the same time they would usually emerge from the sea. They came back to the White Knight, who still did not know how to leave the island. Once the king was on dry land, he walked to the White Knight, bowed, and ordered that one of his fish-knights had his head cut off. Then he approached the knight and signalled him to eat some of the fish, but the noble knight would not. Regardless, the king and his knights began to graze on the grass, which was so good to them that they would not allow anyone to stay on the island. When they had had their fill, they split into two parties and began one of the most formidable and fierce tournaments ever seen. You will now hear marvellous things, for the fish king took the valiant knight in his teeth and pulled whilst signalling him to take part. He pulled so much that the knight eventually understood what he wanted, but this was so outlandish to him that he did not know how to go about it. Yet the king pulled so much that the knight grabbed his shield, drew his sword, and thrust himself into the fray in company of the king. He began to hit the fish-knights, and they him; and they responded so well to his attacks that he had to work just as hard to demonstrate his prowess over them as he had done at the noble king of Cornwall's tournament. The marine knights preferred to fight against him rather than each other, as they thought they should not be considered brave unless they had fought against him.

Great was the tournament, and wonderful to behold. The valiant knight gladly took part. You must understand that the battle lasted over an hour, before the fish ceased to fight and withdrew to the sea. Then, the king of the knights took his leave of the young man and went back into the water, as his nature could no longer cope with air. From this day on, as long as the knight was there, he came to visit him in this way.

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# The Siege and Conquest of Cordoba in the *Crónica particular de San Fernando*: A Translation and Discussion

This article contains a translation into Modern English and discussion of one chapter from the *Crónica particular de San Fernando*, a fourteenth-century chronicle originally written in medieval Castilian prose, detailing the life of King Ferdinand III of Castile-Leon (r. 1217/1232 – 1252). The chapter tells of the siege and conquest of Cordoba, a key victory for the Christians in the Reconquista campaign, and a sorry loss for the Moors. The article first gives a short description of the chapter and the methodology behind the translation, and then presents the translated chapter in full.

What follows is a translation into English and discussion of an excerpt of the *Crónica particular de San Fernando* (*CPSF* or *Crónica* = ‘Personal Chronicle of Saint Ferdinand’).<sup>1</sup> The *CPSF* is a chronicle about the life of King Fernando III of Castile-Leon (r. 1217/1232 – 1252), who later became San Fernando.<sup>2</sup> A textual reference within the *Crónica* has allowed scholars to date it to the latter years of the reign of Fernando IV (r. 1295–1312), the great-grandson of Fernando III.<sup>3</sup> The *CPSF* is extant in various manuscripts, to varying degrees of completeness.<sup>4</sup> Probably the most famous witness can be found within the codex *E*,<sup>2</sup> of the *Estoria de Espanna* (History of Spain), (Madrid, Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, X-i-4). *E*, together with *E*,<sup>1</sup> (Madrid, Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, Y-i-2), were published in 1906 by the philologist and historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal, in his edition entitled the *Primera Crónica General* (*PCG* = ‘First General Chronicle’).<sup>5</sup> The *Estoria de Espanna* is a chronicle of Spain from pre-history to the time of Fernando III: it was not completed, but provisional notes were made for sections never actually realised.<sup>6</sup> It was composed under the direct patronage of Fernando III’s son, Alfonso X, as part of his wide

<sup>1</sup> My own translation, with significant support from Aengus Ward. Thanks also to Enrique Jerez and Christian Kusi-Obodum for their suggestions whilst I was preparing the translation. A version of this translation can also be found as part of the digital edition of the *Crónica particular de San Fernando*, available at <<http://estoria.bham.ac.uk/cpsf>>, within Aengus Ward, ed., *Estoria de Espanna Digital v.1.0* <<http://estoria.bham.ac.uk>> [accessed 2 March 2019].

<sup>2</sup> Where no regnal number is given, in this article ‘Fernando’ means Fernando III.

<sup>3</sup> Luis Fernández Gallardo, ‘La Crónica particular de San Fernando: sobre los orígenes de la crónica real castellana, I. Aspectos formales’, *Cahiers d’études hispaniques médiévales*, 32 (2009), 245–65 (p. 247).

<sup>4</sup> Mariano de la Campa, ‘Crónica Particular de San Fernando’, in *Diccionario Filológico de Literatura Medieval Española. Textos y transmisión*, ed. by Carlos Alvar and José Manuel Lucía Megas (Madrid: Castalia, 2002), pp. 358–63 (p. 360).

<sup>5</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Primera Crónica General que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289*, 2 volumes (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1955). This article uses the 1955 edition. A further edition dates to 1977.

<sup>6</sup> Manuel Hijano Villegas, ‘Monumento inacabado: La Estoria de España’, *Cahiers d’études hispaniques médiévales*, 37 (2014), 13–44 (p. 14).

politico-cultural *œuvre* comprising, amongst other topics, histories, laws, astrological texts and poetry. However, the *CPSF* is not Alfonsine, and is found in folios added to *E<sub>2</sub>* after the death of Alfonso – much of the *Crónica* is distinctive from other texts in the manuscript because of a change of hand from a thirteenth- to a fourteenth-century one. The *CPSF* is, therefore, a post-Alfonsine history. It is aristocratic, or noble, dates to 1284–1325, and can be best understood when it is read as having its roots in the Alfonsine *œuvre*.<sup>7</sup> Leonardo Funes, a key scholar of post-Alfonsine historiography, has called the *CPSF* ‘the most significant piece of historiography of the post-Alfonsine period’.<sup>8</sup>

The excerpt translated below uses *E<sub>2</sub>* as a base text, working directly from digital images of the manuscript, but reverting to the 1955 edition of the *PCG* in cases of lacunae or where the text in the image was unclear.<sup>9</sup> This means this is a composite translation, but I have taken the decision not to point out in the translation which sections of text come from which manuscript or edition, as this would create textual noise, rendering the translation difficult to read, and, therefore, somewhat defying the purpose of the translation. The excerpt was chosen as it is representative of the *Crónica*, and is a self-contained section within the narrative of the chronicle. The section appears as one chapter within *E<sub>2</sub>*; this is number 1046 in the *PCG*, and 1057 in the 2016 digital edition of the *Estoria de Espanna* by Aengus Ward.<sup>10</sup> It is the longest chapter in the *CPSF*, covering almost three folios (around six sides).

The content of the excerpt tells of the siege and conquest of Cordoba, which took place between January and June of 1236. This situates the *Crónica* in the time of the *Reconquista* campaigns, during which the Christians fought the Muslims, or the Moors, to recover the Moorish-held lands of modern-day Spain known as *al-Andalus*. Fernando is remembered as a great warrior, and the conquest of Cordoba was one the most significant of his reign, as Cordoba had been one of the most important cities in *al-Andalus*.<sup>11</sup> Despite the economic and demographic crisis that had befallen Cordoba since 1225, it remained a culturally significant city for the wider Islamic world. Its conquest was a severe loss for the Moors and an important victory for the Christians.<sup>12</sup>

One of the major purposes of the *CPSF* was as pro-monarchic propaganda, where the nobility are seen to play a key pro-monarchic role. The *CPSF* was written at a time of great antagonism between the king and the nobles, particularly during the minority of Fernando IV, who became a monarch in childhood, and the regency of his mother, María de Molina.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Leonardo Funes, ‘Historiografía nobiliaria del período post-alfonsí: un fenómeno histórico-literario en discusión’, in *Hispanismos del mundo – diálogos y debates en (y desde) el Sur, Anexo digital, sección I*, ed. by Leonardo Funes (Buenos Aires: Mino y Dávila, 2016), pp. 77–86 (p. 86); Manuel Hijano Villegas, ‘Crónica particular de San Fernando: composición y transmisión’, in *Medieval Studies in Honour of Peter Linehan*, ed. by Francisco J. Hernández, Rocío Sánchez Ameljeiras and Emma Falque, *Millennio Medieval*, 155 (Firenze: Sismel - Edizione del Galluzzo, 2018), pp. 275–322.

<sup>8</sup> Leonardo Funes, ‘Dos versiones antagónicas de la historia y de la ley: una visión de la historiografía castellana de Alfonso X al Canciller Ayala’, in *Teoría y práctica de la historiografía hispánica medieval*, ed. by Aengus Ward (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2000), pp. 8–31 (p. 16). My translation.

<sup>9</sup> These images are unfortunately not available to the public.

<sup>10</sup> Aengus Ward (ed.), *Estoria de Espanna Digital* v.1.0 <<http://estoria.bham.ac.uk>> [accessed 3 April 2018].

<sup>11</sup> Fernández Gallardo, p. 245.

<sup>12</sup> Manuel González Jiménez, *Fernando III el Santo: El rey que marcó el destino de España* (Seville: Fundación José Manuel Lara, 2006), p. 157.

<sup>13</sup> Fernández Gallardo, pp. 249, 258; Fernando Gómez Redondo, *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana, Vol. II. El desarrollo de los géneros. La ficción caballeresca y el orden religioso* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999), p. 1238.

Funes argues that this situation made the nobles' role in the kingdom more important than it otherwise would have been, and this is reflected in post-Alfonsine historiography in general, and in the *CPSF*.<sup>14</sup> The *Crónica* fulfils its pro-monarchic agenda in this excerpt by emphasizing the important role played in the kingdom by the mother of Fernando III, Berenguela, and also by glorifying the Molina line through highlighting their military troop, the *cabalgada de Jerez*, who appear in this chapter.<sup>15</sup> In the excerpt, the roles played in the siege and conquest by several noblemen are foregrounded. This is representative of post-Alfonsine historical texts, which, unlike much of the *Estoria de Espanna*, and its sister chronicle, the *General Estoria*, were not so directly patronised by the monarch, as they are aristocratic, rather than royal, texts.<sup>16</sup> One of these foregrounded nobles is Lorenzo Suárez, a Galician nobleman who had been exiled for misdeeds during the reign of Alfonso IX, the father of Fernando III. Suárez joined the entourage of the taifa emir Ibn Hūd, but later repented. In order to be pardoned by Fernando III, Suárez acted as a double agent, providing the king with information that would help him conquer Cordoba. This led to Ibn Hūd's retreat, during which time he was murdered, leaving Fernando in a much stronger position to take Cordoba.<sup>17</sup>

The excerpt is translated from the Medieval Castilian to Modern English, with a view to rendering the translation as readable as possible — for instance, I have used Modern English punctuation and capitalisation, to ensure the text is as legible as possible. Simultaneously, I have attempted to retain allusions to some aspects of the medieval style, such as in the syntax. This is similar to the way that, in their translation of the medieval Catalan chronicle the *Llibre dels Feyts*, referred to intertextually in the translated excerpt of the *CPSF*, Helena Buffery and Damian J. Smith aimed to 'remain true to the flavour of the king's narrative'.<sup>18</sup> Discussing her English translation of sections of Froissart's *Chroniques* for the Online Froissart, Keira Borrill addresses this point eloquently:

There has been a persistent tension between the requirement to create a new, up-to-date translation whilst retaining Froissart's characteristic register, but without slipping into an archaic form of speech or, even worse, a mock-medieval sociolect. [...] The key objective for this translator was to create prose that would be readily comprehensible to the readership envisaged, without either dumbing down or indulging in archaic lexis or syntax.<sup>19</sup>

One aspect of translation that is more difficult than the application of modern English

<sup>14</sup> Leonardo Funes, 'El lugar de la *Crónica Particular de San Fernando* en el sistema de las formas cronísticas castellanas de principios del siglo XIV', *AIH, Actas del XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (Birmingham, 21-26 August 1995), Vol. 1 (1998), pp. 176-82 (p. 178) <<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1355830>> [accessed 15 September 2016].

<sup>15</sup> Fernández Gallardo, p. 247.

<sup>16</sup> Leonardo Funes, La 'Estoria cabadelante' en la *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*: Una visión nobiliaria del reinado de Fernando III', in *Antes se agotan la mano y la pluma que su historia – Magis deficit manus et calamus quam eius hystoria, Homenaje a Carlos Alvar, Volumen I: Edad Media*, ed. by Sarah Finci Carter and Dora Mancheva (San Millán de la Cogolla: Cilengua, 2016), pp. 643-55 (p. 651).

<sup>17</sup> Francisco Ansón, *Fernando III: Rey de Castilla y León* (Madrid: Palabra, 1998), pp. 149-51.

<sup>18</sup> Helena Buffery, 'Notes on the Translation', in *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon – A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Libre dels Fetts*, trans. by Damian J. Smith and Helena Buffery (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 11-14 (p. 13).

<sup>19</sup> Keira Borrill, 'Translation Policy', in *The Online Froissart*, version 1.5, ed. by Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen <[https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart/apparatus.jsp?type=context&context=translation\\_policy](https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart/apparatus.jsp?type=context&context=translation_policy)> [accessed 7 November 2017], para. 4.

punctuation and capitalisation is that of naming policies: discussing her translations of Froissart's *Chroniques*, Borrill refers to this as a 'thorny issue'.<sup>20</sup> In the excerpt below, toponyms appear in their Modern Castilian version, inclusive of diacritics. Anthroponyms generally appear regularised according to the way they appear in Manuel González Jiménez's book *Fernando III el Santo*, since these are widely accepted, and readers of the translation may choose to look people or places up online, and would find this difficult if I had retained all of the orthographic variants of the original.<sup>21</sup> One exception to this is Ibn Hūd: González Jiménez is inconsistent, using both 'Abén Hud' and 'Ibn Hud'. For consistency, I have opted for 'Ibn Hūd', as this is far more common online. Furthermore, key scholars of medieval Spain, including, for example, Joseph O'Callaghan, use 'Ibn Hūd'.<sup>22</sup>

The translated excerpt is presented below.

## Chapter of the siege and conquest of Córdoba

Having told the story of the other great deeds of King Fernando of Castilla and León, the history now moves to telling of how he took Córdoba, and it says: having conquered Úbeda two years after the death of his father, King Alfonso of León, King Fernando was very strengthened, set his sights on Córdoba and besieged it, and this was in the time of the year 1236.

The story tells that Córdoba is a royal city, and is like the mother of all of the other cities in Andalucía. According to the story, this is how don Fernando came to the land of this city. Being in the kingdom of León, King Fernando went round administering justice and ordering the kingdom, and he arrived at the town of Benavente. At that time, the Christians at the frontier - cavalry, noblemen, commanders and Almogavar troops on horseback and on foot - came together in the Christian town of Andújar, and set their cavalry towards Córdoba and captured the Moors that were taking refuge there with their most important people. From them they received reliable information of how the city of Córdoba was very secure, that they were not on the look out nor were they worried or protecting themselves in fear of the Christians, and that to get over the city wall, the Christians would have to use scaffolding. They thought that they should conquer the suburbs that they call in Arabic 'el Axerquía' because they thought that from there they could conquer the whole city.

This is what did happen. They agreed to do it, and they discussed how they would create the ladders to get up the city wall, and thought about how they would get into the towers and over the wall. They decided to do it on a night when the weather was poor, and it would be darker, so that they could remain unseen whilst they did it. This tale tells of how it took place: they involved Pedro Ruiz Tafur and Martín Ruiz de Argote, and sent to them the agreement that don Pedro Ruiz and his brother don Álvar Pérez had made in Martos. They sent them to tell them which night they had decided to do it, and that he should be ready with his company to help them when they needed it.

<sup>20</sup> Borrill, para. 6.

<sup>21</sup> González Jiménez, pp. 152-59.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 170,

Meanwhile, don Pedro Martínez went to his brother don Álvar Pérez and they gathered together as many people as they could, and they prepared the ladders that night, and they put them against the foot of the wall. This was on the eighth day of the month of January, and they considered whether the Moors were keeping watch over the towers and the wall; they did not hear any voices of anyone keeping watch because they were all asleep, and the watchmen were imprisoned by the fortress of sleep. They walked around the towers and the wall, and the Christians spoke to one another and asked, ‘What shall we do?’ and Domingo Muñoz, the leader, said to them, ‘My advice is this: since we are here, we should make the sign of the cross and commend ourselves to God, Holy Mary and the apostle Saint James, and we should strive to finish this for which we are here in the service of God. And if we cannot throw up the rope ladders we should put these wooden ones and those amongst us who speak Arabic best should climb, dressed as Moors, so the Moors should not recognise them, and they should think that we are Moors like them.’

This advice that Domingo Muñoz gave them they took to be good, and they did it this way. They tried three wooden ladders and found them to be too short, so they tied one to the other and threw them onto a tower. The first Arabic-speaking Christians who went up the ladder were Álvar Colodro and Benito de Baños, and then the others went up with them. These men went dressed as Moors and wearing turbans, and they took control of a tower which is now called The Tower of Álvar Colodro. They found four Moors who were sleeping there. One of the Moors was one of those who had been involved in the strategy. The Moors awoke and asked the Christians what they were looking for, and they answered in Arabic that they were the over-guards, and that they were checking the torches. And the Moor about whom we have already told you, recognised Álvar Colodro by his words, and took his hand in his and said into his ear, ‘I am you-know-who. Take revenge on these men and I will help you’. At this they took them, covered their mouths and threw them out of the tower. The Christians who were down below killed them.

At this, the Christians began to climb up the ladder at great speed, and when they saw that most of them were in the tower, they went around the city walls taking all of the towers around the Martos gate, until they had taken that gate. By daybreak the Christians had already taken control of all of the towers and the city wall, and the suburb outside of the wall which was called the Axerquía, and its gate. Pedro Ruiz Tafur entered by this gate with the others on horseback who were there. The Moors, seeing that the Axerquía had been taken over, had to vacate the houses and flee with all they could, to inside the city. The Christians were on horseback chasing these people through the streets, and they killed many of the Moors, and the Christians barricaded all the streets of the Axerquía, except for the main street, which they left without a barricade so that they could chase the Moors out. When the Moors had put into the town all the things they could, they fought with the Christians, and the Moors from the other part of the town, and fired arrows, darts and stones at them. The Moors defeated the Christians three times and pushed them towards the wall.

The Christians, seeing themselves under pressure by the great power of the Moors, who were so many in number, had their agreement and sent two men with their message: one to King Fernando, their lord, that he should come and help them, and the other to don Álvar Perez who was in Martos, who was one of the great powerful and

noble men of Castilla. With one knight, Ordon Álvarez, who was one of the king's retinue, and who turned up there at that time, they sent the message to King Fernando; and they ordered the messenger sent to don Álvar Pérez to tell this story to all of the Christians at the frontier, and the messenger did just this. And the other one, the messenger going to the king, travelled day and night until he got to Benavente, where the king was. He arrived as the king was sitting at the king's table, and he gave the king the letters and told him why he had come. The king said that he did not want to wait even a single hour, and ordered that his vassals should follow on. And then he ordered that men from the cities and the castles should go quickly with him to the frontier because of the message he had received from there, and he sent this message; and not waiting for them, he set off with scarcely a hundred knights. But then there was a great storm with much rain, and the rivers rose and disrupted them for so many days that they could not reach the area around Córdoba as quickly as they had wanted.

But he arrived in good time and the floods had passed, and the path was thus: from Benavente straight to Ciudad Rodrigo, and from there to Alcántara, across the Guadiana River at Medellín, and from Medellín straight to Magacela, and from there to Benquerencia, which was Moorish and the governor was a Moor, and he was a good gentleman and a good man. And when he found out that don Fernando had pitched his tent in a field close to a spring at the foot of a castle, the Moor came out and took the king gifts of bread, wine, meat and barley. The king received this gladly and gave him many honours, and talking to him he asked for the castle, and the Moor responded to him thus: 'You are now going to conquer Córdoba, and until you have finished that you will not gain this castle. But, once you complete your task, I will give you this castle and I will serve you with all that I have.' And he said this with a tone of ridicule, meaning that the king could never achieve what he wanted to do.

And when the king passed through there he had no more than thirty knights with him, and with those who went with him, were Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca and don Diego López de Vayas, who was at that time a squire, and Martín González de Mijanças, and Sancho López de Aellos, and don Juan Arias Mejía, and others of whom we do not know the names. And from there the king moved to Dos Hermanas, and to Daralbaçar, and leaving Córdoba on the right hand side he went to the bridge of Alcolea, and there he set up camp with the few men he had with him. When King Fernando arrived at the siege of Córdoba, don Álvar Pérez had already been in the Axerquía for some time, to help the Christians, and don Pedro Martínez his brother, who the Moors called Alaftaç, because he had a snub nose, and other people from the frontier, on foot and on horseback, and from the other places in Castilla and León, who had heard the call and went there to serve God and the king, and to gain something for themselves and to help the Christians, and also the friars of the orders who were there at the service of God.

And when the Christians who were there in the Axerquía found out that their lord, King Fernando, had arrived they were greatly pleased, and they forgot how much wrong and suffering had happened up to that point, and their hearts were encouraged and they had within them so much strength to finish what they had started. And King Fernando, settling there where we have already told you about, Ibn Hūd, with many great people on horseback and on foot. And there, with the Moorish king was Lorenzo Suárez - he who King Fernando had thrown out of his land for all of the wrongdoings that he had done. And whilst King Fernando was in the siege of Córdoba, many more

of his people were arriving. But even with this they were very few in number. And Ibn Hūd, who was in Écija, found out that King Fernando was there with very few people, and he wanted to go with all of his force to Córdoba to remove Fernando, but God helped King Fernando, as you will now hear.

This king, Ibn Hūd, was always suspicious of committing great deeds because most times when he did this he was defeated, and came out badly from them, and for this reason, although he had been told that King Fernando had with him so few people, he could not believe that such a powerful man as King Fernando would go there with so few men. And Ibn Hūd trusted Lorenzo Suárez a great deal: he believed that Lorenzo Suárez wished the king ill as he had quarrelled with him, and for this reason he spoke to him and he said, ‘Lorenzo, what do you advise me to do about this deed?’ And don Lorenzo said to him, ‘My lord, since you ask my advice for what to do, do the following: allow me to go with three Christian men on horseback, and I will go at night to the army of King Fernando, and I will enter into his army and will arrive at his tent undercover so that nobody will see me or recognise me. I will return to you, so that you can go there fully informed. But promise me that until I return to you neither you nor your people will move from here.’

Ibn Hūd was very content with this advice, and he agreed to do this. And don Lorenzo went to don Fernando’s army with those three knights. When he arrived at the vantage point on yonder side of the bridge, he dismounted from the horse with one of the knights that he had with him. He left the other two knights and all the horses there, and told them to wait for him in that place. He infiltrated the army and nobody caught him, until he got to the king’s tent. And when he was close to the king’s tent he saw a huntsman who was keeping watch, and said to him, ‘Friend, call one of the king’s men to me and tell him that here is a man who wants to speak to the king urgently’. And the huntsman went into the tent where the king was lying, and called Martín de Otiella, who got up and went out to see him. And when don Lorenzo saw him he said to him that he wanted to speak to him, and he took him to one side and said, ‘Do you not recognise me? I am Lorenzo Suárez. Go to the king and tell him that I am here and want to speak to him, and that I did not dare to come here to him, except upon his order.’ And Martin d’Otiella entered before the king, woke him, and the king told him to enter. And when he entered before the king he said to him, ‘Are you here, Lorenzo Suárez? How dare you come before me?’ And he said, ‘My lord, you threw me out to the land of the Moors for my wrongdoings, and this wrong can be turned into good for both you and me.’

And then he told the whole story of how he had come to be there, and the king thanked him very much, and said to him, ‘What do you advise me to do?’ And don Lorenzo replied, ‘My lord, my advice is that you stay in this place where you are now, and that you put your best army on guard as best as you can. You know that you have people in the Axerquía, and make sure that there are enough there to keep it under your control, and order that the rest of them come to you. And I will return to Ibn Hūd, and will try to reject the information that he was given, so that he disperses his troops. And so I will do one of two things: I will reduce the damage that he wants to do to you, or if I can’t do this, I promise you that with my body and with as many Christians as I have with Ibn Hūd, that I will come to you. And whatever of these that I can do, between now and tomorrow night at this time, you will have a message from me with my news,

brought to you by this squire here with me now.' And King Fernando thanked him a great deal and told him he was pardoned, and he received him as a vassal.

And don Lorenzo turned to the king and said to him as he was leaving, 'My lord, I forgot to tell you, for three or four nights light many fires here in your camp, so if Ibn Hūd sends spies to see your camp at night time, because of the fires they will see they will believe that your army is more numerous than it really is.' And the king said he would do it. Don Lorenzo left, and when he arrived there where he had left his horses, he leapt on his horse and they headed off. The dawn broke when he was in Castro, and from there he went to Éjica, and he arrived at the first sleep, and in this way he went to Ibn Hūd, and Ibn Hūd said to him, 'What have you seen, Lorenzo Suárez?' And he responded, 'My lord, I do not dare to say, because I am afraid that you will not believe me, but send somebody to see, and they will find King Fernando with many great and good people. I would have been with you quicker, had I not stayed there so long so that I could find out everything for you.' And Ibn Hūd said to him, 'What do you advise me to do?' And Lorenzo Suárez said to him, 'My lord, it is not my place to advise you, but to serve you and to carry out the orders you give me.' And Ibn Hūd left the advice for another day.

And in the morning of the following day, two Moors of the king of Valencia arrived there on horseback. They brought with them a message from the king of Valencia that King Jaime of Aragón was coming with all his power to besiege Valencia, and the king of Valencia asked for the aid of Ibn Hūd. And when Ibn Hūd saw these letters he called his advisors and don Lorenzo Suárez to him, and asked their advice. And the advice they gave him was that although the Christians had taken the Axerquía of Córdoba, they could not take the city so quickly, and that he should go to fight the King of Aragón, and that if he won, afterwards he could return to help Córdoba. And then King Fernando's army will be diminished, and this would make Ibn Hūd more able to beat Fernando. And Ibn Hūd took this advice as good, and he moved with his whole army directly to Almería, to move his ships to guard the port of Valencia. And whilst there in Almería, a trusted Moor, who had the name Abenarramarín, invited him to his house, got him drunk, and drowned him in a trough of water that was in his house. When the armies that Ibn Hūd had taken with him learnt that he was dead they scattered, each one to their own place. And Don Lorenzo Suárez headed back towards King Fernando, with all the Christians that he had with him, and the king thanked him a great deal for the service he had done.

And you should know that as soon as Ibn Hūd was dead, the kingdom of the Moors on this side of the sea was split into many parts and they had no single king over them, as they had had up to that point. God wanted to guard King Fernando, because he had achieved the service of God that he had started. And at that time, King James of Aragón came to besiege Valencia, and conquered it, according to what you will hear in his history. And every day that King Fernando was besieging Córdoba, more of his people were coming from all over his kingdom.

When the Moors found out that Ibn Hūd was dead and that the kingdom had been split into many parts, they felt this very badly and had great sorrow in their hearts. Furthermore, seeing how the army of King Fernando was growing each day, his prospects were getting better, they offered him a pact. From then on, great companies of gen-

tlemen, noblemen and commoners of the cities of Castilla and León came every day. Córdoba became very strongly besieged, and the inhabitants of Córdoba were greatly pained. And at the end, the inhabitants of the city were in a bad way, due to the battles and skirmishes that they had suffered, and defeated by hunger and the lack of food, despite the fact that they did not want to, they were forced to surrender to the strength of King Fernando. And the Arabs who were encircled in the city emerged, keeping their lives but nothing else.

On the festival of the apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul the city of Córdoba was named as the highest of all the other cities. This is the patron and the example for all the other towns of Andalucía. On that day it was purified from the filth of Mohammed and was given to King Fernando who was put in charge of it. King Fernando had the cross put on the tallest tower where the name of the false Mohammed used to be called out and praised, and all of the Christians, with great happiness and delight, called out, 'God, help us!'

Then the king, hand in hand, ordered that the royal seal be placed next to the cross of our Lord God. In the tents of the righteous, voices of happiness and delight could be heard calling out, that is those loyal to Christ, and in those voices the bishops and all the clergy sang and said, 'Te Deum laudamus', Latin for 'God we praise you'. The very noble King Fernando, with the church and with the faith in the King of Heaven, entered there. Now the history will go on to tell of the noble conquests of King Fernando, and of the works of piety carried out by him.

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ABDENOUR BOUICH

# Translated Poems of the Berber Kabylian Poet Si Mohand ou-Mhand (1845–1906)

ξΘ÷ῃΟ。 | ΘΞ Σ:∅.ΙΛ : Σ∅÷ΙΛ Θ:ΣΗ÷Ι Θ +.ΙΣΗΞ+

This paper proposes an English translation of selected poems written by one of the most important Kabyle Berber poets of the 19th century, Si Mohand ou-Mhand. Since this poet is largely unknown to the English-speaking world, the translations are preceded by a historical and cultural context of the poems' composition, an etymological investigation of the words 'Berber' and 'Kabyle', and a brief biography of Si Mohand ou-Mhand, who lived under French colonialism.

Berbers or Imazighen (ፊርማኬኝ, pronounced 'Imaziyen') make up the native population of Northern Africa stretching from Siwa Oasis in Egypt in the east to the Canary Islands in the west, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Niger River in the south. They form groups and tribes all across this region. However, they are not to be homogenized since, despite their shared mother language, cultural and linguistic similarities and differences can be found among these various groups. Important Berber groups living in this region include the Riffians (*Irifiyen*) in Morocco; the Kabylans (*Iqvayliyen*), and the Chaoui (*Ishawiyen*) in Algeria; the Berbers of Djerba in Tunisia; the Infusion in Libya; and the Berbers of the Siwa Oasis in Egypt. In antiquity, Berbers were known as 'Libyans', or (during the Punic Wars) as 'Numidians'. After the Arab conquests of Northern Africa beginning from 647 AD, many Berber tribes were assimilated into Arabic language and culture, while others accepted Islam as their religion but refused Arabic assimilation and maintained their language.

Si Mohand ou-Mhand was a Berber Kabylian poet from Northern Algeria, belonging to one of the Berber tribes that fought the Arab invasion and preserved their own language and identity. He is thought to have been born in 1845 in Icheraïouen, one of the villages of the tribal confederation of Aït-Iraten, situated today in the Algerian city of Tizi-Wezzu. His father was Mohend Amezyan N'Ath Hmadouch and his mother was Fatima N'Ath Ssaid. The Ath Hmadouch family was one of the noble families in the village, so Si Mohand ou-Mhand was educated at the esteemed Koranic school of Sidi Abderrahman. Thus, he had the opportunity to learn the Quran and the Arabic language, which he sometimes used alongside Berber in his poetry. With the French invasion of the Berber region of Algeria in 1857, the poet's family was disposed from their lands and went to live in the village of Sidi Khalfa that is situated in Larbaa N'Ait Iraten in the city of Tizi-Wezzu. The family took part in the Kabyle insurrection against French colonialism in 1871 in which Si Mohand ou-Mhand's father was killed before his son's eyes. Mouloud Mammeri writes: 'Mohand lui-même ne

doit la vie sauve qu'à l'intervention d'un officier qui avait jugé sa mort inutile.<sup>1</sup> After the failure of the Berber insurrection, the family was separated: Ou-Mhand's uncle was exiled to New Caledonia; his mother fled to their original village of Icheraïouen; his brother, Arezki, to Tunisia. Si Mohand ou-Mhand led the life of a wandering poet and storyteller, travelling between Tizi-Wezzu, Annaba, and Tunis. After a long struggle with tuberculosis, he died in 1906 in the Sœurs Blanches hospital situated in Michelet, a village in the city of Tizi-Wezzu.

Ou-Mhand's poetry is a confluence between his knowledge of Berber traditions and the Arabic language and grammar that he learned during his education at the Quranic school. More importantly, his poems demonstrate his knowledge of 'Kabyle poems that constitute the heritage of his country.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, ou-Mhand produced his poetry in Berber, sometimes borrowing words from Arabic and Islamic traditions, especially in works touching on religious themes. As for the structure of his poetry, ou-Mhand adopts the Berber traditional form of *aseftru*, originating in the Berber verb *seftru*, which means 'to reflect' or 'to meditate'. The *aseftru* takes the form of a short sonnet composed of three verses, themselves composed of three lines. The length of each stanza is 7, 5, and 7 syllables, respectively, following the rhythmic pattern AAB AAB AAB. This is not new to the audience. As Brugnatelli states, much of Berber epic poetry follows the same metre.<sup>3</sup> Adolphe Hanoteau's compilation of Berber poems, for example, contains many instances of poetry which follow this metre.<sup>4</sup> *Aseftru* are brief yet brimming with meaning strengthened through many complex figures of speech, particularly metaphors. This richness adds to ou-Mhand's thematic abundance, which is characterized by a tormented life, his adventures as a vagabond wandering around Algeria and Tunisia, and the experience of a colonized subject. Ouerdia Yermeche encapsulates the poet's early experiences: 'Victime des exactions coloniales, impuissant devant le sort qui lui est réservé – l'anéantissement de sa famille et la confiscation des terres ancestrales –, il est jeté sur les chemins d'un l'exil à la fois spatial et social.'<sup>5</sup> However, despite his social exile, ou-Mhand played the role not only of a literary figure but also a cultural agent. His poetry paints a vivid portrayal of the degrading socio-political and economic conditions that Algerians were subjected to under French colonialism. As Ouerdia Yermeche observes, 'Dans son immense exil intérieur et son errance spatiale, il reste ombilicalement lié à sa communauté, et les tribulations qu'elle vit sont les siennes.'<sup>6</sup> Ou-Mhand's poetry also engages with subjects regarded as taboo, such as eroticism, courtship, drugs, and alcohol, in a society where everyday life and social relations are regulated by conservative, religious, and social mores.

<sup>1</sup> 'Mohand owes his life only to the intervention of an officer who considered his death useless.' Si Mohand Ou-Mhand, *Les Isefra, poèmes de Si Mohand-ou-Mhand*, ed. and trans. by Mouloud Mammeri (Paris: Maspero, 1969), p. 18. All translations my own, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Vermondo Brugnatelli, 'L'Œuvre de Si Mohand ou-Mhend dans la littérature amazighe', in *La Culture amazighe et le développement humain : Actes du colloque organisé au Palais des Congrès, Fès, les 6-7-8-9 juillet 2006*, ed. by Moha Ennaji (Fes: Revue L & L, 2007), pp. 57-65 (p. 59).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> See El-Hadj-Ameur-Ou-El-Hadj, 'Prise d'Alger', in *Poésies populaires de la Kabylie du Jurjura : Texte kabyle et traduction*, ed. and trans. by Adolphe Hanoteau (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1867), pp. 1-19 <[http://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/f\\_view/BML:BML\\_00GOO0100137001102825176/IMG00000025](http://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/f_view/BML:BML_00GOO0100137001102825176/IMG00000025)> [accessed 26 March 2019].

<sup>5</sup> 'A victim of colonial abuses, and powerless before his fate — the annihilation of his family and the confiscation of ancestral lands — he is thrown in an exile that is both spatial and social.' Translation my own. Ouerdia Yermeche, 'L'Onomastique et la poétique de l'errance dans la poésie mohandienne', *Recherches et travaux*, 76 (2010), 13-25 (p. 13).

<sup>6</sup> 'In his immense inner exile and his spatial wandering, he remains umbilically linked to his community, and its tragedies are also his own.' Ibid., p. 24.

## Sources for ou-Mhand's poetry

This paper presents an English translation of selected poems by Si Mohand ou-Mhand. The vast majority of translations of ou-Mhand's poetry have been made into French, leaving his work relatively unknown in the English-speaking world.<sup>7</sup> I consulted these translations in the course of my work, and each helped facilitate my own translation method. Nevertheless, in recent years isolated attempts have been made to redress this imbalance, and ou-Mhand's work has begun to appear in English: Fadhila Sidi-Said Boutouchent has offered her own partial rendering into English of the first work that I translate below, while Pierre Joris presents a complete rendering in a recent edited collection.<sup>8</sup> Other poems by ou-Mhand are also starting to appear, with the ongoing project by Lynda Chouiten (University of Boumerdes), 'The Nomadic Bard Reaches Britain', aiming to translate ou-Mhand's work while retaining both its beauty and its rhyme-patterns.<sup>9</sup> Thus far, however, it is the French editions that have engaged most directly with the question of how to represent the distinct nature of Kabyle poetry, one concisely articulated by Mammeri in his editorial apparatus: since Ou-Mhand worked within an oral tradition, it is difficult to attribute a work to him with any certainty, and any work that is attributed to him may itself exist in any number of variants.<sup>10</sup> The earliest collection of ou-Mhand's poetry, produced during the final years of his life by Boulifa, presents itself as the product of personal acquaintance with the poet; even this collection, however, does not include all of the works that have since been attributed to him.<sup>11</sup> Here, I offer an English version of ou-Mhand's poetry informed by my own interpretations, explaining my choice of words where I could not find the equivalents in English. I have chosen to organise the works into three themes: colonization, courtship, and the sacred.

## Colonization

The following poem is the most famous of ou-Mhand's works and expresses the poet's indignation at French colonization.

### 1. *I swear that from Tizi-Wezzu*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The earliest edition of ou-Mhand's works accompanied by a translations is *Recueil de poésies kabyles*, ed. and trans. by Si Amar u-Said Boulifa (Algiers: A. Jourdan, 1904; repr. Paris: Awal, 1990, ed. by Tassadit Yacine). More recent French translations include Mammeri (ed.), *Les Isefra* (1969); *Les poèmes de Si Mohand : Édition bilingue*, ed. by Mouloud Feraoun (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1960); and Younes Adli, *Si Mohand ou Mhand : Errance et révolte* (Algiers: Paris-Méditerranée, 2001). I am very grateful to Dominic Newman for his assistance in sourcing material from Adli's collection, which (at the time of writing) is available in the United Kingdom only at the British Library.

<sup>8</sup> Fadhila Sidi-Said Boutouchent, 'Walt Whitman and Si Mohand ou M'hand: Free-Folk Voices', *Majallat al-Munssārāt al-Lughawiyah*, 30 (2014), 1-22 (pp. 18-19) <<https://www.doi.org/10.12816/0011353>>. For a complete translation, see 'Si Mohand', in *Poems for the Millennium, Volume Four: The University of California Book of North African Literature*, ed. by Pierre Joris and Habib Tengour (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 241-44 (p. 241), trans. by Pierre Joris. Notably, however, Joris' translations take as their source not the Kabyle originals, but Mouloud Mammeri's French renderings.

<sup>9</sup> Private communication, May 2019.

<sup>10</sup> 'L'établissement d'un recueil de poèmes de Si Mohand bute sur deux obstacles inhérents à tout essai de fixation de la tradition orale : la difficulté d'attribution et l'abondance des variantes.' Mammeri (ed.), *Les Isefra* (1969), p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> For a partial overview of works attributed to ou-Mhand, see Mammeri (ed.), *Les Isefra* (1969), pp. 90-99, 469-77.

<sup>12</sup> Tizi-Wezzu: a Berber city in Northern Algeria.

*to the village of Akfadu<sup>13</sup>  
no-one will subjugate me*

*Rather break and die than bend,  
rather be cursed  
in a country where rulers are but go-betweens*

*My brow marked out for exile,  
I swear that exile is better  
than living under the rule of swine.*

Salem Chaker purports that ou Mhand's poetry 'oscille entre la prostration et l'impuissance', reflecting the position of the Berbers after the French invasion.<sup>14</sup> The poem begins with two geographical references: Tizi-Wezzi and Akfadou. Both locations are significant Berber regions in Kabylia, and were involved in the Berber insurrection of 1871 against the French. However, as suggested by Paulette Galand-Pernet, spatiality is used 'très anciennement', and is 'commun aux différentes littératures berbères'.<sup>15</sup> Berber culture often endows places with mystical significance and presence. Yermeche's analysis goes further, arguing that 'les toponymes cités dans ses vers illustrent la marche incessante et ininterrompue du poète déraciné, à la recherche perpétuelle d'un havre de paix, et marquent de manière implicite son opposition à la domination coloniale'.<sup>16</sup>

Ou-Mhand makes frequent use of animal metaphors, as we will see in other poems. In this work, he uses one in the final verse to express his disgust with colonialism. Berber culture, deeply influenced by Islam, forbids the consumption of pigs, and the animal itself is regarded as unclean. The pig is also used as a derogatory reference to the French or Christians. I was unable to find an exact equivalent for the verb *ttqewiden*. In Berber, this is a very serious insult. It comes close to the word 'sycophants' or more colloquially 'ass-kissers.' Here, ou-Mhand is mocking 'les « collaborateurs », les parvenus et opportunistes de tout poil qui s'empressent de gagner les bonnes grâces des Français'.<sup>17</sup> This mockery is even more explicit in the following poem:

- 2. *The flag is crumpled up by kinglets  
who came ranting  
and burrowing in our nights*

*The goldcrest wore trousers  
and became a master  
claiming to bring justice*

<sup>13</sup> Akfadu: a Berber village in the city of Bejaia (Northern Algeria).

<sup>14</sup> 'oscillates between prostration and impotence'. Salem Chaker, 'Une tradition de résistance et de lutte : la poésie berbère kabyle, un parcours poétique', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 51 (1989), 11-31 (p. 18).

<sup>15</sup> 'very old, common to different Berber literatures.' Paulette Galand-Pernet, 'Mohand, héritier créateur', *Etudes et documents berbères*, 25-26 (2007), 77-104 (p. 94).

<sup>16</sup> 'The toponyms mentioned in his verses illustrate the incessant and uninterrupted movement of the uprooted poet, in the perpetual search for a haven of peace, and implicitly mark his opposition to colonial domination.' Yermeche, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> 'the collaborators, the upstarts and the opportunists of all kinds who hastened to win the good graces of the French.' Chaker, p. 19.

*The rabbit became a policeman  
with a gun in his shoulder strap  
allowing himself to punish*

*The eagle's wings have been bound  
and he has been condemned to exile  
Oh dear God, what a misery!*

This work belongs to the tradition of *leâlamat*, which consists of oral poems that have as an incipit the word *leâlam*, meaning ‘banner’ or ‘flag’. This tradition has existed for a long time in Berber culture, and was familiar to ou-Mhand’s audience. *Leâlam* has a connotative meaning, and refers to honour, authority, and freedom. When ou-Mhand writes that ‘the flag is tied up’ he means blemished honour. The term ‘kinglets’ refers to the *champêtres* – local agents or mediators appointed by French authorities to interact with Berbers, particularly in remote villages. The poet mocks them by applying animal metaphors such as ‘goldcrests’ in line 4. For Berbers, the goldcrest symbolizes weakness and pettiness. Ou-Mhand writes ‘the goldcrest wore trousers,’ which suggests empowerment since trousers are associated with masculinity and chivalry in Berber culture. The poem’s use of rabbits – weak animals that become police officers – satirizes French colonizers.

Brugnatelli highlights a parallel between line 1 and line 11 that resides in the fact that both the flag and the eagle are tied up.<sup>18</sup> Here, we find another animal metaphor: Berbers associate the eagle with a strong warrior who has been condemned to exile. The theme of exile is recurrent in ou Mhand’s work and calls back to Berber leaders such as El Mokrani and Cheikh El Haddad, who led the Berber insurrection against French colonization. After the failure of the insurrection, many leaders, including the poet’s uncle, were deported to New Caledonia.

## Courtship

Women are very present in ou-Mhand’s poetry. Yermeche writes: ‘Dans son mode de vie marginal, il ne délaisse pas pour autant les plaisirs de la vie. Son rapport au temps réel s’effectue par la référence aux hommes en général et à la gent féminine en particulier [...].’<sup>19</sup> In fact, the poet never misses a chance to express his emotions whenever he is smitten by a woman during his numerous adventures of wandering between Algeria and Tunisia. The following two works are examples of ou-Mhand’s love poetry:

- 3. *Tell this green-eyed girl  
with well-drawn eyebrows  
this caged partridge*

*That she sentenced me to torment  
with her dark eyelashes  
and gun-like breasts*

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<sup>18</sup> Brugnatelli, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> ‘In his marginal way of life, he does not abandon the pleasures of life. His relation to real time is made by reference to men in general and to women in particular.’ Yermeche, p. 21.

*I dream of a coffee  
with her, in intimacy  
in this cup below her belt*

In this poem, the poet does not reveal the identity of the woman he is courting, but rather refers to her through some features of her body which constitute the standards of female beauty in Berber culture. As for the unknown identity of the woman, it is essential to keep in mind that in the Berber and Algerian society of the late nineteenth century, ‘la simple évocation de la femme était taboue’.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, ou-Mhand uses an animal metaphor to refer to the woman as a ‘partridge’. Berber culture often uses the partridge as a reference to the beauty, softness, and fragility of women, but also to indicate inaccessible and unapproachable women. The poet expresses his desire for intimacy in the three last lines, subtly channeling it into a dream of having coffee. Ou Mhand was known for his addiction to coffee and hashish, both of which he used as a fuel for poetic inspiration.<sup>21</sup> The following work also belongs to ou Mhand’s love poetry:

**4.** *I looked to the west  
scrutinizing the skyline  
Suddenly, my sweetheart appeared*

*We descended into gambling  
surely for our leisure  
hence we played some Ronda<sup>22</sup>*

*She took three cards of ten  
though I dispossessed her from the eleven  
she shamelessly defeated me*

The poem begins with a reference to space and reminds the audience of ou-Mhand’s life as a wanderer. It seems that the poet is dreaming of a romantic encounter in a society where intimacy with women outside marriage is rare, if not impossible. What is striking in this poem is ou Mhand’s use of a Spanish card game to describe a moment of intimacy, as the details of the game provide a suggestive portrayal of his sexual experience. In Berber culture, gambling is forbidden and people who indulge in it are seen as immoral, and the term ‘to gamble’ has progressively acquired a euphemistic sexual sense when used specifically with reference to a woman.

## The tradition of the sacred

Although very secular in most of his work, ou-Mhand also wrote religious verses. Yet his religious poetry is as ambivalent as the poet’s personality. Indeed, in some of his poems ou-Mhand appears to be thankful to God, while in others he appears to complain about Him and blame Him for his misery. As Brugnatelli explains, ‘C’est en vertu de sa familiarité

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<sup>20</sup> ‘the mere mention of women was taboo’. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Brugnatelli, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Ronda: A Spanish card game.

avec Dieu que Si Mohand se permet très souvent de lui reprocher son injustice dans la distribution des destins.’<sup>23</sup> The following poem is a prayer of praise and gratitude to God.

**5. Compassionate, You are the most merciful**

*Glory to You the Almighty  
Master of countless crowds*

*You provide for those who have no money  
Your power is unmatched  
You keep watch over us*

*Since even those who do nothing live  
without debts or worries  
I swear to you, hunger, I do not fear you any more*

This work reflects the poet’s mastery of the Arabic language and his knowledge of Islam. The majority of the words are borrowed from Arabic. Not only does ou-Mhand use Arabic in his poetry, he also makes references to what Brugnatelli terms ‘la terminologie savante dans les domaines de la grammaire et de la religion.’<sup>24</sup> The following poem takes a different approach. Here, ou Mhand complains about his poverty, not directly addressing God, but an angel believed to distribute wealth to people:

**6. Distributor, come down and talk to us**

*May God convince you  
to have pity on us, the helpless.*

*For some, you have given the zest of life,  
far from the miseries,  
in cosy beds.*

*For me, you have given endless nights in the barn  
Sleeping beside junkyards  
Braving cold, sickness, and stench*

In his poetry, Si Mohand ou-Mhand was able to combine various approaches that are often paradoxical. The first approach is one characterised by moral concerns, inspired by Islamic principles and cultural wisdom, and often takes the form of moral precepts and regret for the degradation of manners during the French invasion. The second approach is can described as hedonistic, evidenced in his provocative poems about women, alcohol, and hashish. The third approach is mystical, expressing the poet’s repentance and his hope for redemption. Indeed, the poet tries to make his readers feel a deep mystical ecstasy and an intense awareness of the spiritual life. He never ceases to solicit the grace of God, to praise His merits, to call upon His mercy, eventually exhorting the readers to give up the pleasures of this world and to turn to the salvation of the Hereafter.

<sup>23</sup> ‘It is precisely his familiarity with God that allows (ou-Mhand) to blame Him for his injustice concerning the distribution of fortunes.’ Brugnatelli, p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> ‘scholarly terminology related to the fields of grammar and religion.’ Brugnatelli, p. 57.

## Appendix: Sources for Kabyle (Berber) Texts

The table below indicates where each of the poems translated above has appeared across the four collections of ou-Mhand's work, along with their incipits in Kabyle. Unfortunately, copyright restrictions have prevented the reproduction of the original Kabyle texts.

No.	Incipit	Boulifa (1990)	Feraoun (1960)	Mammeri (1969)	Adli (2001)
1	Ggulley seg Tizi-Wuzzu	no. 30 (p. 84)	no. 16 (p. 74)	no. 32 (p. 153)	
2	Leâlam cudden iqelaql				no. 85 (p. 183)
3	Inn'as i mm tiṭ zerqaqen				no. 20 (p. 100)
4	Grey tiṭ-iw s azelmad				no. 29 (p. 109)
5	A lhanin kečč d ṣrahim	no. 83 (p. 102)	no. 22 (p. 80)	no. 210 (p. 368)	
6	A qessam res-ed a k-naḥku				no. 60 (p. 152)

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'Si Mohand', in *Poems for the Millennium, Volume Four: The University of California Book of North African Literature*, ed. by Pierre Joris and Habib Tengour (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 241-44, trans. by Pierre Joris

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THOMAS WALLER

## Recreating Resistance: Translating José Luandino Vieira's *Luuanda*

This article critically evaluates the only extant English translation of José Luandino Vieira's 1964 short story collection *Luuanda*. I argue that the text presents three clear obstacles to translation: first, the revolutionary attitude that the text has come to symbolise is specific to the political climate of the source culture; second, its language is radically experimental; and third, the form of the text is subversive only with reference to the historico-political context of its country of origin. Through a close examination of Tamara L. Bender's attempts at negotiating these obstacles for an Anglophone readership, I explore the ways in which cultural difference can be mediated and recreated through translative practices.

In his latest documentary, dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei catalogues the testimonies of those swept up in the wave of mass migration caused by the greatest human displacement this planet has seen since World War II. *Human Flow*, a poetic visualisation of the ways in which cultures come into contact in times of crisis, gives expression to migrants who, in crossing cultural borders, change them, and are changed in the process.<sup>1</sup> 'When there is nowhere to go, nowhere is home' is the film's pithy promotional slogan. That space, at once empty and full of meaning, is the zone that must be negotiated in translation. It is Apter's translation zone, 'that connects the "I" and "n" of transLation and transNation', Bhabha's hybrid in-between space that 'carries the burden of the meaning of culture'.<sup>2</sup> In such a context, it does not seem out of place to dredge up an artefact from the history of relations between self and other, if only to serve as an example of the ways in which culture can be translated. Literary translation, as the most eloquent and ill-fated of such relations, provides a useful starting point. Accordingly, in the present study, I will take an English translation of an Angolan text and discuss the ways in which cultural difference is mediated and recreated.

José Luandino Vieira's 1964 short story collection *Luuanda* presents three clear obstacles to translation. Firstly, the revolutionary attitude the text has come to symbolise is specific to the political climate of the source culture; second, and not entirely unrelated, its language is radically experimental; and finally, the form of the text is subversive only with reference to the historico-political context of its country of origin.

Taking each obstacle in turn, the political implications of *Luuanda* are best illuminated by way of reference to the revolutionary and anti-colonial activities of its author, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Human Flow*, dir. by Ai Weiwei (AC Films and Participant Media, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 5; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 56.

commotion caused by the terms of its reception. A member of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), Vieira was serving a prison sentence at the time of *Luuanda*'s publication for distributing so-called subversive pamphlets. Despite the incarcerated status of its author, in 1965 the book was awarded the Grande Prémio da Novelística, an act which infuriated the Salazar regime. As Tamara Bender, the English translator of *Luuanda*, explains in her preface to the book: 'Within a few weeks of the award, the Portuguese secret police raided the Society's headquarters in Lisbon, physically destroyed its offices and officially closed the Society down for the first time in its history'.<sup>3</sup> The book was now banned; however, the cause of the furor was not simply the political affinities of its author: *Luuanda* was a subversive literary text in its own right. For encoded in the work is a reality the colonial regime wanted to keep suppressed; namely, the cultural life and destitution of the *musseques*, Angola's slums. Accordingly, in *Luuanda*, the ordinary lives of the colonised take centre stage in a cultural *milieu* devastated by the injustices of colonialism. From the story of a stolen parrot in 'Estória do Ladrão e do Papagaio', to a dispute over the rightful owner of an egg in 'Estória da Galinha e do Ovo', what is presented to the reader are the everyday problems of ordinary people, but problems that nevertheless bespeak a painful existence of poverty and subjection. As Vieira himself remarks in a recent interview: 'In my characters, in my countermapping of the city of Luanda, which brought the *musseques* to the fore, cultural difference was embedded, a difference that justified claims to political independence'.<sup>4</sup> If, as Gayatri Spivak has asserted, the translator must go beyond 'correct cultural politics' and take account of 'the history of the language, the history of the author's moment', then herein lies the first obstacle to a translation of *Luuanda*: how to account for the richly subversive history of the text, whilst preserving the political urgency of the realities encoded in its language.<sup>5</sup>

The hybrid, innovative nature of this language presents a second challenge to the translator of *Luuanda*. Widely regarded as 'the first writer of prose narrative to experiment innovatively and successfully with *musseque* speech and urban Kimbundu', Vieira's fiction is characterised by its use of a Portuguese heavily inflected with the speech patterns of Angolan dialects.<sup>6</sup> This refashioning of the language of the colonisers is necessarily a political act. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write that the 'crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place'.<sup>7</sup> While *Luuanda* cannot be considered a post-colonial piece of writing, as it was written during the colonial period, the notion of a seizure of power aptly describes the political radicalism of Vieira's linguistic experimentation. Indeed, the language of *Luuanda* was hybridised to such an extent that many Portuguese readers struggled to understand it, a struggle for which Vieira understandably had little sympathy. Yet, besides alienating certain readers, the use of a vernacular tongue makes the immediacy of the text's themes more

<sup>3</sup> José Luandino Vieira, *Luuanda*, trans. by Tamara Bender (London: Heineman, 1981), p. viii.

<sup>4</sup> Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, "'E Agora José, Luandino Vieira?' An Interview with José Luandino Vieira', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, (2016), 27-36 (p. 32).

<sup>5</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 397-416 (p. 406).

<sup>6</sup> Russell G. Hamilton, 'Lusophone Literature in Africa: Language and Literature in Portuguese-Writing Africa', *Callaloo*, 14.2, (1991), 313-323 (p. 320).

<sup>7</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 38.

urgent, a fact that has led Patrick Chabal to identify in Vieira's fiction 'an exceedingly close relationship between context and text, that is between the world in which his characters live and the language in which the stories are written'.<sup>8</sup> Vieira's language is thus almost inseparable from the realities it depicts, a feature that proves problematic in translation, where 'the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text can only be signalled indirectly, by their displacement in the translation, through a domestic difference introduced into values and institutions at home'.<sup>9</sup> Here, a whole host of questions fan out before the would-be translator, the most salient of which being: How does one recreate at home a text that is essentially insular, tied to the culture of its origin by virtue of its political and lexical significance within that same culture?

Before we move on to a discussion of Tamara Bender's translation of *Luuanda*, we must first consider a third aspect of the text: its form. Vieira refers to his short stories as 'estórias', eschewing the more popular Portuguese word *histórias* in order to emphasise the importance of orality in his work. We can define the *estória* as a 'tense hybrid form whose narration centers around a particular storytelling performance'.<sup>10</sup> Vieira picked up the term from another lexical innovator of the Portuguese language, João Guimarães Rosa, adopting it because he believed it was a more accurate rendering of the Kimbundu word *missosso*, meaning 'moral story or allegory, fable, narrative, or tale'.<sup>11</sup> In his use of the *estória*, then, Vieira retains some of the formal properties of the *história* while emphasising the oral nature of the popular storytelling tradition of the *musseques*. In this sense, Vieira is making yet another political move. As Frantz Fanon wrote just two years before *Luuanda*'s publication: 'The oral tradition — stories, epics and songs of the people — which were formerly filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental'.<sup>12</sup> Vieira's fusion of a culturally-specific narrative form with an established Western mode of representation — that is, the written word — is an example of Fanon's 'fighting phase', an almost pan-African movement whereby native intellectuals used cultural resources as weapons in the fight against colonialism.<sup>13</sup> Again, the translator is faced with a challenge she cannot ignore; that is, how to render orality in translation, how to negotiate the differences between the speech patterns and storytelling traditions of the source and target languages without damaging the political resonance bound up in that orality. Let us now take a look at the way in which Tamara Bender has dealt with these challenges in her translation of the text.

The only English translation of *Luuanda* to date, Bender's rendering represents a kind of authority in terms of translation, and our discussion is made all the more urgent for want of a yardstick by which to measure its shortcomings and successes. As a preliminary discussion, then, we might look at the motivation behind Bender's translation. As we have already seen, *Luuanda* has had a turbulent and politically-charged history. Banned twice by the

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Chabal, 'Aspects of Angolan Literature: Luandino Vieira and Angostinho Neto', *African Languages and Cultures*, 8.1, (1995), 19-42 (p. 22).

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Venuti, 'Translation, Community, Utopia', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 468-88 (p. 469).

<sup>10</sup> Phyllis Peres, 'Traversing PostColoniality: Pepetela and the Narrations of Nation', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 40.2, (2003), 111-17 (p. 114).

<sup>11</sup> Vieira (1981), p. vii; Ribeiro, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 193.

<sup>13</sup> Fanon, p. 179.

Portuguese dictatorship, with a clandestine edition printed in Brazil in 1965, the text gained a subversive reputation which prefigured the way in which it was received by readers. This reputation has, in turn, played a decisive role in the various translations of the text. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the first translation of *Luuanda* was into Russian in 1968, the year of the Prague Spring in which, just like the Angolans, the Czechoslovakians were fighting for independence from an oppressive political regime — an example of the complex cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Angola that brings to light the ideological implications inherent in translation.<sup>14</sup> André Lefevere has written at length on the role of ideology in translation, and has identified a process of what he calls a ‘rewriting’ of literature that is embroiled in power relations. Translation, he writes, ‘is the most obviously recognisable type of rewriting, and [...] it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their cultures of origin’.<sup>15</sup> Several questions hence arise: which aspects of the text to project? What to foreground? What to omit, and why?

Bender’s translation appeared in the Heinemann African Writers Series in 1980. The series, now relaunched by Pearson Education, was founded by Heinemann in 1962 and was ‘to become for Africans in its first quarter century what Penguin had been to British readers in its first 25 years’.<sup>16</sup> While undoubtedly important for Africans, the series also represented an important shift of focus for Western readers, putting ‘the canonical status of works like Conrad’s [*Heart of Darkness*] in doubt, raising questions about the criterion of “artistic value” used to canonize British literature’.<sup>17</sup> The African Writers Series may have been, in the words of Chinua Achebe, ‘like the umpire’s signal for which African writers had been waiting on the starting line’, but there were still stylistic and contentual norms with which these writers had to comply.<sup>18</sup> In conversation with Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo, Rosemary Marangoly George and Helen Scott mention the ‘infamous story of one Indian African writer who was not published because the publishing industry saw her work as too experimental, not obviously based on her experiences, and therefore not “authentic” enough to fit into the Heineman [sic] African writers series’.<sup>19</sup> This is an example of the determining influence of patronage both in- and outside the literary system, of a publisher that tries to enforce the dominant, or expected, poetics upon a writer in order to satisfy the anticipated reception of its readers (a dynamic developed more fully elsewhere by Lefevere).<sup>20</sup> Turning to *Luuanda*, we can deduce that the ‘image’ portrayed by Bender in her translation consequently had to conform to the literary expectations of the Western target culture, where African writers are often characterised as overtly political. The blurb for Bender’s translation is, therefore, dominated by a description of Vieira’s political activities with comparatively little space given for a discussion of the text itself. In addition, Bender has

<sup>14</sup> Helena Riausova, ‘A Difusão das Literaturas Luso-Africanas na Russia e Teoria das suas Relações Interliterárias’, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 33.2 (1996), 91-95.

<sup>15</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> James Currey, *Africa Writes Back: The Launch of the African Writers Series and the Launch of African Literature* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 2008), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Loretta Stec, ‘Publishing and Canonicity: The Case of Heinemann’s “African Writers Series”’, *Pacific Coast Philology*, 32.2 (1997), 140-149 (p. 142).

<sup>18</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (London; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Rosemary Marangoly George, Helen Scott and Ama Ata Aidoo, ‘“A New Tail to an Old Tale”: An Interview with Ama Ata Aidoo’, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 26.3, (1993), 297-308 (p. 305).

<sup>20</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation / History / Culture: A Sourcebook* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 15-30.

prefaced her translation with not only a further elaboration of the political history of both the text and its author, but also a brief sketch of life under colonial rule in Angola.<sup>21</sup> Historico-political circumstances are thus presented to the reader as vital to an understanding of the text, squaring with Kwame Anthony Appiah's notion of 'thick translation': 'translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context'.<sup>22</sup> In such a way, Bender attempts to preserve some of the cultural texture of *Luuanda*, but this attempt is inevitably and intimately bound up with matters of literary taste and ideological concerns, conforming as it does to the image of the politically engaged African writer à la Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o or Chinua Achebe.

In terms of lexical characteristics, one of the most striking features of Bender's translation is the amount of words she has left untranslated. This is a decision she defends in her preface: 'In this English translation of *Luuanda*, some of the stylistic aspects of its language have, unfortunately, been lost. A literal translation would have made the English incomprehensible'.<sup>23</sup> Faced with Vieira's linguistic experimentation, she has opted to produce certain words as they appear in the source text and provide a glossary to explain their meaning and context, adding to the overall 'thickness' of the translation. Accordingly, in 'Estória da Galinha e do Ovo', as citizens of the *musseques* begin to mock their greedy landlord, we read: 'Everyone already knew him and his threats and the older girls *uatobaram*, whooping insults at him'.<sup>24</sup> 'Uatobaram' is explained in the corresponding glossary entry as 'Kimbundu/Portuguese; third-person plural, present tense, of verb *uatobar* which is a "portuguesation" of the Kimbundu verb *ku toba* ("to act foolishly" or "to say foolish things")'.<sup>25</sup> This example is interesting, since it represents the only instance in all three *estórias* where a 'portuguesation' of a Kimbundu word has been left untranslated, and a discussion of its implications will raise serious questions as to the appropriateness of Bender's translation strategy.

If, as Walter Benjamin would have it, the task of the translator is to find 'the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original', then Bender has failed in her task. In fact, the hybridised lexis of the source text reaches closer to any notion of 'pure language' than the English translation could stake a claim to.<sup>26</sup> The language of *Luuanda* is that organic fusion of Kimbundu and Portuguese that Vieira grew up with in the *musseques*, and the transliteration of this dialect into the *estórias* lays out before the reader syntactical deformations that constitute a linguistic re-formation and a move towards the creation of a new language. Hence, as Benjamin conceives, 'a translation, instead of imitating the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's way of meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language'.<sup>27</sup> Is this not the substance of Vieira's linguistic experimentation? Indeed, Maria Tymoczko has made the comparison between translative and post-colonial writing, stating that 'the transmission of elements from one

<sup>21</sup> Vieira (1981), pp. v-x.

<sup>22</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Thick Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 417-429 (p. 427).

<sup>23</sup> Vieira (1981), p. ix.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1913-1926*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 258.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin, p. 260.

culture to another across a cultural and/or linguistic gap is a central concern of both these types of intercultural writing [that is, both translative and post-colonial writing] and similar constraints on the process of relocation affect both types of text'.<sup>28</sup> Seen in these terms, Vieira becomes the cultural translator, stretching out over the historical chasm that separates coloniser and colonised to reach for something purer. But it is a specific, contaminated sort of purity, one that shatters the sovereignty of the colonisers' language and then reconstructs it, all in the same motion, splicing in fragments of Luanda's own maternal sound, its own corrupted mother tongue.

As we return to Bender's translation now, it appears to us as something hollow. The reader becomes the voyeur, as Vieira's linguistic experimentalism is paraded through the pages of *Luuanda* and the reader is sent back and forth to the glossary in order to catch a glimpse of its inventiveness. The case of the reproduced 'portuguesation' mentioned above leads us into the crux of this inventiveness, while revealing some potential shortcomings in Bender's translation. In the word 'uatobaram', Vieira has 'transcribed the Kimbundu subject prefix *u-*, and the Kimbundu preterite tense marker *-a-*, including them in the loan-word [...]' For the Portuguese-ation he added the preterite suffix *-aram*'.<sup>29</sup> To do as Benjamin says and 'incorporate the original's way of meaning' into the translation would be to come up with a similar construction in English, an anglicisation of the Kimbundu word *ku toba*.<sup>30</sup> The rest of the glossary entry for *uatobaram* tells us: 'By extension the verb also describes the act of children who clap their hands against their mouths while yelling *uatobo*, *uatobo*, meaning "you fool, you fool"'.<sup>31</sup> Taking this into account, we might end up with a neologism along the lines of *uatobe*, or perhaps the more phonetic rendering *watobe*, as in: 'Everyone already knew him and his threats and the older girls were *watobing*, whooping insults at him'. In this way, we recreate some of the lexical originality of the source text and, I believe, come closer to Antoine Berman's conception of the 'trial of the foreign' (*épreuve de l'étranger*), where translation 'establishes a relationship between the Self-Same (*Propre*) and the Foreign by aiming to open up the foreign work to us in its utter foreignness'.<sup>32</sup> Bender fails because she misinterprets the 'foreignness' of the source text. What is foreign about *Luuanda* is not the fact that it is not in English; rather, the 'foreignness' of the text is that which makes it foreign for the reader in the source language; that is, the corruption of Portuguese that also constitutes a disavowal of colonial imposition and a celebratory statement of cultural sovereignty.

Some objections may be raised here. In the attempt to reproduce the originality of the source text through the hybridisation of English and Kimbundu, we could be accused of a kind of recolonisation. In order to assess the grounds for such an accusation, it is helpful to George Steiner's canonical essay 'The Hermeneutic Motion'.<sup>33</sup> Steiner has rightly been taken to task for his deep-seated Western outlook and the phallocentric and imperialist tone

<sup>28</sup> Maria Tymoczko, 'Post-colonial writing and literary translation', in *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 19-40 (p. 23).

<sup>29</sup> Tomás Jacinto, 'The Art of Luandino Vieira', in *Critical Perspectives on Lusophone Literature from Africa*, ed. by Donald Burness (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press), pp. 81-91 (p. 85).

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin, p. 260.

<sup>31</sup> Vieira (1981), p. 117.

<sup>32</sup> Antoine Berman, 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, trans. by Lawrence Venuti, pp. 284-97 (p. 284).

<sup>33</sup> George Steiner, 'The Hermeneutic Motion', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 186-91.

of much of his imagery.<sup>34</sup> In applying Steiner's translation theory to the text at hand, then, we run into a somewhat uncomfortable irony. As Steiner sees it, 'the translator invades, extracts, and brings home. The simile is that of the open-cast mine left an empty scar in the landscape'.<sup>35</sup> A scar in the landscape indeed. Steiner is useful to the extent that he underappreciates the differences, sometimes non-negotiable, between self and other. He calls for 'exchange without loss' without acknowledging the disruptive and potentially intractable quality of cultural difference.<sup>36</sup> Spivak calls this resistance 'the rhetoricity of language', warning that, should it go unheeded, 'a species of neo-colonialist construction of the non-western scene is afoot'.<sup>37</sup> These are the stakes of Steiner's translation theory, and herein is the irony. In pushing for his hermeneutic motion, the restitutive stage of his four-part theory of translation, Steiner only does damage to the difference he intends to 'equalize'.<sup>38</sup> As Tejaswini Niranjana has pointed out, 'translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism'.<sup>39</sup> What Steiner does not account for is the asymmetry that may characterise the parameters in which a translator operates. In the case of translating out of a 'Third-World' dialect into English, for example, the source text is subsumed by a global language, and the pretense of restitution becomes an empty gesture that echoes the vainglory of the 'civilising mission'. As Spivak asks with regard to this issue: 'In the case of the Third World Foreigner, is the law of the majority that of decorum, the equitable law of democracy, or the "law" of the strongest?'<sup>40</sup>

In this sense, perhaps my alternative to Bender's approach to translation is inadequate, amounting to no more than the subsummation of Kimbundu by another colonial language. Perhaps Bender's strategy of importing hybrids untranslated is the best an English translation could do, a twisted version of Steiner's hermeneutic motion that gives back precisely where it makes the reader work for her understanding, illuminating the source text by turning out the lights in the translation. Tymoczko reminds us that 'translation is one of the activities of a culture in which cultural expansion occurs and in which linguistic options are expanded through the importation of loan transfers, calques, and the like'.<sup>41</sup> This cultural expansion is made even more extreme in *Luuanda* by the fact that the calques in the text are loan transfers from the dialect by which the source language has been corrupted, with no relation to the target language whatsoever. So we have words like 'bitacaia', the Portuguese corruption of the Kimbundu word *ditacaia*, and the collection's title, 'Luuanda', the Kimbundu pronunciation of the Portuguese *Luanda*, all providing the reader with linguistic processes entirely alien to their own.<sup>42</sup> Bender's strategy thus appears to preclude the dangers of suppression that accompany translating into English, the language that represents, in David

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Robinson, 'Hermeneutic Motion', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker and Kirsten Malmkjaer (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 97-99; Lori Chamberlain, 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation', *Signs*, 13.3 (1988), 454-72.

<sup>35</sup> Steiner, p. 187.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>37</sup> Spivak, p. 399.

<sup>38</sup> Steiner, p. 190.

<sup>39</sup> Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Spivak, p. 399.

<sup>41</sup> Tymoczko, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Vieira (1981), p. 56.

Huddart's words, 'a threat to linguistic ecologies across the world'.<sup>43</sup> When Mieke Bal poses the timely question 'How can we work with, yet resist, the linguistic imperialism of English in the contemporary world?', perhaps here we have found an answer: translate less; import words that the reader will not understand; situate meaning around the text, rather than within it; and make the reader work harder.<sup>44</sup>

How does this approach reconcile with our third obstacle, orality? In order to import words untranslated, we must also provide a glossary, or else risk alienating the reader. Despite the fact that these were Vieira's intentions towards his Portuguese readership, and the reason that it was not until the eighth edition of *Luuanda* that he authorised the use of a glossary, glosses on untranslated words can only serve to broaden the reader's cultural awareness and thereby mitigate some of the loss, potentially damaging, as we have seen, inherent in any act of translation.<sup>45</sup> Though with the meaning of the text located in the glossary, does the text not then lose its orality? It is true that the text can no longer be read aloud without lengthy side notes that disrupt the storytelling process. On the other hand, it could be argued that the 'thickness' of the text helps to recreate this orality within the reading experience itself. By sending the reader in and out of the glossary, for example, a dialogic aspect is introduced into his reading experience, not dissimilar from the back-and-forth quality of oral interchange. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the form of the text was designed to be 'told and retold', and, with a lexis only accessible to the target audience by way of paratextual commentary, Bender's translation proves resistant to the orality set out by Vieira as one of *Luuanda*'s most distinctive features.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, we arrive at a reading of Bender's translation no more certain of its success than when we started. Typical of any translation, we could discuss the way in which it has negotiated the difference of the source text almost *ad infinitum*, for loss in translation is as inevitable as it is stimulating. Bender has failed to replicate the hybrid nature of Vieira's language but respected the fact that its inventiveness can never be reproduced without a potentially damaging change in the terms of its signification. In translation, the text has lost its original form and become reliant on contextual information that stresses its political relevance, whilst altering the reading experience of the target audience. However, there is still one complaint to be made: Bender also does not attempt to recuperate this inevitable loss. Because there is only failure in translation, a truism that stretches back to Saint Jerome as he realises: 'If I translate word for word I produce nonsense, but if I have to change something in the order of the words or their sound I could be accused of failing in my duties as a translator'.<sup>47</sup> Accepting this failure is the first step for the translator. To accept that translating is what Ortega y Gasset calls 'a utopian task' is the *sine qua non* of the act of translation. But this is only the point of departure.<sup>48</sup> What is lacking in Bender's translation is the urge to move beyond failure and into experimentation.

<sup>43</sup> David Huddart, *Involuntary Associations: Postcolonial Studies and World Englishes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p. 38.

<sup>44</sup> Mieke Bal, 'Translating Translation', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6 (1) (2007), 109-124 (p. 109).

<sup>45</sup> Phyllis Peres, *Transcultururation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 38.

<sup>46</sup> Ribeiro, p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Lefevere, *Translation / History / Culture: A Sourcebook*, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, 'The Misery and the Splendor of Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, trans. by Elizabeth Gamble Miller, pp. 49-64 (p. 49).

What Spivak calls ‘the politics of translation’ is no doubt delicate when it comes to the translation of a text like *Luuanda*. However, it is also a text that urges the translator to, as Niranjana would have it, ‘reclaim the notion of translation by deconstructing it and reinscribing its potential as a strategy of resistance’.<sup>49</sup> Resistance was the driving force behind Vieira’s invention and so it should be with the translation. We think of Venuti’s translation of Derrida, in which he tried to recreate Derrida’s text ‘by inventing comparable effects — even when they threaten to twist the English into strange new forms’.<sup>50</sup> We are also reminded of Philip Lewis who, himself a translator of Derrida, calls for ‘strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own’.<sup>51</sup> A translation of *Luuanda* begins to emerge that attempts to recreate for the target language some of the political upheaval occasioned by the source text at the time of its publication. In 1964 *Luuanda* won Angola’s top literary award, and the following year the Society of Portuguese Writers awarded it their highest prize for fiction. In 2006, José Luandino Vieira was awarded the Prémio Camões, the most prestigious literary award in the Portuguese language, an award which he subsequently refused. This is no second-rate author, nor is *Luuanda* a second-rate text. My final question is: is it not time we had an English translation of *Luuanda* to match the revolutionary experimentalism with which Vieira endowed his work?

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<sup>49</sup> Niranjana, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence Venuti, ‘Introduction’, *Critical Inquiry*, 27.2, (2001), 169–173 (p. 173).

<sup>51</sup> Phillip Lewis, ‘The Measure of Translation Effects’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 264–283 (p. 270).

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# 'A Thousand Violins in the Palm of My Hand': The Suitability of Federico García Lorca's Poetry for Musical Adaptation

This article examines the suitability of the poetry of Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) for musical adaptation, and particularly its value in constructing an operatic libretto. The article first considers the technical and cultural aspects of Lorca's writing, drawing on the treatment of Lorca's poem 'Malagueña' by the American composer George Crumb in his 2010 work *The Ghosts of Alhambra*. I will then explore more general questions of how text can be dramatised through music, using Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, a setting of an excerpt of Goethe's *Faust* for voice and piano, as well as Verdi's *La Traviata*, itself an adaptation of Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias*. The article concludes with a brief consideration of the implications for my own treatment of Lorca's poetry, in the context of my personal praxis as a composer.

*Hay muy pocos ángeles que canten,  
hay muy pocos perros que ladren,  
mil violines caben en la palma de mi mano.*

— Federico García Lorca<sup>1</sup>

I am currently in the process of writing an opera in which the poetry of Federico García Lorca is a major component of the libretto and underpins the thematic structure of the piece as a whole. In order to achieve a successful and cohesive work, it is first necessary to consider the suitability of Lorca's poetry for a musical setting in particular, and then extend this analysis into the textual needs of an operatic libretto in general. The purpose of the following analysis is neither to emphasize its application in my personal compositional choices, nor to suggest that effective opera libretti could not be constructed (in fact, they assuredly have been) with historical and contemporary aesthetics radically different from my own. Rather, this essay is a reflection upon the treatment of text by major figures within the operatic genre, and a critical analysis of the possibilities presented to the musician by Lorca's work.

<sup>1</sup> 'There are very few angels who sing. / There are very few dogs who bark. / A thousand violins fit in the palm of my hand.' (trans. by Catherine Brown), from Federico García Lorca, 'Casida II: Del llanto', in *Lorca: Collected Poems*, ed. by Christopher Maurer and trans. by Catherine Brown, Cola Franzen, Angela Jaffray and others (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), pp. 788-89.

## Overview of Lorca's Style and Technique

Lorca is a writer who does the composer a number of technical and thematic favors. His work is deeply influenced by rhythmic, structural, and cultural elements that find conceptual commonality between artists of the word and the note. As a child, he was heavily exposed to Spanish folk music by his family and relatives.<sup>2</sup> He was a classically trained pianist and surrounded himself with musicians and dancers – notably Manuel de Falla, whose work inspired Lorca to compose *Canciones españolas antiguas* for piano and voice – and was a major figure in the exploding Spanish artistic renaissance of the 1920s and 30s.<sup>3</sup> In 1922, Lorca participated in the Concurso de Cante Jondo, a flamenco festival in Granada that was organized by Falla.<sup>4</sup> Lorca entitled a 1921 collection of his poetry (unpublished for ten years) *Poema del Cante Jondo*, and it is in these that a great deal of rhythmic and thematic material borrowed from the musical genre may be found. Four of them explicitly use ‘guitar’ in their title or a transparent reference such as ‘The Six Strings’. Others mention the instrument in the body of their text, and various other references to sound and instruments such as bells and castanets occur throughout.<sup>5</sup>

The short poem ‘Crótalo’, Spanish for ‘castanet’ (literally, ‘rattlesnake’), is an example of one of the poems from the collection in which a composer would find a lot of technical and thematic crossover between respective genres. Castanets are common in Sevillanas and some flamenco,<sup>6</sup> and Lorca’s poem opens with the simple identification that three syllables of the word ‘crótalo’ have a similar rhythm to its idiomatic playing:

Crótalo  
Crótalo  
Crótalo  
Escarabajo sonoro<sup>7</sup>

The final line is satisfying in the original Spanish, as ‘Escarabajo sonoro’ extends the rhythmic structure of the first three repeated lines into a fourth line that is three times the length. Easily compartmentalized rhythmic motifs are common and highly utile for classical composers. An example that is both well-known and happens to be similar to the short-short-short-long structure of Lorca’s is a product of Ludwig van Beethoven’s pen:



Fig. 1: Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, opening bars.  
My transcription.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Gibson, *The Death of Lorca* (Chicago: J. Phillip O’Hara, 1973), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Lorca’s companionship with Falla and other musicians is illustrated in Francisco García Lorca, *In the Green Morning: Memories of Federico*, trans. by Christopher Maurer (New York: New Directions, 1986), pp. 121-22.

<sup>4</sup> Gibson, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> On the indivisible relationship between Lorca’s poetry and his interests in music, see D. Gareth Walters, ‘Music’, in *A Companion to Federico García Lorca*, ed. by Federico Bonaddio, Monografías, 226 (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2007), pp. 63-83.

<sup>6</sup> The use of castanets in Spanish dance music (and specifically flamenco) is extremely varied; for an overview, see Rita Vega de Triana, *Antonio Triana and the Spanish Dance: A Personal Recollection* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1995), pp. 91-93.

<sup>7</sup> Federico García Lorca, ‘Crótalo’, in *Collected Poems*, pp. 150-51 (p. 150). For a translation, see footnote 8 below. We are grateful to Casanova & Lynch for their support in reproducing the original Spanish versions of Lorca’s poems.

From small ideas such as these composers can create, and have created, entire symphonies of the highest artistic merit, and in the case of composers such as Wagner, entire operatic cycles.

Falla's 'Jota' for baritone and piano from *Siete canciones populares españolas* demonstrates the effectiveness with which both generic and idiomatically Spanish rhythmic structures like those utilized by Lorca can be applied in a musical setting. The melodic figure in triple meter in the top voice is repeated twice, and then spins itself into a threefold repetition. This is nearly the same idea in similar proportions as in Lorca's poem, although there is no evidence of a direct inspirational connection in either direction. The figure even contains a triplet idea that references the castanet rhythm employed by Lorca:

Fig. 2: Lorca's 'castanet triplet' in Falla's setting (mm. 24-35). Manuel de Falla, '4. Jota', in *Siete Canciones populares Españolas* (1914), pp. 15-21 (p. 16). <[https://imslp.org/wiki/7\\_Canciones\\_populares\\_Españolas\\_\(Falla%2C\\_Manuel\\_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/7_Canciones_populares_Españolas_(Falla%2C_Manuel_de))> [accessed 1 April 2019].

The excerpt includes another common feature in the Spanish idiom, the hemiola. A hemiola is the division of groups of threes into duple figures:



Fig. 3: A sample hemiola rhythm. My transcription.

The top voice of the left hand utilizes a repeated hemiola ostinato C#–B–C#–B, etc. The effect on the listener is that the melody sounds as if it is in the simple (duple), broader tempo of a 3/4 time signature, until the third repetition occurs with accents on the downbeats in the second line to define the more sprightly rhythmic impulse of 3/8.

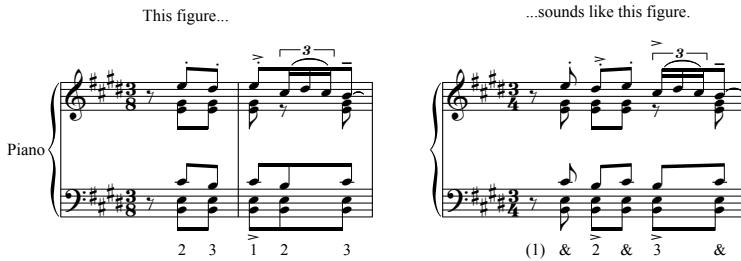


Fig. 4: The effects of the hemiola in Falla's 'Jota'. My transcription.

This idea is rooted in the rhythmic idiosyncrasies of Spanish folk and traditional music, and will recur throughout the examples that follow.

A major point of concern for any consumer of literature is the necessity of translating a foreign language into a tongue familiar to the reader, and this problem is greatly magnified for a musician seeking to adapt a foreign-language text. Naturally, some works suffer more than others from translation, and Lorca falls definitively into the former category. Since Lorca's style often relies heavily on culturally idiomatic rhythm and pulse, a composer is likely to encounter serious problems if they choose to work in another language. An English translation of 'Crótalo' as 'Castanet [...] sonorous scarab'<sup>8</sup> for example, does not preserve Lorca's rhythmic structure very well. There are several different attempts by translators to match the appeal of the original, but all are as interchangeably inferior. The translation not only robs the English reader of Lorca's natural rhythmic prowess and character, but also deprives the text of an elemental quality of its cultural flair. 'Castanet,' with a hard consonant at the end, loses the rolling quality of 'cró-ta-lo, cró-ta-lo, cró-ta-lo.' Worse, the last line loses an entire beat in English. These shortcomings might not seem very tragic given the benefit of non-Spanish speakers having casual access to Lorca's body of work, but in musical terms, the shifting emphasis, length of line and diminished autological experience would have a major impact on a composer's fundamental conception of the musical content.

The depth of Lorca's exploration of the Spanish idiom does not create solely conceptual and technical challenges to overcome when working with a translation. Information imprinted deep within the language itself evaporates when that foundation is broken up. For Lorca, the exploration of these rhythms is not merely a matter of comfortable idioms employed for popular effect and appeal with the Spanish public. His work reflects an attempt to identify and animate a Spanish experiential commonality that exists at the very boundaries of history, speech, and sound. The *cante jondo* idiom, for instance, is the most serious reflection of flamenco. It originated amongst the Andalusian *gitanos*, and is 'the essence of the art of flamenco and forms the foundation from which a multitude of other styles developed.'<sup>9</sup> Even the word *jondo*, meaning 'deep,' is spelled with a 'j' rather than with an 'h' as in *hondo*, the common Spanish word of the same meaning, to reflect the uniquely aspirated Andalusian allophone [χ], thus imbuing the very definition of the genre with a profound sense of regional cultural ownership. The artform cannot be uttered or written – or the depths of it expressed – without propitiations being made to the underlying Andalusian spirit.

<sup>8</sup>Federico García Lorca, 'Crótalo', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 150-51 (p.151) (trans. by Cola Franzen).

<sup>9</sup>Christof Jung, 'Cante Flamenco', in *Flamenco: Gypsy Dance and Music from Andalusia*, ed. by Claus Schreiner and trans. by Mollie Comerford Peters (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000), pp. 57-88 (p. 68).

One finds this idiomatic essentiality everywhere in Lorca's work. Even the most seemingly simple poetic jotting about a tiny instrument for the fingertips is infused with deep and historical cultural vitality that evaporates the moment translation is attempted. Certainly, this exists to some degree in any translation, but in translating Lorca, it feels less like a trimming of the hedges and more a cutting of the root. In any setting of his poetry to music – particularly in opera, which is of primary concern to this author – the question of language will be of much greater import than, say, aesthetic concerns (such as the preferential contemporary aesthetic of Italian in opera during Mozart's life, as opposed to his native German).

## Lorca's 'Malagueña' and its Musical Treatment by George Crumb

There have been many settings of Lorca's poetry in song, and his spring will likely continue to yield fresh water for as long as words are set to sound. American composer George Crumb spent a significant portion of his career in the 60s and 70s setting Lorca's poetry to music. Among his several treatments is *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, a seven-movement work for baritone, guitar, and percussion featuring seven of Lorca's poems from his *Poema del Cante Jondo*.<sup>10</sup>

Crumb's orchestration and composition around Lorca's text reflect a fundamental conception of flamenco. Recognizable to any audience are the basic figures of guitarist, percussionist (admittedly, in a piece by George Crumb the percussionist will have a somewhat more impressive scaffolding of hardware surrounding them than the average collection of Spaniards hammering out the rhythm on a tabletop), and soloist. The baritone is also responsible for playing the claves occasionally, thus completing the imagery of a soloist with a small, hand-held set of wooden percussion instruments ('Crótalo, crótalo, crótalo ...').

The sixth movement uses the text of Lorca's 'Malagueña', and shares the title. A *malagueña* is a traditional flamenco composition, and a brief history and some examples will be useful for understanding Lorca's construction. It is derived from the *fandango*, an ancient Andalusian dance under the umbrella of flamenco, but it evolved over time into the freely structured rhapsodic style of *cante libre*.<sup>11</sup> The following rendering of the fandango rhythm which also appears in the *malagueña* is familiar to most people:<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 5: A simple fandango rhythm. My transcription.

Traditionally, this rhythm would have been clapped and accentuated by the accompanying dancing, and, as with many ancient Spanish dance rhythms, it includes the hemiola.

<sup>10</sup> George Crumb, *The Ghosts of Alhambra* (New York: Peters, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> On the origin of the *malagueña* from within the fandango tradition and its subsequent evolution, see Jung, 'Cante flamenco', p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> Ravel's *Boléro* presents a modified fandango rhythm as its key percussive motif. Maurice Ravel, *Boléro* (autograph manuscript, [1928]), p. 1 (m. 1) <[https://imslp.org/wiki/Boléro\\_\(Ravel,\\_Maurice\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Boléro_(Ravel,_Maurice))> [accessed 8 April 2018].

The liberality with which various *malagueñas* and derived pieces treat this figure is as diverse as the composers working within the genre. Two examples will suffice to suggest the breadth of treatment. The famous ‘Malagueña’ from the suite *Andalusia* by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona keeps the hemiola as a motif, but reduces the four-note interjections to two notes and imbues them with melodic content. The fandango rhythm is still easily identifiable even without the suggestion of the title, and it highlights the stylistic force traditional Spanish rhythms embody:

A musical score for piano in 3/4 time, key signature of A major (three sharps). The left hand plays sustained notes on the G4 and B4 strings. The right hand plays eighth-note chords in the treble clef staff. Measure 11 starts with a half note on G4, followed by eighth-note chords (G-B-D) on B4, G4, and B4. Measure 12 starts with a half note on G4, followed by eighth-note chords (G-B-D) on B4, G4, and B4.

Fig 6: 'Malagueña', mm. 1-6. My transcription, from Ernesto Lecuona, *Andalucía* (New York: Edward B. Marks, 1956) p. 26. Reproduced by kind permission of the Publishers.

The work is very freely composed in block sections with highly rhapsodic transitions between them – as would be expected – and variations of this rhythm serve as the bulk of the thematic material. A subtle treatment is present in Emmanuel Chabrier’s lyric symphonic composition *España*, which begins with a bare suggestion of the fandango rhythm. This would be unidentifiable as such to a blind listener, but the evidence beyond the title that this was indeed a Spanish idiom would be the visual of the conductor beating 3/8 time against the larger 3/4 pulse. As with all art forms, whether one translates a text or records a work that was intended to be performed live, the communicative powers of the artist are diminished, even when all that is removed is the single musician who performs in silence.

All' con fuoco

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

f pizz.

f pizz.

f pizz.

f pizz.

f pizz.

ff pizz.

Fig. 7: 3/8 time and the hemiola in the opening bars to *España*. Emmanuel Chabrier, *España* (Paris: Enoch, Frères & Costallat, [1884]). Repr.: Paul Dukas and Emmanuel Chabrier, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' and '*España*' in Full Score (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997), pp. 79-139 (p. 79) (mm. 1-6) <[https://imslp.org/wiki/España\\_\(Chabrier%2C\\_Emanuel\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/España_(Chabrier%2C_Emanuel))> [accessed 5 April 2019].

The question posed by the hemiola is resolved shortly thereafter when the harps join and fill in a triplet variation of the fandango rhythm:



Fig. 8: The harps enter with a triplet fandango. Chabrier, *España*, p. 80 (mm. 11-12).

This concept of short rhythmic bursts is used to great effect in Lorca's poem. He preserves the idea of the fandango triplet meter in the text and accentuates the rhapsodic quality of the malagueña with rapid-fire phrases that do not rhythmically elide with each other. Here is the rhythmic breakdown of the first three lines of Lorca's 'Malagueña' expressed in the most natural terms using simple music notation:

<p>La muerte entra y sale de la taberna</p>	<p><i>Death enters and leaves the tavern.<sup>13</sup></i></p>

Fig. 9: A simple rhythmic breakdown of Lorca's 'Malagueña'. My transcription.

Once again, we become aware of the artistic poverty imposed upon Lorca's writing by translation. 'La muerte' establishes with great effect the musical thrust of the poem, in which regard the monosyllabic English 'death' is an extremely poor substitute. Beyond the obvious rhythmic shortcoming, 'La muerte' relies on three successive short vowel sounds ('ah'-‘eh’-‘eh’, /a ‘mwer-te/) to propel the reader or speaker through the text. Moreover, their motivic use in the first three lines creates artistic cohesion of the first stanza and the only longer vowel sound – the longer 'ee' sound /i/ – is both the geographical and thematic pivot point of the text.

A rendering of the text using only its vowels reveals a deep and symmetrical satisfaction of the idea of alteration. The first line establishes the unit (/a/ - /e/ - /e/) as motivic. The second line functions as a linguistic mirror and is brilliantly illustrative of the text. The vowel sounds of 'entra' ('enters') are an inverted permutational fragment of the first line. The vowels of the fragment are reversed in 'sale' ('leaves'), with the unique sound /i/ serving as the beat of reflection (/e/ - /a/ - /i/ - /a/ - /e/). The presentation of the theme of alteration on both the semantic and the linguistic levels is particularly effective. The final line is an inversion of the first (/e/ - /a/ - /a/) with the extra two beats /e/ - /a/ operating as a tag to diffuse the rhythmic momentum of the second line.

Setting the tag aside for a moment, the first stanza is a perfection of poetical linguistic conception. The first five syllables naturally group together both conceptually and rhythmically as a unit of three and a unit of two ('la muerte entra'). The /i/ syllable reverses them into a unit of two and a unit of three ('sale de la ta-') with all the phonemes reversed as well.

<sup>13</sup> Federico García Lorca, 'Malagueña', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 144-47 (p. 144). The translation of this poem used throughout this article is taken from Crumb, *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, where it is included on an unnumbered early page of the score.

/a/ - /e/ - /e/	'ah' - 'eh' - 'eh'
/e/ - /a/ - /i/ - /a/ - /e/	'eh' - 'ah' - 'ee' - 'ah' - 'eh'
/e/ - /a/ - /a/ - (/e/ - /a/)	'eh' - 'ah' - 'ah' - ('eh' - 'ah')

The issue of the tag is only problematic insofar as one imposes the condition of total symmetry as an ideal. It is extremely rare in practice for an artist's fluidly idealistic conception to fit comfortably into the squared dimensions of reality, and an artist must make choices to deal with blunt truths. In Lorca's case, there is no avoiding the fact that the word 'taberna' has three syllables and will insert a slight flaw into the otherwise crystalline structure of the stanza. However, very often these quirks provide a deep and profound insight into an artist's craft. As great artists seem to do, he converts this minor weakness into a greater architectural strength.

The final stanza is a repetition of the first in which the architectural scale has been increased from the level of the syllable to the word, and the word to the line.

La muerte entra y sale, y sale y entra la muerte de la taberna.	<i>Death enters and leaves, and leaves and enters the death of the tavern.<sup>14</sup></i>
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Once again, the idea of a mirror around the syllable /i/ is present. However, instead of merely serving as a pivot for a few words as in the first stanza, now it reflects and reverses two entire lines 'La muerte entra y sale'. Likewise, the tag from the first stanza that was only the last two syllables of 'taberna' is now the entire line ('de la taberna'), and solidifies the conviction that this minor issue has been considered and accounted for by Lorca. Finally, Lorca confirms the three-beat/five-beat line structure introduced in the first stanza as thematic with the three-line/five-lines structure of the first and last stanzas respectively, thus fusing the conceptual architecture of the outer two stanzas into a thoroughly cohesive whole.

It is sufficient (although certainly not exhaustive) to demonstrate the potential shortcomings of translation by examining the effect it has upon the linguistics of the first stanza. All of the aforementioned elements are either lost or weakened in the English. 'Death', rather than ending with a vowel sound that rolls naturally into the following line, concludes with the voiceless dental fricative (**death**, /θ/). This phoneme both literally concludes the forward motion as the tongue touches the back of the teeth, thus requiring an additional movement of the tongue that impedes elision with the following word, and artistically introduces a sense of arrest to a reading. While the English does loosely preserve the idea of vowel alternation, it has several major shortcomings. It utilizes four distinct vowel sounds — 'eh' /e/, 'uh' /ə/, 'ah' /æ/, and 'ee' /i:/ — and arranges them in a comparatively graceless fashion:

/e/ /e/ - /ə/ - /æ/ - /i:/ /ə/ - / æ/ - /ə/	'eh' 'eh' - 'uh' - 'ah' - 'ee' 'uh' - 'ah' - 'uh'
---	---

Here, the pivot point of the second line is the 'ah' /æ/ sound which repeats in the middle of the final line, collapsing the delicate architecture of Lorca's original. There is alternation of

<sup>14</sup> Federico García Lorca, 'Malagueña', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 144-47 (pp. 144-46). Translation by Crumb.

‘eh’/e/ and ‘ah’/æ/ sounds in only the barest terms as there is only a grammatical relationship rather than a sonic one, and there is no inversion or evolution of the motivic features of Lorca’s original. There are three syllables leading of the pivot, and four nearly unrelated syllables in the group following it. Worse, the one line that is unambiguously symmetrical is the final one, which destroys the concept of the tag that was critical to Lorca’s conception of the structure of the final stanza and, by extension, the architecture of the poem as a whole.

Admittedly, these may seem like trivial or pedantic technical concessions to the average reader, but for a poet working with the aesthetics of words it is clear they have the potential to affect a tectonic shift in conception. There is every reason to expect the same would be true for a composer. A brief illustration of one form this might take is the effect of the easy rolling vacillation between short vowels of the original becoming altered by the tendency to linger on the long ‘ee’/i:/ sounds in the English, which somewhat undermines the coming and going imagery of the text. This might draw a composer – either consciously or unconsciously – towards the interpretive implications of ‘leaving’ being a slightly more dominant theme than ‘coming.’ Given that this is a poem about death, it is easy to conceive of the number and sort of creative variances towards which composers might be led. Architecturally, the concepts of phrase length, beats and tags all have direct musical analogues that would most certainly be points of great consideration for the thoughtful composer.

The first line of the second stanza is a nod to the hemiola figure intrinsic to the fandango rhythm, and serves as a transition between the three lines preceding and following it:

Pasan caballos y gente siniestra por los hondos caminos de la guitarra.	<i>Black horses</i> <i>and sinister people pass through</i> <i>the deep pathways</i> <i>of the guitar.<sup>15</sup></i>
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Fig. 10: A rhythmic depiction of ‘Pasan caballos negros’. My transcription.

The next three lines comprise the rest of the sentence beginning with ‘Pasan’, and are both a rhythmical and metaphorical improvisation on the first three lines. The first begins on a pickup beat and is a little longer, the second treats the words ‘por los’ ornamenteally, and the final line is identical to its counterpart. Note that both sentences end with ‘de la’, and the rhythmic consistency of Lorca’s writing accentuates this feature:



Fig. 11: A rhythmic description of the following lines. My transcription.

Note that the word *hondos* has been spelled in the common Spanish rather than with the Andalusian ‘j’ when the word is not used as the title of the genre.

<sup>15</sup> Federico García Lorca, ‘Malagueña’, in *Collected Poems*, pp. 144–47 (pp. 144–45). Translation by Crumb.

It is sufficient for the purposes of this essay to analyze Crumb's setting of these lines to get the flavor of his style and approach as a whole. After a brief introductory figure, Crumb presents the main idea of the first three lines in 7/16 time:

Fig. 12: George Crumb, 'Malagueña', in *The Ghosts of Alhambra (Spanish Songbook 1)* (New York: Peters, 2010), p. 11 (mm. 4-6). Edition Peters No. 68286; © 2010 by C. F. Peters Corporation, New York.  
This excerpt, and all those that follow, are reproduced by kind permission of the Publishers.

Although the metamorphosis from a language-driven aesthetic to a musical one has not led Crumb to produce a more obvious rendering of Lorca's arching vowel structure, it has nevertheless manifested as a background image in his structure. 'La muerte' begins on an eighth note beat, and the figure develops from one-, to two-, to a three-note idea on the longer /i/ vowel sound in 'y sale', which we recall was Lorca's pivot point. The final line 'de la taberna' is set off in the eighth note beat but brings back the single sixteenth note of the first bar, suggesting a background reference to Lorca's arching treatment.

Crumb's choice to shift the architecture to the background rather than the foreground as it is in Lorca's poem is probably a matter of his style and aesthetic, but nevertheless serves as an excellent example of how information may be retained or lost in extremely subtle ways through translation. While it is not prominent, it is clear that something of Lorca's ideas has been retained in Crumb's setting. It is impossible to know without asking Crumb how much of this was intended or manifested from more obscure machinations of an artist's mind, but the fact of its presence on some identifiable level is certainly well beyond numerical games.

However, although the architecture of the language is weakened, Crumb provides artistic compensation by strengthening musical ideas that are only barely suggested by Lorca. Lorca's only explicit animation of his rhythms as inspired by the *malagueña* is the title. Crumb seizes on this opportunity by giving the guitar chords that use the half-step motion between the first and second scale degrees typical of the Phrygian mode. This harmonic progression is extremely familiar to the ear as 'Spanish', and is derived from the generalized example below:



Fig. 13: a stock instance of Phrygian motion. My transcription.

Crumb uses the Phrygian figure in his setting of ‘Malagueña’ to preserve the idiom for the listener but alters the harmonies to avoid a familiar treatment. The rough harmonic outline of the alternating sixth and seventh guitar chords in the example is  $c^6-G^{6/4}$ , or  $iv^6-I^{6/4}$  (analyzing for simplicity only the upper three notes in the chord), with the C/E $\flat$  to B/D Phrygian motion sounding prominent in the texture.

The asymmetrical measuring is an interesting choice, as 7/16 is naturally grouped into sets of simple (duple) and compound (triple) figures and lightly reflects the hemiola idea. It proceeds through the first three lines of Lorca’s poem, and after the word *taberna*, the percussionist – punctuated by the baritone’s claves – plays a version of the first three beats of the fandango rhythm.

Fig. 14: George Crumb, ‘Malagueña’, in *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, p. 11 (m. 8)

The same three lines are repeated, this time concluding with a full statement of the fandango rhythm, accompanied by a flourish on the last note on the tamtam.

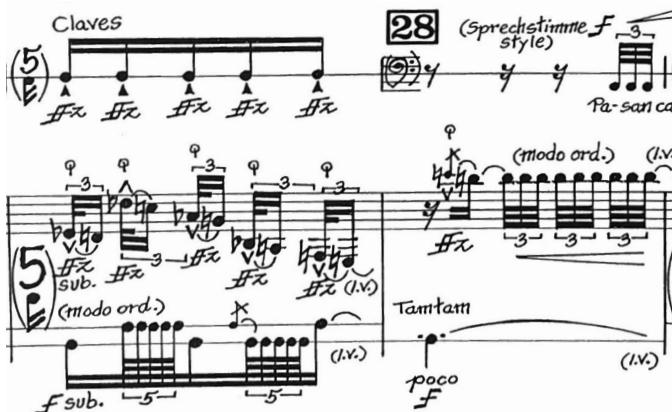


Fig. 15: George Crumb, 'Malagueña', in *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, p. 11 (mm. 14-15).

What follows is a moment wherein the differences between the aims and machinations of poetry and music collide. Crumb omits the word 'negros' from the line 'Pasan caballos negros'. Recall that this is exactly the word that forces the natural triplet rhythm of 'Pasan caballos' into the hemiola in Lorca's text.

Structurally, Lorca's poetic form transitions from one idea to the next, but Crumb's preference is for this section to focus on the conceptual forward motion of the 'sinister people passing through the deep pathways of the guitar'. Hemiolas are naturally slowing, as a quick three pattern becomes a broader rhythmic group, so Crumb cuts the word:

Fig. 16: George Crumb, 'Malagueña', in *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, p. 11 (mm. 15-16).

Crumb finds a charming answer for this regrettable necessity. 'Pasan caballos negros' falls into a syllabic group of 3+2+2. In musical terms, that forms a 7/16 bar, precisely the figure on which Crumb builds the material of the first three lines. In a curious way, he has replaced the vocalization of the word 'black' by painting it on the background of the piece. Will anyone hear that in the music? There is not a single chance, and I cannot say with certainty that Crumb intended it. However, I do know that this type of highly conspicuous coincidence is something that talented composers – and indeed, talented artists in general – are able to achieve. This could be Crumb's way of making amends for altering the work of a poet he admired a great deal.

The final three lines with which we will concern ourselves take on a grotesque and comical quality in Crumb's setting. Starting with 'Pasan caballos', the lines are delivered in the improvisatory and staccato bursts as they were treated by Lorca. Crumb utilizes a series of five descending chords as an accompanying figure, echoing the four-chord harmonic descent common in flamenco music (iv-III-II-I). Crumb then takes the risk of employing the woodblocks as an echo of the horses as they traverse the sinister, deep pathways of the guitar.

In comedy, timing is – as they say – everything. The use of woodblocks for horse sounds by comedians such as Spike Jones is so ubiquitous that it is the musical equivalent of taking 'two empty halves of coconut and banging them together.' One needs to look no further than the final three bars of comedic classical composer Peter Schickele's dramatic oratorio *Oedipus Tex* to discover that if having sex with a horse is a premise in classical music, the woodblocks are the punchline.<sup>16</sup> It is unsurprising then, that Crumb does not place this cartoonish element of theater directly over the word 'caballos'. This sort of amateurish sound painting would undoubtedly verge on patronizing the audience; it would risk saying, 'For those of you who have not yet become learned in Spanish ... it's a horse.' By setting it over the text two lines later, Crumb brilliantly evokes a morbidly humorous conception of this bleak journey, reminiscent of the grim and absurd collision of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza with the Knight of the Looking Glass and his squire's grotesquely oversized papier-mâché nostrils. The guitar embellishes this asymmetrical clopping with glissandos to heighten the spectacle:

Fig. 17: George Crumb, 'Malagueña', in *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, p. 12 (mm. 20-22).

Finally, in acknowledgement of Lorca's identical construction of the lines 'de la taberna' and 'de la guitarra', the section closes with a repetition of the partial fandango rhythm that occurred at the end of the first three.

All of this is very effective and interesting, and above all, listenable and accessible to an audience member without much musical training. The thrust of Lorca's imagery and rhythmic motifs find a very natural home under Crumb's pen, and one would expect that

<sup>16</sup> P. D. Q. Bach, *Oedipus Tex* (S. 150), ed. by Peter Schickele (King of Prussia: Theodore Presser Company, [n. d.]).

a great and diverse portion of Lorca's writing would be similarly well-suited for musical adaptation.

## The Suitability of Text for Traditional Opera Libretti

Having established the issues of suitability and the basic principles through which musicians might approach Lorca's work, it is time to address the setting and function of text in opera, and the possible problems that utilizing poetry for those purposes may present. It would seem that poetry being a precise, concise, and symbolically rich rendering of language would be a good starting point for the construction of a libretto. Poetry is the historical substrate of song, and even to this day, pop writers feel a suspiciously guilty compulsion to rhyme.

In practice, however, a great deal of poetry is particularly unsuitable for operatic composition, and not just because poems tend to deal with narrative on the small scale. The problem is one of distillation. Good poetry seeks to infuse language with as much meaning between the words as in them. In opera, it is the goal of most composers to fill those voids with music. This is the distinguishing difference between 'opera' and what I would term 'operatic'. Opera is a genre of staged drama that is nearly or entirely sung. 'Operatic' refers, by my narrow definition, to the treatment of musical language itself as a dramatic presence. Ostensibly, an opera could be thoroughly non-operatic by this definition.

Hence, Crumb's setting of 'Malagueña' is neither operatic in scope nor conception, despite the writing being highly illustrative of the text. The only moment where the music begins to take on the guise of an independent voice in the poetic drama is the super-textual commentary or interpretation the woodblock moment provides, but it never rises to the level of a purely musical dramatic presence. It informs the listener of what Crumb might be reading into Lorca's work for a laugh, but it is not something the larger dramatic thrust must engage with to create resolution of the song as a whole. In pursuit of this concept, we will begin first with an analysis of the relative artistic merits and challenges of setting the text of a play to music.

Franz Schubert's second composition is the song *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, op. 2. It is taken from scene 15 of Goethe's epic poetic stage drama *Faust Part I*, in which Gretchen is sitting at a spinning wheel mulling the potential ramifications of a romantic relationship with the title character. The scene is short, and Schubert uses the entire text:<sup>17</sup>

My peace is gone  
My heart is heavy;  
I shall never  
Ever find peace again.

When he's not with me,  
Life's like the grave;

---

<sup>17</sup> The text is taken from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Gretchen at the spinning-wheel', trans. by Richard Stokes <<https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/199>> [accessed 6 April 2019]. The translation is © Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder*, published by Faber, and is provided courtesy of Oxford Lieder ([www.oxfordlieder.co.uk](http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk)).

The whole world  
Is turned to gall.

My poor head  
Is crazed,  
My poor mind  
Shattered.

My peace is gone  
My heart is heavy;  
I shall never  
Ever find peace again.

It's only for him  
I gaze from the window,  
It's only for him  
I leave the house.

His proud bearing  
His noble form,  
The smile on his lips,  
The power of his eyes,

And the magic flow  
Of his words,  
The touch of his hand,  
And ah, his kiss!

My peace is gone  
My heart is heavy;  
I shall never  
Ever find peace again.

My bosom  
Yearns for him.  
Ah! if I could clasp  
And hold him,

And kiss him  
To my heart's content,  
And in his kisses  
Perish!

In the staged version of the scene the metaphor of the spinning wheel works very well with Gretchen 'spinning her wheels' over Faust. Schubert's adaptation depicts the spinning wheel with a cyclical stream of 16th notes in the piano:



Fig. 18: The cyclical sixteenth notes. Franz Schubert, ‘Gretchen am Spinnrade’, in *Schubert-Album., Band 1*, ed. by Max Friedlaender (Leipzig: Peters [n.d.]), pp. 176–81 (p. 176) (mm. 1–3) <[https://imslp.org/wiki/Gretchen\\_am\\_Spinnrade%2C\\_D.118\\_\(Schubert%2C\\_Franz\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Gretchen_am_Spinnrade%2C_D.118_(Schubert%2C_Franz))> [accessed 6 April 2019].

Additionally, the eighth note rhythmic ostinato on the upper voice of the left hand evokes the imagery of Gretchen nervously treading the foot pedal of the spinning wheel. Both rhythmic figures sustain their tension nearly from beginning to end, alluding to the tension that must be maintained by the spinner when drawing out the thread.

However, while all this is certainly evocative, music is not a deterministic art from which the image of a spinning wheel can be reliably conjured for the listener. There are easily fifty examples of similar music in the repertoire that have nothing to do with spinning yarn. The major difference between Goethe and Schubert is that Schubert’s song is intended to be performed without the visual benefit of the spinning wheel. Moreover, there is no trace of a reference to spinning, sheep, weaving, or anything of the kind in Gretchen’s monologue. It is fair to say that, without Schubert’s title, there would be nearly no chance at all that someone would dream up a spinning wheel solely from hearing the music. The magic of Schubert’s piece comes from the suggestion to the audience in the title that she is spinning, which in turn enables well-crafted music to produce the image of the spinning wheel in their mind.

In the poem ‘Malagueña’, Lorca achieves something very similar. The body of the text does not mention fandango, flamenco, musicians, or even depict the guitar as being played by a human being. It is merely the suggestion in the title that awakens the image of the musicians and animates the rhythmic reference to the *malagueña* in the text. Crumb’s setting, being musical, does not suffer from the staging deficiency Schubert needed to overcome. Rather, Crumb has to replace the *malagueña* rhythms that are lost when his musical setting breaks up the words.

Nevertheless, the mere production of a mental image or idea through artistic association is not implicitly ‘operatic’ despite the fact that the interpolation of Schubert’s setting in the staged production of *Faust* would be the beginning of creating an opera. Similarly, the staging of the scene with or without the presence of a spinning wheel, or the announcement of the song’s title from the stage, would not imbue Schubert’s virtual spinning wheel with an operatic quality. The musical completion of the spinning metaphor establishes the wheel as an object, but it is not a part of the drama which creates tension or demands resolution on its own. What it does do, however, is demonstrate how a limited amount of text can be used to create great opportunity for music to fill in narrative gaps. This is the craft of the librettist, and it is one of the reasons seemingly trivial plots and writing are the subject of running jokes amongst musicians: these things are no more meant to be read by themselves than the scene from *Faust* is meant to be performed without staging.

One way of moving the material in the direction of ‘operatic’ might be if, in one scene, Gretchen is spinning as a D major version of the music accompanies her without the text, and in a later scene she sings the text with the music as Schubert has written it in D minor without the spinning wheel. In the first scene, the music is not necessary for producing the visual of the spinning wheel any more than the virtual spinning wheel image is necessary for Gretchen to communicate her personal problems. Moreover, without the music, there would be no reason to connect the two events throughout the course of the drama.

What we now have – and more to the point, what the pitiable Gretchen has – is a uniquely musical problem that demands resolution in musical terms. Music has imposed itself on the narrative. Now, even if Gretchen could rid herself of every textual and circumstantial demon with which she has been presented, unless she addresses her musical circumstances, the curtain will fall with an extant fact of dramatic and artistic incompleteness. The natural direction this takes in the highest forms of opera is the establishment of musical drama as the foundational paradigm of the entire work. *La Traviata*, for example, existed first as the novel *La Dame aux Camélias* and then a play, both by Alexandre Dumas’ son with whom he shared a first and surname. The primary obstacle to be overcome in any novel is the complete lack of setting, which is nothing more than a blank piece of paper as far as the reader is concerned. All of this must be established by the author, and it follows very naturally that a first-person description of the setting serves as the originating vehicle for symbolism at the beginning of *Camélias*:

In my opinion, it is impossible to create characters until one has spent a long time in studying men, as it is impossible to speak a language until it has been seriously acquired. Not being old enough to invent, I content myself with narrating, and I beg the reader to assure himself of the truth of a story in which all the characters, with the exception of the heroine, are still alive [...] This is how these details came to my knowledge. On the 12th of March, 1847, I saw in the Rue Lafitte a great yellow placard announcing a sale of furniture and curiosities. The sale was to take place on account of the death of the owner [...] I was not long in discovering the reason of this astonishment and admiration, for, having begun to examine things a little carefully, I discovered without difficulty that I was in the house of a kept woman.<sup>18</sup>

The novel was so popular in its time that Dumas fils converted it into a play. Of course, the main dramatic element of a play is that of characters and their interactions. It would be artistically valueless for an actor to walk on stage and describe what was around them just as it would be redundant to watch Gretchen spinning to Schubert’s music. Therefore, Dumas fils introduces the same symbolic content – a dead (or in this case, absent and probably dying) rich woman in France, some kind of relationship drama, and a preoccupation with time – in the form most natural to a play: the interaction of characters:

*[De] Varville]. Someone rang the bell.*

*Nan[ine]. Valentine will open the door.*

*Var.* It is Marguerite, no doubt.

*Nan.* Not yet; she is not to return until half-past ten and it is now barely ten. [...]

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<sup>18</sup> Alexandre Dumas, *The Lady of the Camellias*, ed. and trans. by Edmund Gosse (New York: Werner, 1902), pp. 1-2 <<https://archive.org/details/ladyofcamellias00duma>> [accessed 7 April 2019]. In this and the examples below, I draw on translations in the first instance.

*Var.* Quite pretty, that little Nichette.

*Nan.* And clever!

*Var.* And M. Gustave?

*Nan.* Which M. Gustave?

*Var.* Of whom he spoke, and awaited her below.

*Nan.* He is her husband.

*Var.* M. Nichette?

*Nan.* He is not her husband yet; but he will be.

*Var.* In a word, he is her lover. Very well, I see. She is clever, but she has a lover. [...]

*Nan.* Listen, M. de Varville. There are many true things to be said in regard to madame; all the more reason not to mention those which are not true. Now, this is what I can assure you, for I have seen it with my own eyes, and Heaven knows that madame has given me no orders in the matters as she has no reason to deceive you , and cares not whether she stands ill or well with you. I can assure you that, two year ago, madame, after a long illness, went to drink the waters to recover her health.<sup>19</sup>

The novel was published in 1848, the play premiered in 1852 in Paris, and in 1853 Verdi's *La Traviata* debuted in Venice. It is a decidedly condensed adaptation, focusing largely on the primary character (renamed Violetta) who is dying of consumption, her romantic dalliance with a handsome tenor, and then the spending of the entire third act succumbing to her degenerative lung disease in truly respectable opera fashion by singing loudly and brilliantly for about forty-five minutes without the least hint of diminished technical capacity.

The final point is not a bit of humor for its own sake. The soprano was put to stage to die a musical death, not a gruesome or realistic one. The libretto, then, is essentially the long-form dramatic version of Schubert's title: it should give enough body to the music that the audience can follow the plot, but little more. Thus, the first few lines of the libretto of *La Traviata*:

*Chorus 1.*

Past already's the hour of appointment —  
You are tardy.

*Chorus 2.*

We played deep at Flora's,  
And while playing the hours flew away.

*Violetta.*

Flora, and kind friends, the night is before us.  
Other pleasures we here will display. [...]  
'Mid the wine-cups the hours pass more gaily.

*Flora [&] Marquis.*

Can you there find enjoyment.

*Violetta.*

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<sup>19</sup> Alexandre Dumas, *Camille: Complete French and English Text*, [n. trans.] (New York: Chickering & Sons, 1881), pp. 5-7 <[https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiuc.6261859\\_001](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiuc.6261859_001)> [accessed 7 April 2019].

I strive to;  
Yes, to pleasure I yield, and endeavor  
With such remedies illness to stay.

*All.*

Yes! enjoyment will lengthen our days.<sup>20</sup>

All the themes are there, but present in a nearly comical and childish form compared to the novel and the play. However, this is merely a skeleton upon which Verdi can set the musical flesh. Key areas and melodic motifs permeate the work and bind it together to form a cohesive musical narrative. In fact, the real beginning of the opera happened before the chorus ever walked onstage. The entire paradigm is encapsulated, and the thematic material presented, in the deep composition of the overture that is the true artistic equivalent of the first few paragraphs of the novel and the play. It begins in the key of B minor as a dramatic interaction of two characters: the first and second violins, divided. The primary melodic voice in the top divisi of the first violins is dominated by a descending half step, and the top line of the second violins is an ascending whole step, suggesting the inevitable descent of Violetta's health and the hopeless optimism of her love interest Alfredo. In the second bar, the first violin line reaches up a half step from C♯ to D, ultimately faltering back to C♯ in the third measure after an attempt to rise up to an E. The rhythmic speed is doubled, emphasizing time as a theme.

In the next phrase in bars 5-7, the half step idea becomes a sliding chromatic descent that – for all the hope of modulation in the harmony – ends up right where it started: on the same B–A♯ half step as the beginning, but this time with the cadential determinism of a i<sup>6/4</sup>–V perfect authentic cadence in the making.

Fig. 19: Giuseppe Verdi, 'Praeludio', in *La Traviata* in Full Score (Milan: Ricordi, 1914), pp. 1-6 (p. 1) mm. 1-9) <[https://imslp.org/wiki/La\\_traviata\\_\(Verdi,\\_Giuseppe\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/La_traviata_(Verdi,_Giuseppe))> [accessed 7 April 2019]

However, this does not occur. The three-note chromatic descent that offered the only ray of modulatory hope in the fifth bar becomes a temporary savior. The A♯ slides down to an A♭ as the second phrase elides it with the *tutti* in bar 8, augmenting the experience of time once again, and offering the promise that melodic indulgence might free the listener from the looming harmonic inevitability. The music moves quite emotionally through several key areas until the descending half step idea becomes a yearning ascending motive in bar 13. Unfortunately, it cannot sustain itself and collapses down the first violin line into silence.

<sup>20</sup> Giuseppe Verdi, *La Traviata*, ed. and trans. by T. T. Barker (Philadelphia: Oliver Ditson, [n.d.]), p. 5 <<https://archive.org/details/verdisoperalatra00verd>> [accessed 8 April 2019].



Fig. 20: Verdi, 'Praeludio', p. 2 (mm. 10-13).

In essence, this is the dramatic outline of the entire opera on the first page of the score. The themes of a pair in a tragic relationship, decadence as expressed in chromaticism, and a preoccupation with extensions of time and the inevitability of death are all contained in a thread of music that takes about the same amount of time required to read the introduction of the novel or deliver the first few paragraphs of the play. The text, therefore, of the first scene need only clarify any ambiguities that are the natural shortcoming of unspoken musical communication. This idea of using text as a series of road markers for the true artistic medium permeates the entirety of *La Traviata*, and the construction of libretti in general.

## Conclusion

Having analyzed the construction of Lorca's poetry, established its suitability for musical setting, and the nature of texts that suit the constructional needs of opera, we have the necessary understanding to address the project of incorporating his poetry as a significant portion into the libretto of an opera.

There is no doubt that Lorca's body of work contains longer, narrative-driven works such as the *Romancero Gitano* ('Gypsy Ballads') which are cohesive enough to adapt a libretto from text alone. Their common thematic material – presentation as a series of vignettes of human experience, dramatic content, and universal themes of human experience – would render them an obvious choice for someone tasked with constructing a traditional libretto for a traditional opera. In truth, they would very likely be suitable for non-traditional and avant-garde settings as well, although they are not the focus of this analysis.

Pertinent to that end, however, is that a librettist would most certainly have the luxury of preserving a great deal of Lorca's text because of the suitability of his poetry for music, unlike *La Dame aux Camélias* and its play adaptation which are nakedly unsuited for the purpose. It would not seem very satisfactory to attempt to stitch Lorca's poetry – even in its most narrative iterations – into a nearly or wholly un-adapted libretto. His vignettes in the 'Gypsy Ballads' are still only snapshots that bear varying relevance to the material around them, and even a spirited and highly creative reorganizing effort would likely encounter problems that would demand editing and the introduction of new material to produce a functional classical libretto.

Another great advantage of using Lorca's body of work for a project of this nature is that his symbolic language and style are, on the whole, very consistent. Themes such as cattle, bulls, the moon, blood, flowers, night, insects, and music appear in his very first and his

very last poems, as well as throughout the intervening work. Similarly, while his approach varies greatly from subject to subject, Lorca's approach to language, beat, and pacing are remarkably coherent over time. A librettist using Lorca as the basis for his construction would not be confronted with a dramatic mid-life shift between radically different poetic styles and voices.

Finally, Lorca also wrote a great deal of poetry that focuses on individual reflection and the exposure of inner thought, which is a hallmark of traditional opera. Cherubino's aria in the first act of *Figaro*, in which he ('she', actually, as it is a breeches role) sings of love is one of the finest examples of this type of treatment:

I do not know anymore what I am, what I do,  
 One moment I'm on fire, the next moment I am cold as ice,  
 Every woman changes my color,  
 Every woman makes me tremble.  
 At the very mention of love, of delight,  
 I am greatly troubled, my heart stirs within my chest,  
 It compels me to speak of love  
 A desire I cannot explain...<sup>21</sup>

Along these lines a poem such as 'The Song of the Barren Orange Tree' is easily conceivable as a centerpiece for a scene in an unaltered form, if not the focal point of an entire act, as the personified orange-tree gives voice to his own internal monologue:

Leñador.	<i>Woodcutter.</i>
Córtame la sombra.	<i>Cut my shadow from me.</i>
Líbrame del suplicio	<i>Free me from the torment</i>
de verme sin toronjas. [...]	<i>of seeing myself without fruit. [...]</i>
¿Por qué nací entre espejos?	<i>Why was I born among mirrors?</i>
El día me da vueltas,	<i>The day walks in circles around me,</i>
y la noche me copia	<i>and the night copies me</i>
en todas sus estrellas. [...]	<i>in all its stars. [...]</i> <sup>22</sup>

One can see, even in translation, that all of the elements that make Lorca's poetry suitable for musical treatment are present, and this could fit nicely into a properly constructed libretto just as it is. Lorca's work is not only highly suitable for musical composition on the small scale, but it contains a great number of advantages for the composer and librettist on the

<sup>21</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, trans. by Hannah Kilpatrick <<http://www.aria-database.com/translations/figaro.txt>> [accessed 5 April 2019].

<sup>22</sup> In this instance, I am using an alternative translation to that provided in the *Collected Poems* edition (pp. 540-41, trans. by Alan S. Trueblood), namely, that of W. S. Merwin, in *The Selected Poems of Federico García Lorca*, ed. by Donald M. Allen (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1955), pp. 62-3. While both provide readable renderings of the text, Trueblood's translation falls short in its treatment of the word 'verme'. In three occurrences in the four-stanza poem —'de verme sin toronjas' in the first and last stanzas and 'Quiero vivir sin verme' in the third —the word is implied but never directly translated ('of bearing no fruit' and 'Let me live unmirrored' respectively). Lorca's repetition of 'verme' is a critical poetic device for establishing an introspective and *pathétique* perspective that is severely inhibited by the Trueblood treatment. Merwin's translation, by contrast, animates the ideas of dream and sadness far more effectively by preserving the active voice of the tree per Lorca's original intent.

grand operatic scale, as well. Although composers such as Crumb have made long and serious work of his text, it is with great hope and enthusiasm that future generations of composers may look at the unexplored possibilities Federico García Lorca still offers.

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# Notes on Contributors

**Alison Marmont** is a doctoral researcher in modern languages funded by the AHRC South West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership. She graduated with an MA and an MSt in modern languages from the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford respectively. She is doing her thesis at the Universities of Southampton and Exeter and is supervised by Dr Aude Campmas, Dr Helen Vassallo and Dr Scott Soo. Her interdisciplinary project examines the novels of the contemporary French authors Marie NDiaye and Linda Lê and the socio-political context which informs them to understand the intersectional nature of racial discrimination experienced by ethnic minority women in modern-day France.

**Benjamin Shears** is a second-year Postgraduate Research Student at Exeter, and recipient of the Niklaus-Cartwright Scholarship. His undergraduate degree was in English and French at the University of Warwick; from there, he proceeded to the University of Oxford, achieving a Distinction in his Master's in Modern Languages (French). Ben then moved from Oxford to the University of Exeter to continue his research: he is now also a part of the English department, comparing the ways in which Samuel Richardson's novels and Voltaire's *contes philosophiques* use character to develop a refined construction of the enlightened individual; he frames this project within John Locke's epistemological argumentation. At Exeter, he is an editor of *Xanthos*, as well as an experienced seminar tutor and examiner. Outside of academia, he is also incoming Inter-varsity Captain for the University Debating Society.

**Coline Blaizeau** is a second-year doctoral student at the University of Exeter, funded by the Niklaus-Cartwright Scholarship. She specialises in late medieval French literature and language. Her research looks at the marvellous in the *Roman de Perceforest*, and the ways in which it explores notions of reality and fantasy to think of itself as a product of literature. Through this 'metafictive marvellous', she argues, the text reflects on and emphasises its inherently fabricated nature. In 2017, Coline completed an M.St. in Modern Languages (Medieval French) at St Peter's College, University of Oxford, where she graduated with Distinction. She also holds degrees in English and Spanish, and is editor-in-chief of *Xanthos*.

**Polly Duxfield** recently defended her doctoral thesis, entitled 'Digitally Editing Manuscript Prose in Castilian: The *Crónica particular de San Fernando* - A Case Study' (University of Birmingham, 2019), under the supervision of Aengus Ward. This examined the theory and practice of digitally editing medieval prose, and considered the use and usefulness of crowdsourcing as a source of transcription. She is also the editor of the *Digital 'Crónica particular de San Fernando'*, having spent five years working in the team which produced the digital edition of the *Estoria de Espanna*. Polly is now combining working part-time in academia, with stage two of the *Estoria Digital* starting imminently, this time with an increased focus on crowdsourced transcription, with teaching A-Level Spanish at a Sixth Form College in the West Midlands.

**Abdenour Bouich** is a second-year PhD candidate in English at the University of Exeter.

His research project, funded by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, consists of a comparative study of contemporary Native American and Aboriginal Australian literary productions, drawing upon postcolonial revisions of trauma studies. Prior to his arrival in Exeter, Abdenour conducted his bachelors and masters at Bejaia University in English Literature and Civilization. He is currently Director of Communications for *Xanthos*.

**Thomas Waller** is a PhD candidate at the University of Nottingham researching Portuguese-language African literatures and cinemas with a particular focus on the cultural production of Angola and Mozambique. Working within the analytical framework of the world-systems tradition, his research looks at the ways in which cultural production from Portuguese-speaking Africa registers a tension between ‘the local’ and ‘the global’, seen for example in the conflict between local social conditions and a global cultural and economic agenda. Having completed his BA in Hispanic Studies and Portuguese and his MA in Comparative Literature at Queen Mary, University of London, Thomas successfully applied for a Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership at the University of Nottingham, where he is currently researching in the department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies.

**Benjamin Tomkins** is a professional composer and violinist based in Colorado. He received his master’s degree in violin performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music in 2005, where he studied with Stephen Rose. He currently performs with the Cabrillo Festival in Santa Cruz, CA, is a Master Mentor at the Denver School of the Arts and regularly performs, teaches and composes both nationally and internationally. He is currently finishing work on an octet for strings and composing the libretto and music for an opera based on the lives of the famous matadors of the 1920s in Spain and their association with the poet Federico Garcia Lorca.

**Svetlana Yefimenko** is a PhD candidate in Modern Languages at the University of Exeter. Her research investigates the phenomenon of Classical reception in Russian literature of the nineteenth century, with a current focus on the ‘anticipatory plagiarism’ between Tolstoy and Homer. She is also a published translator, author and copywriter, in addition to her work with *Xanthos*.

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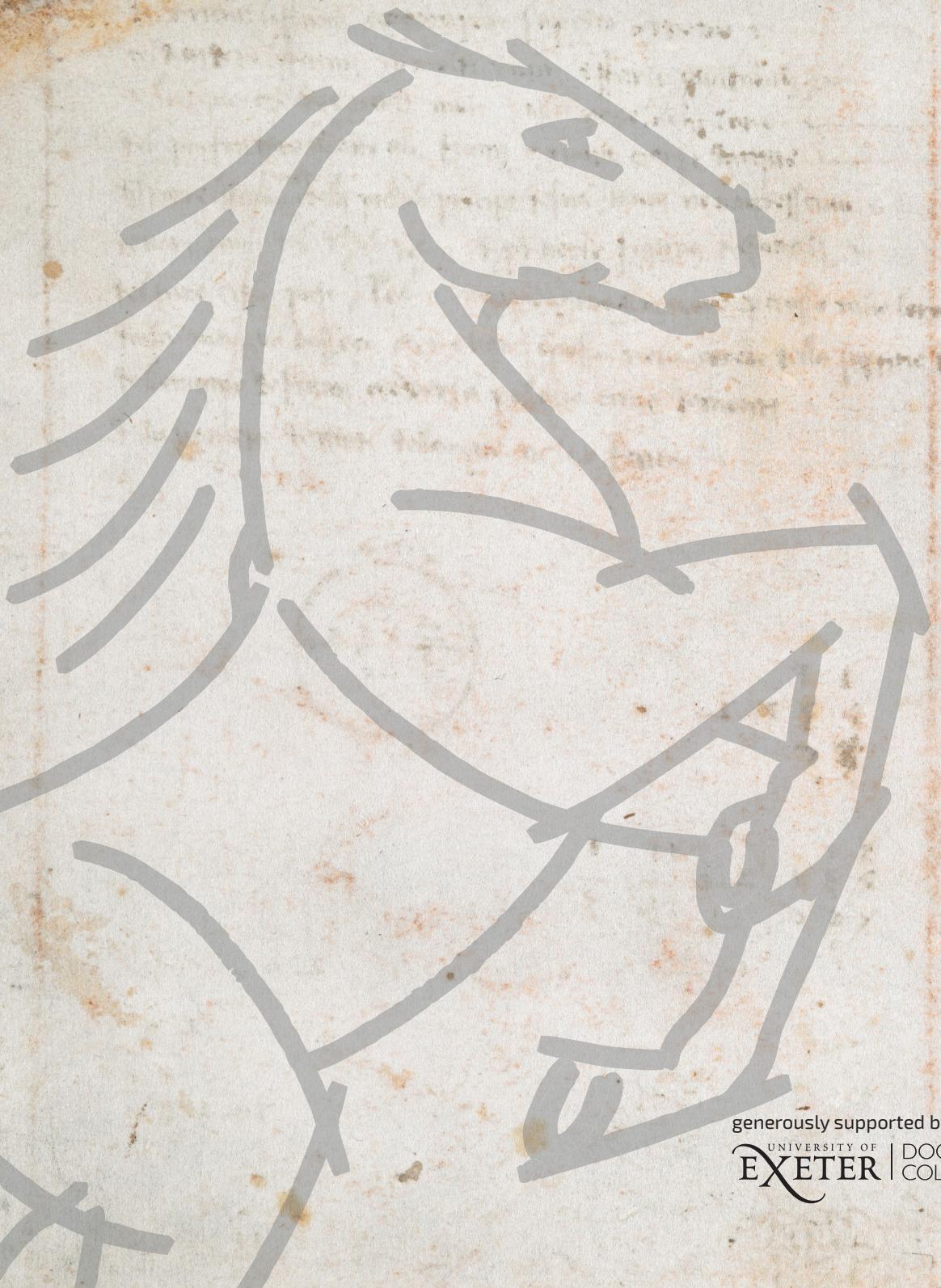
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