

ABSTRACT

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TRANSLATION AS ETHICS AND POETICS
IN THE TRANSCULTURAL U.S. 1830-1915

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This dissertation documents the emergence of "foreignizing" translation and its influence on poetic practice in the transcultural United States between 1830 and 1915—a period critical to the development of free verse in English. The study also explores the extent to which poetry translation constitutes a genre with special relevance to the multilingual U.S. In Lawrence Venuti's formulation, foreignizing signals the difference of the source text by disrupting cultural codes and literary norms in the target language (*Translator's Invisibility* 15). The innovative and ethically-charged translations recuperated here played a vital role in the development of "American poetry" by introducing heterodox authors, genres, and discourses into print.

Despite nationalist and English-only tendencies in U.S. scholarship, the literature of the United States has always exceeded the bounds of a single language or nation. More than a mere byproduct of foreign dependency, the nineteenth-century proliferation of literary translations and non-English literatures reflected a profoundly multilingual

“nation of nations.” As such, this study emphasizes both the transnational *and* multicultural character of U.S. poetry.

In tracing this often invisible tradition of foreign-bent translation, I offer five case studies spanning eighty years, two centuries, three continents, and numerous languages. From the influential debut of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim’s self-translated *Goethe’s Correspondence with a Child* (1838) to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s comparativist translation anthology, *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845); from Judith Gautier’s pioneering *vers libre* variations on the Classical Chinese (1867) to binational poet Stuart Merrill’s free verse Englishing of Gautier (1890); from Pound’s heteroclite Medievalism (1905-1910) to the inaugural volume of Harriet Monroe’s transnational magazine, *Poetry* (1912-1913), the translations considered here challenged “literary canons, professional standards, and ethical norms in the target language” (Venuti, “Strategies of Translation” 242). Taken together, these chapters offer a new transcultural perspective on proto/modern literary translation and the development of free verse in English.

“STRANGE AND ABSURD WORDS:” TRANSLATION AS ETHICS AND
POETICS IN THE TRANSCULTURAL U.S. 1830-1915

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my sister Amy Elizabeth Lauth (1968-1997) and my family—immediate, extended, and adopted.

Acknowledgements

Any scholarly book worth writing is a herculean task and requires support from all quarters. I gladly acknowledge the many institutions and individuals who helped make this study possible.

This dissertation owes much to the deeply-held convictions of exceptional teacher-scholars. In particular, I wish to thank my director Martha Nell Smith for demonstrating, time and again, that politics and literature cannot be segregated—that poetry is political and at its best radical. Special thanks go to Jerome McGann for insisting that I read Martha Nell Smith’s incomparable study, *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson* in 1995: it launched a career. As my long-time teacher and mentor, Martha offered invaluable guidance and inspiration, as well as unwavering faith in my writing and scholarship.

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As Director of Comparative Literature and a translator in her own right, Professor Nunes gave expert counsel and support at critical points along the way. She also helped shore up my confidence in the interdisciplinary and comparative values of this study; with Zita as a reader, I held the bar higher than I might have otherwise.

As a gifted poet and modernist scholar, Professor Joshua Weiner's guidance rounded out this dream-team of a committee. Josh's smart, careful readings have driven me to revise the dissertation in important directions. I am particularly grateful for his spirited encouragement throughout this process, as well as his detailed comments on the final draft.

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In many ways, this dissertation began with Michael Collier's belief in the vital importance of literary translation and cross-cultural exchange. Along with Professor Elizabeth Loizeaux, Michael proved instrumental in founding Maryland's Jiménez-Porter Writers' House, an undergraduate residential college and literary center for the study of creative writing across cultures. With Michael Collier's support, I found a home as the program's first director and began making a rough outline for this dissertation—a love letter to the literature of the transcultural U.S. I am eternally grateful to him and the many faculty and staff members in the College of Arts of Humanities and the School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures who ensured that the Writers' House became—and

remains—a reality. Special thanks go to Dean James Harris, Associate Dean Gabriele Strauch, and Professors Roberta Lavine and Joshua Weiner, all of whom served as important mentors throughout my tenure as founding director of the Writers' House. To the students and staff of the JWPH (past and present)—and especially my colleague and fellow-writer, Johnna Schmidt—*Gracias por todo*. You inspire me.

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Hope is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul,

And sings the tune without the words,

And never stops at all. . . . (Fr 314, J 254)

Thank you for singing loudest and longest.

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Introduction: “The Research That Implies Love:” Translation and the Transcultural U.S. 1830-1915

. . . [E]mancipation is not possible without a politics of knowledge.

Jeffrey Escoffier, *American Homo: Community and Perversity* (1998)

De meme, dans la relation interpersonnelle, il ne s'agit pas de penser ensemble moi et l'autre, mais d'être en face. La véritable union ou le véritable ensemble n'est pas un ensemble de synthèse, mais un ensemble de face à face.¹

Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethique et Infini* (1961)

In seeking to differentiate between Apuleius' style and that of classic Latinity, Adlington, who translated him in 1566, describes it as “such a frank and flourishing a stile . . . so darke and high a stile, in so strange and absurd words and in such new invented phrases....”

Ezra Pound, *Spirit of Romance* (1910)

If translation is to incorporate into the language and the spirit of a nation what it does not possess, or what it possesses in a different way, the first requirement is simple fidelity. This fidelity must be aimed at the real nature of the original, not at its incidentals, just as every good translation originates in simple and

unpretentious love for the original and the research that implies love, and to which translation must return.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, from the
 “Einleitung” to *Aeschylus’ Agamemnon*
metrisch ubersetzt (1816) trans. by André
 Lefevere (1977)²

The primary purpose of this book is to document the emergence of foreignizing translation and its vital role in shaping the practice of poetry in the transcultural United States between 1830 and 1915—a period critical to the development of free verse in English. This study also explores to what extent poetry translation constitutes a genre with special relevance to the transcultural and multilingual U.S. In Lawrence Venuti’s formulation,

foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language. In its effort to do right abroad, this translation practice must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience – choosing to translate a foreign text excluded by literary canons in the receiving culture, for instance, or using a marginal discourse to translate it.
 (*Translator’s Invisibility* 15-16)

Despite the nationalist and English-only tendencies in American scholarship, “American literature” has always exceeded the bounds of a single language or nation. More than a mere byproduct of foreign dependency, the nineteenth-century proliferation of literary translations and non-English literatures in the U.S. reflected a profoundly multilingual

“nation of nations.” As such, this study emphasizes both the transnational *and* multicultural character of U.S. poetry.

In tracing this often invisible tradition of foreign-bent translation, I offer five case studies spanning eighty years, two centuries, three continents, and numerous languages. From the influential debut of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim’s self-translated *Goethe’s Correspondence with a Child* (1838) to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s comparativist translation anthology, *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845); from Judith Gautier’s pioneering *vers libre* variations on the Classical Chinese (1867) to binational poet Stuart Merrill’s free verse Englishing of Gautier (1890); from Pound’s heteroclitc Medievalism (1905-1910) to the inaugural volume of Harriet Monroe’s transnational magazine, *Poetry* (1912-1913), the translations considered here challenged “literary canons, professional standards, and ethical norms in the target language” (Venuti, “Strategies of Translation” 242).

Because of translation’s marginal visibility, textual histories of production, reception, and publication feature prominently in the following chapters. Unable to rely solely on critical paraphrase, recuperating the history of foreignizing translation in the transcultural U.S. required me to work intensively with primary materials, including lesser-known letters, periodicals, first editions, and unpublished papers. That research shed new light on the pivotal role played by women translators and editors from 1930 to 1915. Primary research also helped identify a particular translation’s resistance to period norms, and the extent to which that text became “an instrument of cultural innovation” (242).

Some of the texts included in this study have not been considered relevant to “American” poetry—or considered at all—while others have long been established as critical to understanding U.S. literature. Taken together, these chapters offer a new perspective on the history of free verse in English, demonstrating how proto-modernist and modernist poetry evolved within a broader (and still open) period of inquiry—one we could call, provisionally, the translation era.³

What is “American Poetry?”

In 1999, Robert Pinsky formed a panel of sixteen contemporary poets to debate what, if anything, makes poetry “American.”⁴ In his response, Rafael Campo attributes the peculiarity of American poetry to a perpetual “reworking” of diverse traditions, maintaining that “American poetry owes as much to the incantations of Native Americans and the songs of African slaves, as it does to the likes of Whitman, Dickinson, Williams and Frost.” Echoing Campo and others, translator and poet Sam Hamill concluded that “American poetry...is American in exactly the manner in which its authors brought gifts from other tongues” (“Q & A: American Poetry”). In short, Campo and Hamill were arguing that the peculiar “American”-ness of poetry is rooted in translation and texts not written in English—or not “written” at all. In critical studies, however, we have been slow to weigh the significance of poetry translation as a practice and poetics with particular resonance for a translingual and multicultural U.S., particularly prior to 1900. As such, this study seeks to examine a range of translation activities in and across U.S. borders—and their role in shaping the modern poetry we have called “American.”

The Research that Implies Love

The summer I turned nineteen, my first love gave me a copy of Nicanor Parra's *Emergency Poems* ("*Poemas de Emergencia*") in the 1972 bilingual translation by Miller Williams. I had never seen or heard anything like it: in the proximity of facing-page translation, there was both integrity and intimacy, as if the two poems might converse across the narrow margin between them. Williams was bound by that nearness, and the ethos of the volume was palpable. Taken as a whole, the facing-page translation seemed to me among the most exquisite and compelling literary texts imaginable. At the time I probably couldn't have told you the translator's name. It didn't seem to matter. Like so many before him, Williams was subject to "the translator's invisibility" (Venuti 1). As Venuti has so convincingly argued, "[t]he translator's invisibility can now be seen as a mystification of troubling proportions, an amazingly successful concealment of the multiple determinations and effects of English-language translation, the multiple hierarchies and exclusions in which it is implicated" (Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility* 12).

Later, I discovered the bilingual translations by the mid-century poets, Robert Bly and James Wright. Those translations struck me as some of the best contemporary poetry published in the U.S. I prized the visceral Spanish of Garcia Lorca, César Vallejo, and Antonio Machado—the haunting German of Rainer Maria Rilke and Paul Celan. Circa 1990, however, poetry translation had little to no place in the official canon of "American literature." While my creative writing professors often cited contemporary poetry translations as instructive (and influential) models, translations rarely featured in English

literature courses. Translation was widely regarded as functional and derivative or, at best, the exclusive province of comparative literature—that critical outpost of cross-cultural study. Robert Frost was quoted—as unimpeachable as God: “poetry is what gets lost in translation.” And he wasn’t wrong. Not until much later did I decide that Frost wasn’t entirely right either.

I continued to study poetry for another decade before discovering that translation had a long and venerable history in U.S. literature. Poetry translation, it turns out, was a passion of the multilingual U.S.—the place where English leaned in like a lover to the beguiling utterances of Danish, French, German, Italian, Ojibway, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish, among other languages.

1830-1915: A Great Age of Foreignizing Translation

When I commenced research in 2002, Ezra Pound was the obvious example of translation’s vital role in shaping modern English poetry within and across U.S. boundaries. In 1915, Pound wrote that “a great age of literature is perhaps always a great age of translations; or follows it” (“Notes on Elizabethan Classicists,” *Literary Essays* 232). In this and other statements, Pound affirmed the importance of translation as a poetics—as a method for making and remaking modern poetry in English. And though he produced ground-breaking work in translation, the significance of those writings has not been fully weighed. Recent studies emphasize the influence of Pound’s appropriation of classical Chinese poetics in *Cathay* (1915)—a volume now associated with the advent

of Imagism and Modernism. Of far less interest to scholars has been Pound's early work. Pound actually began translating as early as 1908, producing lesser-known criticism and a few strikingly modern translations from the Greek, Latin, Provençal, French, and Italian.

Like sign-posts, Pound's early work repeatedly pointed me back to earlier translators and translations—and finally to the multilingual origins of U.S. literature itself. The “new, plain-speaking, laconic, image-driven free verse”⁵ we associate with Pound's translations from Classical Chinese has, I argue, a far more complex genesis in the nineteenth-century tradition of foreignizing translation.

Strange and Absurd Words: Translation, Ethics and Proto/Modernist Poetry

Generally speaking, poetry and translation are closely related in their potential to break and remake linguistic conventions. This is more intensively the case with experiments that adopt what German playwright Bertolt Brecht called “alienation effects” (94). Like its counterpart in avant-garde poetry⁶, foreignizing translation unsettles norms “at home” (Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility* 20). In fact, historically speaking the link between the two practices is strong: innovative poetry has often inspired what Philip Lewis calls “abusive fidelity,” a practice yielding “the strong, forceful translation that “value[s] experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own” (41).

Importantly, the literary recourse to “strange and absurd words,” is first and foremost a matter of ethics, not aesthetics. It is a choice to “think... the Stranger” (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 49). These translations deeply engage the language-form of the source text: “the strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I . . .” (43). In just this sense, I argue, proto-modern “American” poetry brought itself *face-à-face* with the unorthodox literary traditions of multiple languages and historical periods. Out of this “event of alterity”⁷ arose an ethically-charged poetics of translation that encouraged a new way of composing in and beyond meter: the displacement of end-rhyme; the advent of idiomatic and cadenced verse; the manipulation of white space and typography as a compositional strategy; the introduction of the prose poem in English; the displacement of the “I;” and Imagism itself. All these so-called “inventions” of modernism owe something to ethos of foreignizing translation, a practice which begins long before 1900.

Because the “Proto-Modern” is a relatively new concept in literary studies, I would like to pause briefly and clarify my use of the term. First and foremost, a proto-modern approach to Western literature has freed scholars to cross centuries, nations, and languages in their effort to highlight correspondences between texts in and out of English. As a body of literature, these works express similar and inter-related concerns, including changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution and reactions against those changes; a crisis of faith in academic, religious, and state authority; a renewed commitment to social and religious reform; the assertion of a subjective self, individuality, and individual freedom; the rise of New Imperialism and the reaction against Imperialism; the preoccupation with Nationalism and Nation as well as the reaction against Nationalism; academic Classicism and the reaction against academic Classicism.

Experiments with form and genre echo and extend these themes and include the prominence of personal narratives, including autobiography, memoir, the epistolary novel; an increased interest in genre-mixing and the creation of new genres; the “invention” of free indirect discourse; the rise of prose poetry, cadenced verse, and the “liberated” lines of *vers libre* and free verse; the use of non-prescriptive literary idioms; and last but not least, a sustained interest in foreignizing translation.

The “Proto-Modern” period is typically defined in one of two ways—in the short or long view. In the shorter view it refers roughly to the period between 1885 and 1910 just prior to Modernism. For the purposes of this study I take the long view, defining Proto-Modernism as a period coinciding with the emergence of American Romanticism and culminating in early modernism, roughly 1830-1913. This period overlaps with other movements to which it is closely related, including the Victorian era (1837-1901), Transcendentalism (1835-1850) and the American Renaissance (1830-1865).⁸

The Proto-Modern period has special relevance for the U.S. As Philip Kuberski argues, “America was modern from its Puritan origins because the problematic of representation, of writing and reading, had assumed national and material consequences” (29). The American experience forced a recognition, however repressed, that “identity is an act of fusion, grafting, or borrowing that hopes to appear as essence, being, origin, and discovery” (29). For a multicultural and multilingual nation deeply ambivalent about and actively “writing” its identity, translation had begun to emerge as both a symbolic preoccupation and literary practice (Boggs, “Translation in the United States” 23). With

dramatically different consequences, literary translations could be made to erase or retain diversity.

In the U.S., the nineteenth-century recourse to non-English poetics is significant and includes foreignizing translations from Provençal, Anglo-Saxon, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Dutch, German, and Chinese.⁹ As a result of these translations, a strange new English poem began to circulate its influence in and beyond the U.S.

The Literature of Translation in the Transcultural U.S.: Five Case Studies

In the spirit of the ground-breaking *Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* (2000), the following chapters are offered as one mediation in the “pervasive English-only approach to American studies” (Shell and Sollors 4). The North American tendency to read the twentieth century as the beginning of multiculturalism has obscured the multilingual history of the United States. In the U.S., modern poetry has developed in “complex spaces in which official national languages coexist uneasily with dialects, minority and immigrant languages, and such international languages as English” (Shell, “Language Wars” 2). More than a mere byproduct of foreign dependency or Europhilia, the proliferation of non-English literatures in the U.S. reflected the deeply-rooted interests of a multilingual and transcultural nation (Ferguson and Heath 7-8).

Studying “American” poetry requires us to broaden the critical frame to include cross-cultural language-practices both *within* as well as beyond national borders. I have

thus adopted the term “transcultural” in favor of the currently popular “transnational” to avoid reasserting “nation” as a defining literary framework. A transcultural approach to scholarship found its first foot-hold in the social and natural sciences but has begun to spread to literary studies as well, where it signals “the need to reinvent comparative literature as a way of engaging responsibly with cultural difference in a wide—or even global—temporal and spatial frame” (Lindberg-Wada 3). As Swedish scholar Gunilla Lindberg-Wada has argued:

transcultural literary studies could play a crucial role in the refurbishment of comparative literature by providing a deeper view of the literary cultures of the world and by making them, and their interrelationship, more comprehensible to students of literature and to a wider audience (3).

In tracing the often invisible (and even scandalous) history of foreign-bent translation in the transcultural U.S., I offer five case studies spanning eighty years, two centuries, three continents, and numerous languages. In these chapters I explore the lesser-known translation work of canonical American writers like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Margaret Fuller, and Ezra Pound; but I have also begun theorizing the non-canonical yet profoundly influential work of translators like Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, Judith Gautier, and Stuart Merrill. All of the translations considered here exerted considerable influence on U.S. literature and altered the course of poetry in English between 1830 and 1915.

For all of these authors, translation method was ultimately a matter of ethics. As Venuti argues, foreignizing alters the way translations are made and read “because it assumes a concept of human subjectivity that is very different from the humanist assumptions underlying domestication” (*The Translator’s Invisibility* 20). While the humanist approach suppresses difference and stresses “semantic unity” and “intelligibility,” the foreignizing translation reveals language to be culturally and historically inflected and “locates discontinuities at the level of diction, syntax, or discourse” (24-25). As a form of ethical writing, reluctant translation highlights the differences between cultures—and individuals—without seeking to assimilate or resolve them. That methodology also has important political implications, implying the right to free expression and dissent within the literary *and* social body.

“A Field Not Limited to English:” Rethinking “American” Poetry

As Werner Sollors has argued, the term “American” is vexed (*Multilingual America* 10). In the most literal sense, it is inaccurate, considering that the “Americas” are made up of many cultures and nations, speaking diverse languages with vastly different literary histories and traditions. Add to this the global dominance of the United States and English itself, as well as the long-standing history of ethnocentrism in the U.S.—both of which have contributed to the marginalization of non-English literatures in the Americas and elsewhere.

We might easily dispense with the problem by dispensing with the term, if not for the fact that the phrases “American Literature” and “American Poetry” have a significant discursive history. After 1830, U.S. institutions increasingly used these terms to reinforce an English-only Nationalism, as well as the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. For this reason, I have avoided the uncritical use of the term “American” when referring to literature associated with the U.S. When the term is invoked by an author or text, I have placed it in quotations. In my own analysis of the geographic and national canon, I use the terms “U.S. poetry” or “poetry of the U.S.” This has produced a disfluency I welcome because, much like foreignizing translation itself, the awkwardness of these terms signals resistance to chauvinistic norms in English-only scholarship.

In the nineteenth-century U.S., literary production was decidedly multicultural *and* multilingual—and “not only a literature of immigration and assimilation” (Sollors, *Multilingual Anthology* 7-8). Prior to 1906, no law existed to mandate literacy in English as a prerequisite of citizenship (Boggs, *Transnationalism and American Literature* 147). As Shell and Sollors have argued “we may know less now than did scholars at the beginning of the past century. For when American literature was being established as a field of study, there was still a sense in the world of scholarship that the language and literature of the United States was a field not limited to English” (*Multilingual Anthology* 1).

Shell and Sollors estimate that the Harvard University Library system alone contains more than 120,000 non-English imprints published in the U.S., including Native American texts; Spanish, French, Dutch, and Russian colonial writings; immigrant

literature in all European, many Asian, and some African languages; and French and Arabic works by African Americans (4). This doesn't even take into consideration the number of works held by the Library of Congress and other institutions.

The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature also suggests how non-English and binational texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century may have better accommodated political and literary unorthodoxy. Take, for instance, Victor Sejour's abolitionist short story "Le Mulatre" (The Mulatto, 1837), the first miscegenation narrative of its kind and the earliest known work of black American fiction. Another case involves Ludwig von Reizenstein's 1853 novel *Die Geheimnisse von New Orleans* (The Mysteries of New Orleans), which is unprecedented in its candid representation of lesbian love and has no known equivalent until after 1900 (9).

Based on these examples alone, there is much work to be done in recuperating the non-English literature of the U.S., which includes the contributions of many under-represented groups, including women, slaves, immigrants, Native Americans and other racial and religious minorities. As Sollors has argued, we are just beginning to understand the breadth and depth of the literature we have called "American" (*Multilingual America* 7).

Methodology

I have drawn largely on the critical methods of Translation Studies, which is itself a form of Comparative Literature. In 1974, François Jost made his case for Comparative Literature at large:

“National literature” cannot constitute an “intelligible” field of study because of its arbitrarily limited perspective: international contextualism in literary history and criticism has become a law. Comparative literature represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary *Weltanschauung*, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive. . . . Comparative literature is the ineluctable result of general historical developments. (29)

My analysis is particularly indebted to the ground-breaking work of Translation Studies scholar, Lawrence Venuti, including *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995; rev. 2008) and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998). In its multidisciplinary approach, Translation Studies has adapted a range of relevant methodologies, including New Historicism, Semiotics, Sociolinguistics, Philosophy, Deconstruction, and Cultural Studies. These fields allow me to underscore the unstable foundations of texts and the culturally-specific codes that inhere in all

language practices. Translation Studies also validates the importance of locating literary works within geographical and cultural networks, such as the transcultural U.S.

For the purposes of this study, it is not enough to evaluate “the poem itself.” Cultural codes inhere in a poem’s language and form, but also in what Gerard calls “paratext” (1). “Thresholds of interpretation,” such as a work’s title, author, translator name (when printed), preface, and illustrations, guarantee the text’s reception and consumption (1-2). Foreignizing translation, I argue, often differs from conventional practice in making paratext visible within the larger translation situation.

Building on Jerome McGann’s critique of modern textual criticism, I place emphasis on the provisional social history of literary works—not on a fixed and final interpretation (*A Critique* 62). As T.S. Eliot wrote, “[e]ach generation must translate for itself” (*Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*, “Introduction” 14). In isolating translations from the context of their production and publication, we often obscure provenance and underestimate influence. With poetry in particular, scholars frequently overlook the technology of the book and the power of print conventions. Publication and transmission histories reveal a more complex picture of textual production and reception, including the role of assistants, colleagues, editors, printers, and publishers.

It is impossible, for example, to adequately theorize the influential relationship between foreignizing translation and avant-garde poetry without reprinting certain translations/poems and the textual apparatus that delivers them. In this sense a “close reading” method helps elucidate both text and context. I therefore attend to whole books

(text/paratext); to poem-pages; as well as to the smallest units of composition, such as syllable, phrase, and line.

This study also draws on the methods of New Historical criticism and Cultural Studies, which emphasizes that “literary and non-literary ‘texts’ circulate inseparably” within a “network of material practices” (Veeseer xi). The poetry anthologies, editions, and periodicals featured here invite correspondences between texts and move towards the multilingual rather than away. While the analysis focuses primarily on literary texts, I also theorize translation as a minor genre associated with the transcultural U.S. This means “reading” translation as a phenomena defined by complex relation to its environment—textual, paratextual, cultural, historical, ethical, political, and linguistic.

Comparative Literature and Translation Studies also stress skepticism itself as critical method (Eaglestone 137). In acknowledging the impossibility—and potential—of translation, I hope to estrange the method and medium of critique. I attempt to complicate the limiting critical frameworks of national literature, period, and genre—but also standard Academic English. In her influential essay, “Translation: A Key(word) into the Language of America(nists),” Kirsten Silva Gruesz highlights the problems inherent in scholarly English itself. “It is,” she argues, “as if everything is subject to critique except the language in which those critiques are voiced: by default, the register of academic English” (85). After Gruesz, I ask: what more could we articulate in adapting foreignizing translation to the language and method of *criticism*? What’s at stake for scholarship when we juxtapose “a series of Englishes” with other languages? Perhaps we have, in the U.S., underestimated the possibilities of multilingual criticism—and our

capacity to read it. To this end, I incorporate numerous primary and critical source texts, including those written in German and French. I have experimented with both translating and not translating those sources, and have enlisted the help of experts where my own expertise fails.

This study also draws on recent critical mediations, which apply the translingual perspective of Translation Studies to the inter-disciplinary and regional approach of American Studies. I am particularly indebted to Colleen Glenney Boggs' study, *Transnationalism and American Literature: Literary Translation 1773-1892* (2007) and Christoph Irmscher's *Longfellow Redux* (2006). While neither Boggs nor Irmscher take up the history of idiomatic free verse or its relationship to foreignizing translation, they make a considerable contribution to the field in constellating translation, literature, and the transnational "American" prior to 1900.

Two recent shifts in American Studies offer a new perspective from which to read the relationship between national and international modernisms: Werner Sollors' "English plus" approach and John Carlos Rowe's "post-national" theory challenge us to think more critically and inclusively about the multicultural and polylingual history of the U.S. and its bearing on literary practice. As Sollors has so convincingly argued, the languages of American literature are many, yet with the exception of Spanish, multiculturalism has only recently begun to pay attention to linguistic diversity within the U.S. (4). Addressing the interrelated concerns of American educational and national policy as well as historical and literary study, Sollors argues against the prevailing

“English only” model in American Studies. Instead, he proposes an “English plus other languages” approach to critical thinking about U.S. literature (3).

In the same vein, John Carlos Rowe’s “post-national” approach to American Studies favors “comparative methods that engage but are not limited to the nation” (Boggs, *Transnationalism* 5). Rowe’s notion of the postnational builds on Sollors’ English-plus approach to U.S. literature; it encourages scholarship that acknowledges both the linguistic and “cultural hybridities that have occurred historically among the many cultures constituting the United States” (Rowe, “Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies” 24). This is a promising critical shift, as both regional and global studies of “American” poetry typically overlook the extent to which the U.S. has always been transcultural within and beyond its borders. Neglecting either dimension of the literary U.S. perpetuates impoverished and misleading scholarship. After all, the key terms now equated with global Modernism—transnational and transatlantic—first entered the English language in the nineteenth-century as a means of describing the uniquely transcultural U.S.¹⁰

Chapter 1: “My new English language:” Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, Reluctant Translation, and the Transcendental Avant-Garde

The terms ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’ indicate fundamentally ethical attitudes towards a foreign text and culture, ethical effects produced by the choice of a text for translation and by the strategy devised to translate it...”

Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (2008)

I struggled for my version as does an animal for its young and suffers them not to be touched by an indiscreet hand, but licks them clean again; so it was with me, instinctively and with great labor I tried to overcome all [their] corrections by deeper inducement, while people laughed at my relucting and said that I never would come to good issue, hence it cannot be otherwise, that all what might be strange, or even never heard of that must be imputed to my persevering obstinacy against the better knowing of my advisers.

Bettina Brentano-von Arnim,
“Preamble” to the English translation
of *Diary, Goethe’s Correspondence
with a Child* (1838)

Introduction

The institutional dominance of English is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. In the multilingual environment of the nineteenth century U.S., translations proliferated as a means of bridging and sustaining numerous language cultures; however, they were also made in the service of an increasingly monolingual nationalism, thereby creating a fundamental tension in literary discourse of the period.

Studying “American poetry” requires us to broaden the critical frame to include cross-cultural language-practices within—as well as beyond—U.S. borders. Circa 1830, U.S. literature began to register a growing discontent with the artificial strictures of an elite, literary English that failed to accurately represent the nation’s intensely transcultural character. English translations, many of which Longfellow collected in his landmark translation anthology, *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, sought to convey the peculiarity of foreign works and operated as a “form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism. . . .” (Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 16).

In Lawrence Venuti’s formulation, foreignizing translation “signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language” (*Translator’s Invisibility* 20). This “disruption” produces a textual effect Venuti calls “resistancy” (18). In the nineteenth-century U.S., resistant translations circulated as exemplars of “modern” poetic practice, deeply influencing the American avant-garde. Yet, in literary studies we have been slow to weigh the significance of “foreignizing” translation as an ethics and poetics with particular resonance for the

transcultural U.S. As such, we face a critical gap in our knowledge concerning the relevance of literary translation to proto/modernism, a movement spanning not one but two centuries.

Recovering Bettina Brentano-von Arnim: A Case Study in Transnational Romanticism

A great iconoclast of Romantic German literature, Bettina Brentano-von Arnim (1785-1859) was also a translator, literary critic, publisher, composer, visual artist, and social activist. A controversial author whose writings made her both famous and infamous in Europe, Brentano-von Arnim's work defied conventions of genre and canon alike. As a result, she has yet to receive the sustained critical attention her work merits—even within Germanic Studies¹¹.

Today, two of her most significant works, *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (Goethe's Correspondence with a Child; 1835) and *Die Gündertode* (Günderode; 1840), are virtually unknown within the U.S. This scholarly oversight persists despite the fact that Brentano-von Arnim's works exerted considerable influence on the key literary figures of the nineteenth-century U.S., including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Emily Dickinson. Brentano-von Arnim's erasure from U.S. literary history is due in large part to the institutional dominance of English after 1900. At the turn of the century, the critical frame of "American" literature became too narrow—and nationalist—to include her. Thus, reconsidering Brentano-von Arnim's work expands the meaning of both "American" and "literature;" it likewise

challenges us to consider the tremendous influence of foreignizing composition and translation in the transcultural U.S.

When Bettina Brentano-von Arnim published *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* in 1835, it was a work of unparalleled literary ambition and generic complexity. A pastiche of genres and styles, the *Briefwechsel* included authentic, invented, and edited correspondence between the autobiographical character “Bettine,” “Frau Rath” (Goethe’s mother, Elisabeth), and Goethe himself. To this, Brentano-von Arnim appended her hyper-lyric *Tagebuch* (Diary). The distinctions between fiction and nonfiction are in no way clear-cut, nor did the author wish to clarify them. Issued in three volumes, the book totaled over 600 pages. Initially received in Germany as the ecstatic love letters of an *enfant terrible*, the *Briefwechsel* quickly attained the status of art. The book met with tremendous popular success and Brentano-von Arnim found herself the subject of articles, reviews, and books (Goozé 363). Readers and critics alike declared her a prodigy and received the *Briefwechsel*—if somewhat ambivalently—as a work of literature rather than authentic correspondence (Wolf 44).

Brentano-von Arnim’s literary methods and translation theories were the result of active participation in German Romanticism (1790s-1850). In addition to her close literary relationship with Goethe, Brentano-von Arnim was a highly-regarded member and host of numerous intellectual circles. She regularly attended the (elder) Mendelssohn circle, which included the young composers Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn, the poet Henrich Heine, the writer Rahel Varnhagen, the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, and the translation theorists Wilhelm von Humboldt and Friedrich Schleiermacher¹² (Bauer 226-

227). Brentano-von Arnim also counted among her acquaintance Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Liszt, Robert Schumann,¹³ Johann Gottfried Herder, and the lexicographers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Her network of fellow intellectuals included some of the most influential nineteenth-century composers, poets, critics, philosophers, linguists, and literary critics. In the long approach to modernism, these artists boldly estranged themselves from prevailing theories of critical, compositional, and political discourse; they defied generic conventions in order to expand the bounds of traditional knowledge and articulate “a modern subjectivity that exists in movement and constant self-reformation” (Steinberg 103).

For Brentano-von Arnim, however, subjectivity was first and foremost a question of ethics. She was a strong critic of state religion and enforced morality, arguing that “nothing is sin that does not disunite thee and thy genius, every jest, every pertness, every daring is hallowed by him, he is the divine freeness” (*Goethe’s Correspondence with a Child: Diary* 1839, 122). The self, Brentano-von Arnim argued, does not exist in isolation but is intimately bound and responsible to everything and everyone that surrounds it: “Justice to all attests love to the one. The more universal, the more individual....Thou gainest — thou possessest thyself where thou lovest; where thou dost not love, there thou art deprived of thyself. . . .” (119).

For Brentano-von Arnim, the matter of individual freedom was far from abstract philosophy. In the early 1830’s, “a well-organized government and security operation stifled every free impulse in German society” (Wolf 44). During this period, Brentano-von-Arnim openly criticized the Prussian government and actively worked for social

justice. Schleiermacher himself was a vocal advocate of liberal religious reform and “a thorn in the king’s side” (Brandt 3). Literature was a regular target of censorship—particularly socially progressive and experimental work. Following Goethe’s death in 1832, the government declared his works incendiary. Nearly every scene of *Faust I* was suppressed on grounds of blasphemy and immorality (Beutin 228). Outraged, Brentano-von Arnim quickly became one of Goethe’s most vocal champions and a muse for progressive Germany. In publishing her *Briefwechsel Mit Einem Kinde*, Brentano-von Arnim hoped to raise enough funds to build a monument to Goethe (see fig. 1).



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Fig. 1. A contemporary portrait of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim with her design for the Goethe Monument, 1838.

Like many members of their circle, Brentano-von Arnim and Schleiermacher had become deeply invested in the notion of translation as both a linguistic activity and “category of thought”—a theory made popular by Johann Gottfried Herder (Lefevere 30). With his influential theories, Schleiermacher anticipates many of the ethical concerns raised by modern translation:¹⁴ the translator’s responsibility to the foreign language and work; language as a social construct which licenses and denies expression; and the implications of linguistic deviance. These were matters of utmost significance to Brentano-von Arnim. Long before philosopher Emmanuel Levinas made his decisive challenge to Western humanism and ontology, Brentano von-Arnim’s writings had begun to theorize not only the instability of the self, but its critical relation—and responsibility—to the “not-me” (Levinas, *Otherwise than Being* 277).

Starting at the Source: German Romanticism, the New “Poetic Genre,” and Intralingual Translation

In 1813, Schleiermacher gave his famous Berlin lecture, “Ueber die verschieden Methoden des Uebersetzens” (On the Different Methods of Translating), arguing that resistance to linguistic codes and literary conventions in the source text often guarantees translation in the first place:

It might even be said that a person deserves to be heard beyond his immediate environment only to the extent to which he influences [his own] language. Any verbal text soon dies away of necessity if it can be reproduced by a thousand organs in a form which is always the same; only

that text can and may endure longer which constitutes a new element in the life of language itself. (Lefevere 71)

Brentano-von Arnim, I argue, became her own foreignizing translator precisely because she had authored “a new element” in the life of her own language first. Schleiermacher appears to have shared her conviction and took an active interest in the *Briefwechsel*. He even offered to proofread the book for Brentano-von Arnim, but died in 1834 before the manuscript was complete (Goozé 291). Schleiermacher also held Brentano-von Arnim’s skill as a translator in high regard and frequently discussed his Plato translations with her (291).

Friedrich Schlegel’s definition of Romanticism’s new “poetic genre”— is critical to understanding Brentano-von Arnim’s literary ambitions, as well as the experimental tendencies sanctioned at this moment in German history:

[Romantic Poiesy’s] vocation is not merely to unify again all separated genres of poetry, and to put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It wants to and also should now mix, now melt together, poetry and prose, genius and criticism, art-poetry and nature-poetry; make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetic....The romantic poetic genre is still in a state of becoming; indeed that is its proper essence, that it should only become, and never be fulfilled. It can become exhausted by no theory. (Pillai 692)

“Poetry” is here redefined as a critical and creative framework in which to conduct experiments with language and genre. Brentano-von Arnim’s trans-generic writings are best understood within Schlegel’s expansive notion of “Poesie.” Indeed, the *Briefwechsel* traffics ambitiously in the diverse territories of poetry, philosophy, epistolary fiction, autobiography, biography, criticism, and memoir without claiming any one genre. As Schlegel argued, this was the “proper essence” of the romantic poetic genre, “that it should only become, and never be fulfilled,” such that no theory could exhaust it.

For Bettina Brentano-von Arnim and many of her German contemporaries, strong resistance to literary classification and codification arose in response to an increasingly closed and repressive Government regime. In a letter of 1839, Brentano-von Arnim argues, “What is philosophy?—the free choice of all intellectual searching and desires. Even more: everything that emanates from the basic principles of particularity” (qtd. in Härtl 148). Her poetics of particularity was an ethical stance—a question of personal and collective freedom.

Importantly, Brentano-von Arnim’s lyric adaptation of the epistolary genre allows her to make a radical break with conventions of gender and genre fixed in printed German itself. For Brentano von-Arnim, “correspondence” was a broader way of thinking, an ethical stance that shaped her approach to both literature and translation. Broadly speaking, correspondence licensed tremendous linguistic diversity for a German writer circa 1830. Letters in particular offered women a genre in which “to develop a thousand lives, a thousand forms within a social milieu that seldom provided comparable options” (French 113). The letter, as Brentano-von Arnim conceived of it, reclaimed for

literature the expressive registers of manuscript, dialogue, and idiolect. In her “Preface” to the *Briefwechsel*, Brentano von-Arnim openly relates the pressure she was under to conform to print conventions—and her unwillingness to cede authorial and editorial control:

Während ich beschäftigt war, diese Papiere für den Druck zu ordnen, hat man mich vielfältig bereden wollen, manches auszulassen oder anders zu wenden, weil es Anlaß geben könne zu Mißdeutungen. Ich merkte aber bald, man mag nur da guten Rat annehmen, wo er der eignen Neigung nicht widerspricht. (*Goethes Briefwechsel Mit Einem Kinde* 1835, i.)

(Whilst I was preparing these papers for the press, I was in different ways advised to omit much or at least give my expressions another turn; to remove all possible chance of their being misunderstood. But I soon perceived, that we follow good counsel only then, when it is not contrary to the tendency of our own inclinations.) (Trans. Brentano-von Arnim, *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child: For His Monument* 1837, 1)

The publisher’s concerns regarding “being misunderstood” appear to have centered primarily on Brentano-von Arnim’s unorthodox use of intimate and informal registers. She also flouted many of the conventions of print-German, including those governing punctuation, register, and syntax. Brentano-von Arnim translates into the language of German literature “the illusion of the spoken word, of the openness and sociability of dialogue” (Baldwin 225).

Though the *Briefwechsel* presents itself sincerely as an homage to Goethe, the book moves well beyond Goethe's experiments with language and form. In both the *Briefwechsel* and her subsequent letter book, *Die Gündertode*, Brentano-von Arnim crafts a literary idiom modeled not merely on letter writing, but on the intimacy and immediacy of the love letter, wherein desire impels the written word toward speech with the "Beloved" (*Goethe's Correspondence with a Child: Diary* 1839, 119). Juxtaposing Goethe's letters with her own, Brentano-von Arnim dramatizes the possibilities of a literary language modeled on intimate conversation. The text's ultimate failure to transform itself into speech makes the mediation of print all the more visible. It also dramatizes the capacity of speech to mean and say differently. As a result, Brentano-von Arnim's diction challenged many literary—and social—conventions of the period.

The Infinite Varieties of Speech: Style-shifting in the Briefwechsel

Broadly speaking, style-shifting refers to the use of more than one language variety, including elements associated with dialects, registers, and genres (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 267). Linguistic variation or "style shifting" is inherent in human language. Speech style varies between groups of speakers but also within the particular language style of an individual: "there are no single-style speakers" (266). The linguistic concept of style-shifting is critical to understanding the ethical (and formal) implications of the *Briefwechsel*—and Brentano-von Arnim's attempt to adapt the infinite variety of speech for literature.

While a particular group of speakers may use a dialect, register refers to varieties associated with situations of use (266). Registers may encompass a range of features specific to the situation of use: as with speaking in a formal vs. informal setting; speaking publically vs. speaking privately; speaking with a child vs. an adult, and so on. Though slippage is common between varieties of register and genre, speech genres are typically “more ritualized and formulaic and are often associated with performance or artistic display of some type:” examples include religious sermons, political speeches, and various literary genres, such as fiction and poetry (267). What’s more, recent research in interactional sociolinguistics stresses how the relationship—and level of intimacy—between particular interlocutors greatly influences their language use (Sanders 4). In the course of a single conversation, speakers may shift in and out of dialects, registers, and/or genres, creating an intensely diverse and idiosyncratic idiolect (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 268).

Because languages and language varieties are culturally and historically specific, code-switching and style-shifting have important political and social implications. Most languages have, for example, a standard variety—or prescriptive language—which is promoted and enforced at the institutional level. An often understudied dynamic in literary studies, prescription is arbitrary and “depends on an ideology” (Milroy 1). Non-standard varieties, which include those marking “inferior” class, gender, or race, are often suppressed by the prevailing institutions of power. Practicing a kind of intralingual translation, speakers and writers may employ style-shifting as a strategy of resistance (Sherzer 100). In this context, “foreignizing” (if I may borrow and re-inflect Venuti’s formulation) can be enlisted in describing Brentano-von Arnim’s “fundamentally ethical

attitudes” towards the prescriptive conventions of literary German; the “ethical effects produced by [her] choice” of language styles for intralingual translation; and “by the strategy devised to translate” those non-prescriptive forms (*Translator’s Invisibility* 19).

As linguist Joel Sherzer argues “poetry based on style shifting and code switching constitutes a political act of consciousness and identity, as well as ethnic, social, and cultural resistance to hegemonic poetic models” deeply engrained in the dominant language-culture itself (100). Broadly speaking, German Romanticism itself had become deeply invested in recuperating the oral forms of a devalued German folklife. Together with the Grimm brothers, Brentano-von Arnim’s brother Clemens Brentano and her husband Achim von Arnim edited the watershed collection of folksongs, *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Magic Horn, 1805-8), which greatly expanded the expressive range of literary German (Uther 428).

As the *Briefwechsel* illustrates, Brentano-von Arnim carried this commitment to “translating” the speech variety of her native language into her own literary experiments with style-shifting. Take for example, this lyric letter addressed to Goethe, in which Brentano-von Arnim shifts between a series of prescriptive and non-prescriptive styles, including those suggesting intimate and literary correspondence; private conversation; and the literary genres of poem and epistolary novel:

ach, da besann ich mich auf alles, wie Du mit mir gewandelt bist in
nächtlichen Stunden und hast mir gelächelt, daß ich Dir die
Wolkengebilde auslegte und meine Liebe, meine schönen Träume, und
hast mit mir gelauscht dem Geflüster der Blätter im Nachtwind; der Stille

der fernen weit verbreiteten Nacht. — Und hast mich geliebt, das weiß ich; wie Du mich an der Hand führtest durch die Straßen, da hab' ich's an Deinem Atem empfunden, am Ton Deiner Stimme, an etwas, wie soll ich's Dir bezeichnen, das mich umwehte, daß Du mich aufnahmst in ein inneres geheimes Leben und hattest dich in diesem Augenblick mir allein zugewendet und begehrtest nichts als mit mir zu sein; und dies alles, wer wird mir's rauben? — Was ist mir verloren? — Mein Freund, ich *habe alles, was ich je genossen*. Und wo ich auch hingehge — mein Glück ist meine Heimat. (*Goethes Briefwechsel Mit Einem Kinde: Seinem Denkmal* 1835, 146-147)

(oh, then I remembered everything, how you walked with me in night-hours and how you smiled at me when I interpreted the cloud pictures and my love, my beautiful dreams, and you listened with me to the whispering of the leaves in the night-wind; to the stillness of the distant, far-extended night.—And loved me, that I know; how you led me by my hand through the streets, I felt it on your breath, in the tone of your voice, something, how shall I describe it to you, which breathed around me, that you accepted me into an inward, secret life and you had in this moment turned to me alone and desired nothing more than to be with me; and of all this, who shall rob me?--What have I lost?—My friend, *I have all that I have ever enjoyed*. And wherever I go—my happiness is my home.)¹⁵

It is virtually impossible to convey in English the cumulative effect of repeated style-shifting within the *Briefwechsel*—or the shockwave it sent through Brentano-von Arnim’s contemporaries. As post-modern readers, we long-ago acclimated to intensive style-shifting and the use of intimate and informal registers in literature—practices that owe much to the innovations of Romantic works like the *Briefwechsel*. The previously quoted passage, however, gives some indication of Brentano-von Arnim’s range. Within the space of one sentence or phrase, she compounded a profoundly intimate speech style like “da hab’ ich’s an Deinem Atem empfunden” (I felt it on your breath) with high literary style such as “der Stille der fernen weit verbreiteten Nacht” (to the stillness of the distant, far-extended night). This is the kind of complex code-switching that made Brentano-von Arnim’s work incendiary—and highly influential.

In order to approximate something like conversational speech, Brentano-von Arnim employed a breathy, compounding syntax, which extends the sentence over and over again across the length of an entire paragraph. In conversation, the pressure to think while talking promotes looser construction, repetition, and rephrasing (Crystal 291). Brentano-von Arnim’s unconventional use of dash, colon, and semi-colon suggested the speed and spontaneity of speech, which is not responsible to the conventions of orthography and punctuation.

The use of more colloquial elements like interjections and asides also dramatized speaking aloud, where syntax is shaped by the struggle to translate complex thoughts for a particular listener, as with the phrases “ach, da besann ich mich auf alles, wie Du mit mir gewandelt bist in nächtlichen” (oh, then I remembered everything, how you walked

with me in night-hours) and “an etwas, wie soll ich’s Dir bezeichne” (in something, how shall I describe it to you). With a similar aim, Brentano-von Arnim made repeated, emphatic use of the interrogative, for example: “wer wird mir’s rauben? — Was ist mir verloren?” (who shall rob me?—what have I lost?). This is the syntax of “searching and desire,”¹⁶ which allows her to mark the absence-presence of the interlocutor to whom she responds—and is responsible. In this way, the *Briefwechsel* validates both correspondence and intimate speech as legitimate—and ethical—idioms for literature.

Significantly, Brentano-von Arnim also transformed German literary prose—and poetry—by carrying over poetic devices which heightened lyrical coherence. The renowned Hungarian composer, Franz Liszt, praised the *Briefwechsel* as “transfigured music” (Willison 319). Where style-shifting is concerned, “poetry” constitutes a speech genre with recognizable features relating to form and function (Jones 29). Though Brentano-von Arnim uses the prose features of sentence and paragraph, she simultaneously adopts elements of the nineteenth-century verse genre. Note, for example, the use of pronounced assonance, consonance, and alliteration in the previously quoted passage:

... wie Du mich an der Hand führtest durch die Straßen, da hab’ ich’s an
Deinem Atem empfunden, am Ton Deiner Stimme, an etwas, wie soll ich’s
Dir bezeichnen, das mich umwehte, daß Du mich aufnahmst in ein inneres
geheimes Leben und hattest dich in diesem Augenblick mir allein
zugewendet und begehrtest nichts als mit mir zu sein, (emphasis
added; 1835, 147)

Goethe's own use of highly lyrical prose in his epistolary novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, provided an important Romantic model for the *Briefwechsel*, as did his experiments with *freie Rhythmen* ("free rhythm") in *Prometheus* (1789) and *Faust* (1808). Introduced by the great foreignizing translator Friedrich Klopstock and canonized by Goethe during the "Sturm and Drang" period (1770-1789), *freie Rhythmen* licensed far more formal and linguistic diversity. By 1830, poets were becoming increasingly impatient with conventional fixed forms, which excluded the irregular rhythms and diverse genres of contemporary spoken German (Gorrell 37).

In an anticipation of both prose poetry and free verse, Brentano-von Arnim adapted the emphatic use of parallelism ("where one text segment echoes another in syntactic and/or semantic terms"¹⁷). Importantly, this device allows her to score and stress the rhythm of her prose in a manner consistent with lyric verse:

ach, da besann ich mich auf alles, wie Du mit mir gewandelt bist in
nächtlichen Stunden und hast mir gelächelt, daß ich Dir die
Wolkengebilde auslegte und meine Liebe, meine schönen Träume, und
hast mit mir gelauscht dem Geflüster der Blätter im Nachtwind; der Stille
der fernen weit verbreiteten Nacht. — Und hast mich geliebt, das weiß
ich; wie Du mich an der Hand führtest durch die Straßen, da hab' ich's an
Deinem Atem empfunden, am Ton Deiner Stimme, an etwas, wie soll
ich's Dir bezeichnen, das mich umwehte, daß Du mich aufnahmst in ein
inneres geheimes Leben....

(oh, then I remembered everything, how you walked with me in night-hours and how you smiled at me, when I interpreted the cloud pictures and my love, my beautiful dreams, and you listened with me to the whispering of the leaves in the night-wind; to the stillness of the distant, far-extended night.—And loved me, that I know; how you led me by my hand through the streets, I felt it on your breath, in the tone of your voice, something, how shall I describe it to you, which breathed around me, that you accepted me into an inward, secret life....)

Reclaiming its origin in elocution, Brentano-von Arnim's deployment of comma and dash also allow her to mark the rhythmic patterns of speech cadence and intonation. If we emphasize the pauses required by her punctuation—as one might do when reading a poem aloud—Brentano-von Arnim's rhythmic scheme becomes even more audible:

Ach,
 da besann ich mich auf alles,
 wie Du mit mir gewandelt bist in nächtlichen Stunden und hast mir
 gelächelt,
 daß ich Dir die Wolkengebilde auslegte und meine Liebe,
 meine schönen Träume,
 und hast mit mir gelauscht dem Geflüster der Blätter im Nachtwind;
 der Stille der fernen weit verbreiteten Nacht. —

Und hast mich geliebt,

das weiß ich;

wie Du mich an der Hand führtest durch die Straßen,

da hab' ich's an Deinem Atem empfunden,

am Ton Deiner Stimme,

an etwas,

wie soll ich's Dir bezeichnen,

das mich umwehte,

daß Du mich aufnahmst in ein inneres geheimes Leben....

(oh,

then I remembered everything,

how you walked with me in night-hours and how you smiled at me,

when I interpreted the cloud pictures and my love,

my beautiful dreams,

and you listened with me to the whispering of the leaves in the night-wind;

to the stillness of the distant,

far-extended night.—

And loved me,

 that I know;

 how you led me by my hand through the streets,

 I felt it on your breath,

 in the tone of your voice,

 something,

 how shall I describe it to you,

 which breathed around me,

 that you accepted me into an inward,

 secret life....)

In the original German, one can see how the use of comma and dash allow Brentano-von Arnim to emphasize certain “internal” rhymes and repeating sounds, as well as the broader pattern of rhythm developed across phrases and sentences. Clearly, Brentano-von Arnim did not intend each mark of punctuation to correlate with traditional line breaks; that would be a gross simplification of her complex prosody. The exercise does, however, illustrate her poetic ambition and skill, as well as the intentional departures she made from the conventions of period prose and verse.

Speech, like the lyric forms it has engendered, “exhibits a unique prosody, which relies on variations in intonation, volume, as well as contrasts of loudness, tempo,

rhythm, pause, and other tones of voice [that] cannot be written down with much efficiency” (Crystal 291)¹⁸ As linguists have demonstrated, speech is in fact a continuous stream of sounds without a definite boundary between each word—properly called “connected speech” (Jeffries 64). Significantly, the features of connected speech—including alteration, addition, and deletion of sounds—preserve a rhythm uniquely characteristic of the specific language. Both English and German have a stress-timed speech rhythm; this means that the stressed syllables occur at equal intervals in time—but also vary somewhat in actual conversation (65-66).

As evidenced above, this turns out to be of great significance to Brentano’s “prose-poetry” experiments. In stress-timed languages, the prosody of speech—rhythm, tempo, and intonation—develops within the phrase and sentence, making an irregular if discernable pattern (Jurafsky and Martin 262). By adapting the rhythm of dialogue, Brentano-von Arnim achieved a subtle and sophisticated lyricism. Nearly a century before Pound, Brentano-von Arnim realized the possibilities of [composing] “in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome” (Flint, “Imagisme” 199). As such, the *Briefwechsel* served as an important model for both nonmetrical verse and lyric prose.

Even the most injurious English reviews of the *Briefwechsel* conceded Brentano-von Arnim’s exceptional poetic talent in German and English alike. And with good reason: her ethically-charged lyricism and style-shifting radicalized the possibilities of poetry and prose—particularly in the U.S. where her experiments met with unmitigated success. As such, Brentano-von Arnim represents one of the most powerful (and under-

acknowledged) practitioners of unorthodox German Romanticism, a movement which shapes both English and French experiments in *vers libre* and prose poetry.

Though there is far more work to be done in this area, I have established that the *Briefwechsel* was translated into French as early as 1843 by Hortense Lacroix Cornu¹⁹ under the pseudonym S[ébastien] Albin (Jaeck 134). A French author and translator from German and Italian, Cornu made numerous translations from the German and regularly furnished articles to the “Revue du Nord” and other periodicals under her pseudonym (Cushing 395). Cornu was particularly well known for her translations of Goethe and Brentano-von Arnim. Cornu was also close to Napoleon III, and though the two held vastly different political views, Cornu used her influence upon the Emperor to make significant changes to the system of Higher Education in France (Renan 228-229).

Hortense Cornu lived for many years in Germany and Italy and was a friend of Brentano-von Arnim, who may have advised her on the French translation of the *Briefwechsel* (Lewald 49). Cornu’s somewhat scandalous translation of the *Briefwechsel* was widely read and reviewed in France (Bellos 360). No small revelation in literary history, this discovery proves that Brentano-von Arnim’s experiment in the new “poetic genre” circulated in a foreignized French alongside of Bertrand’s *Gaspard de la nuit* (1842) and preceded Baudelaire’s *Petits Poèmes en Prose* (1869), works which typically mark the advent of prose-poetry and anticipate both Symbolist and modernist free verse. Without question, the three volumes have a great deal in common, particularly in the use of linguistic and generic style-shifting. The extent to which *La Correspondance* may have

influenced French Romanticism and early Symbolism is not clear and deserves far more attention in literary studies.

“My New English Language:” Bettina Brentano-von Arnim and “Reluctant” Translation

Between 1834 and 1838, Brentano-von Arnim worked on her English translation of *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*. She initially enlisted the help of the preeminent British translator Sarah Austin, whose three-volume translation, *Characteristics of Goethe*, had appeared in 1833. In the end, Austin refused to continue as translator on grounds that the *Briefwechsel* was essentially immoral and unsuitable for the English public (Collins and Shelley 100-101).

Undeterred by Austin’s rejection, Brentano-von Arnim found enthusiastic if less qualified assistance among English students in Berlin. When it was finally distributed by Longman in 1837, the first two volumes of *Goethe’s Correspondence with a Child* represented unprecedented editorial intervention on the part of a female author. Brentano-von Arnim retained final authority over every aspect of her book’s production and publication, including its translation. During this process, she taught herself English, became enamored with its possibilities, and ultimately judged her translators’ efforts deficient. She later retranslated portions of the first two volumes and elected to translate the third volume, *Tagebuch* (Diary), on her own.

When the translation of *Diary* appeared in 1838, it was nothing short of limit-smashing. An unprecedented experiment in German, Brentano-von Arnim’s *Diary* was, if

possible, even more shocking in English. In her “Preamble” to the Diary, Brentano-von Arnim openly recounts the resistance she encountered from her advisors—and their attempts to coerce her into compliance with English print conventions:

I struggled for my version as does an animal for its young and suffers them not to be touched by an indiscreet hand, but licks them clean again; so it was with me, instinctively and with great labor I tried to overcome all the corrections by deeper inducement, while people laughed at *my relucting* and said that I never would come to good issue, hence it cannot be otherwise, that *all what might be strange, or even never heard of* that must be imputed to *my persevering obstinacy* against the better knowing of my advisers.” (emphasis added) (*Goethe’s Correspondence with a Child: The Diary of a Child*. Vol. 3, 1838 vii)

“Relucting” is itself a kind of keyword here, a gerund Brentano-von Arnim invents from a then-obsolete use of the English verb “to reluct,” meaning “to strive or struggle to do something; to display opposition” (*OED*). Brentano-von Arnim resurrected and transformed the verb in order to convey the deeply engrained and widespread cultural resistance to anything but a prescriptive translation—and her determination to proceed anyway. She cultivated the “strange” or “never heard of” as a primary method of ethical translation (Lefevere, *Translating Literature: The German Tradition* 71).

As her preamble attests, Brentano-von Arnim knew the risks of deviating from convention but refused to compromise. The domesticating strategy of previous translators had stripped her prose of its poetry, rendering the innovation imperceptible in English.

“Often my ear was hurt by the words lack of musical rhythm,” Brentano-von Arnim complains, “that in the German text by their harmonious sounds, and even by their single parts awake poetic sensation” (*Goethe’s Correspondence...The Diary* 1838, iii). This was an unacceptable outcome for a work which was in the greatest sense, lyric. Like a poem, she argued, there was meaning in the music of her prose: the *Tagebuch* had to be rendered in an English flexible enough to recreate both rhythmic and semantic play.

Until recently, critics underestimated Brentano-von Arnim’s ambition and savvy as a translator, preferring to read the *Diary*’s eccentric English as the product of poor translation. The volume’s “Preamble” is Brentano-von Arnim’s definitive theoretical work on translation and clearly testifies otherwise:

I persisted often in my wrong way, when my advisers would have subverted my construction as they were *absurdities*, often my version larded with *uncommon* or *obsolete expressions* gave way to misunderstanding, then I could not ally the correction with my meaning, and would not be disputed out of my wits impassioned as I was for my *traced-out turn*, for which I had rummaged dictionary and poetry and never would yield till the last sheet which to day will come in the press.
(emphasis added) (vi).

As this passage illustrates, Brentano-von Arnim is far from naive in creating a foreign-bent translation. She valorized the “trace” and “turn” of phrase that privileges infinite etymology over finite prescription and highlighted the play of difference between speech and writing, between languages and language styles, between idiolect and dialect.

“Bent Towards A Foreign Likeness:” The Theory and Method of Reluctant Translation

Brentano-von Arnim’s preamble also helped explicate the work of her mentor, Schleiermacher. His famous lecture on the subject carefully distinguishes foreign-bent translation from the “most schoolboyish” or merely literal (qtd. in Lefevere 78). A word-for-word translation, Schleiermacher concedes, will surely “shock” the reader into awareness that the work before her is not fluent English (German, French, etc). The absence of fluency, however, does not guarantee fidelity to the “magisterial” achievement of the source (78). The genuine translation, Schleiermacher argues, exhibits a “feeling for language” which is not only non-prescriptive but “also causes us to suspect that it has not grown in total freedom but rather has been *bent towards a foreign likeness*” (emphasis added) (78-79). Schleiermacher did not develop a specific method for foreign-bent translation, but Brentano-von Arnim did, picking up where her mentor left off.

Brentano-von Arnim’s “Preamble” made a significant (if under-theorized) contribution to translation studies—particularly in light of the fact that Schleiermacher’s 1813 lecture was thought to have remained virtually unknown outside of Germany until 1977, when Andre Lefevere translated it into English. In spirit at least, Schleiermacher’s philosophy found its way into English as early as 1838. As such, Brentano-von Arnim represents one of the most important translator-theorists of the proto-modern period. Studies in comparative literature and translation have tended to overlook her “scandal to poetic convention” and translation (Godard 509). Brentano-von Arnim’s early translations, like those of her intellectual compatriot Germaine de Staël, “recognize the foreign language and culture in a ‘reciprocal,’ not ‘exclusive’ valorization” (509). As the

preamble illustrates, she was uncommonly explicit in relating her foreign-bent translation method; she is also among the most candid writers of her period on the politics of print-production, particularly for a female author.

Brentano-von Arnim openly celebrated the achievement of her “absurd” and “uncommon” translation, which she privately dubbed “voluptuousness-holyghost”²⁰. Not coincidentally, the name celebrates the idiosyncratic, as well as the equal importance of all that exists: physical and metaphysical; sensual and spiritual. In a letter to Caroline von Egloffstein, she boasts: “[y]ou must study my new English language, which I have built only instinctively and in a feeling of harmony” (Sie müssen meine neue englische Sprache studieren, die ich nur instinktmäßig und im Gefühl der Harmonie gebaut habe) (qtd. in Goozé 283). As this letter suggests, the lyric and dialogic ambition of *Diary* drove Brentano-von Arnim further and further into a “relucting” or reluctant method of translation that was itself an early deconstruction of English.

In order to recreate the German in English, Brentano-von Arnim relied heavily on various English poetry volumes as well as Samuel Johnson’s dictionary (*Goethe’s Correspondence...The Diary* 1838, vi). The “strange etymologies” she found there rewarded her with far greater variety of expression than prescriptive English of the period:

What erroneous ways have a hastened through; how often have I ferreted for words that do not exist, or bolted expressions offered in so many diversing shapes, that the choice disturbed me highly ... What a copiousness of words with their flexure overflowed me, how abundantly

gracious seemed to me those varieties of flexions, I would have them all inweaved in my version, and desponded in choosing the finest, the noblest, the most eloquent, and euphonical among all.—Often having studied a whole night, when in the morning I would peruse it, I was obliged to study it anew by help of the dictionary ... where I fell upon so beauteous expressions I would compound with my text ... the strange etymologies even as blossom-dust transported by sedulous bees from foreign lands to their homely field, variegating the flowerage of their words. – Vulgar people know not of the treasures upon their lips. . . . (v)

Brentano-von Arnim was acutely aware that etymology, like translation, recovers metaphor: the origins of language in sensual experience. Etymology also dramatically documents the process of naming as well as the great variety within and across languages. By “vulgar people” Brentano seems to have meant “native speakers” who have, through perpetual use, become insensitive to the poetry of their own vernacular. As an argument in favor of her own code-mixing, Brentano-von Arnim used the agricultural conceit of hybridizing varieties, suggesting that by crossing two distinct languages (German and English) she had created a superior breed of literary English.

In describing her method of translation, Brentano-von Arnim uses two revealing English verbs: “inweave” and “compound.” Both terms approach translation as a composition of differences rather than the product of assimilation. Threads woven together may be pulled apart; their pattern is visibly constituent. Creative juxtaposition is likewise inherent to German; it allows speakers to liberally and spontaneously compound

nouns and adjectives to form a new word in which roots are easily distinguished. For this reason, German compounding has often been cited as a unique intellectual capacity of the language to subvert convention and think new forms. Importantly, it is also a *poetic* capacity of German; compounding encourages word-play and allows for juxtaposition and compression within the lyric unit.

Through a rather remarkable English translation, Brentano-von Arnim was able to render a version of the *Tagebuch* (Diary) which exhibits marked resistance to the conventions of literary English circa 1838. Like its counterpart in German, *Diary of a Child* achieved this foreignizing effect through the use of non-prescriptive language varieties and repeated style-shifting, as with the passage below:

Midnight has past this long time, there I reclined till now; and as I look round, the light burns low. Where was I so deep in thoughts?—I thought, thou sleepest, and I had looked beyond the river, where the people had kindled a fire near their linen upon the bleaching green, and I had listened to the melodies they sung to keep themselves awake; — I too am awake and think of thee; it is a great mystery in love, this lasting embrace of thy soul with my mind, much may arise from this, that no one can forsee
(*Goethe's Correspondence...The Diary* 1838, 6).²¹

With *Diary*, Brentano-von Arnim had created a piece of English “prose poetry” to rival her contemporaries on either side of the Atlantic. There is simply nothing like the lyric and descriptive power of her intimate English prose circa 1835. With many of the same poetic devices she employed in German, Brentano-von Arnim pushes her *Diary* outside

the bounds of the period's English prose genres through sustained use of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and even internal rhyme.

Note, for example, the repeating pattern of sounds in the first sentence alone:

Mid**n**ight has past this long **t**ime,/ there I re**cl**ined **t**ill **n**ow;/ and as I look **r**ound,/ the **l**ight burns **l**ow. As with the *Tagebuch*, each pause required by her emphatic punctuation serves to reinforce the lyric pattern and rhythm of the prose. One might even say that Brentano-von Arnim has used the English translation as an opportunity to intensify the lyric qualities of the original.

At sentence-level, Brentano-von Arnim often bent the English through use of irregular (or archaic) syntax and neologism. In the passage quoted above, the syntax of the first two phrases is almost indecipherable: “Midnight has past this long time, there I reclined till now;” and yet it creates a haunting logic of its own. Brentano-von Arnim’s English abounds in poetic word-play and double-entendre, as with the use of the noun “past” in place of the verb “passed,” which invokes both the past and the passage of time, while simultaneously suggesting that time seemed to stop for the speaker, who is lost in the dream-like dimension of insomnia, reverie, and desire. In nineteenth-century prescriptive English, midnight cannot “have” past—it can only pass; but with her violation of standard syntax, Brentano-von Arnim transformed midnight into the timeless territory of longing. That meaning is reinforced by the unsanctioned phrasing “this long time, there I reclined till now.” When one reads *Diary* in its entirety, there is little doubt that the fluent translation, “Midnight has long since passed,” was well within Brentano-

von Arnim's grasp; English fluency, however, was not the author's primary concern—or even her preference.

In her "Preamble," Brentano-von Arnim even confesses to consciously retaining certain "errors" in spelling and syntax for figurative or lyric effect (as with the example above where the strong "t" in "past" maintains a tightly scored rhythmic pattern). In nineteenth-century English literature, poetry exercised its right to break and remake certain literary and linguistic norms, though with far less abandon than Brentano-von Arnim. The *Diary's* unorthodox phrasing, word order, and run-on construction forced readers to parce—and rediscover—their own language. The *Diary* brought new attention to the limitations of prescriptive English as well its potential for variety and "flexure," as Brentano-von Arnim called it.

In her translation of the *Tagebuch*, Brentano-von Arnim repeatedly coined new words that signaled the *Diary's* origins in German. She often gave literal translations of nineteenth-century German compounds like "virtue-life" (*Tugendleben*) without domesticating them into a more fluent English word or phrase (*Goethe's Correspondence ... The Diary* 1838, 112). Other neologisms are Brentano-von Arnim's own poetic variations on the German, as with "hellen Mondnächten" (clear moonnights), which she translates as "moon-clear nights" (113). Both strategies have the effect of estranging (and enriching) prescriptive English, while allowing Brentano-von Arnim to retain the unique capacity of the German. With "hellen Mondnächten," for example, a fluent translation of the period would most likely have read simply "moonlight" or possibly "moonlit nights." Neither translation sustains the broader rhythmic pattern or evokes the image as vividly

as Brentano-von Arnim's "in the moon-clear nights they allured me." Here, the translation sacrifices neither semantic nor lyric fidelity in signaling the source text. A very difficult balance to achieve, Brentano-von Arnim's self-authored translation frequently demonstrates both exceptional resistancy and fidelity.

Also worth noting is the dramatic style-mixing in this passage, where Brentano-von Arnim has woven together an intensely intimate and private speech style with the use of the elevated—and archaic—second-person singular pronouns, "thee," "thou," "thy," which take the verb ending -(e)st (as in, "thou takest"). The use of Elizabethan syntax challenged linguistic norms for American and British English circa 1835—particularly where letter-prose was concerned. In English, the second person singular pronouns became obsolete in the seventeenth-century and were retained only in poetry and sacred texts. Because of the *Briefwechsel's* poetic and philosophical ambitions, it is likely Brentano-von Arnim welcomed these associations.

Importantly, however, the second person singular pronoun had an added significance in German, where it was (and still is) used exclusively to signal intimacy and informality between speakers. In nineteenth-century Germany it would have been absolutely verboten to address anyone other than intimate friends, family members, or God as *Du*, the German equivalent of "thou/thee." This is the form "Bettine" boldly assumes with Goethe:

Sehnen sich die Pflanzen? ringen sie nach dem Blühen, wie mein Herz
heute ringt, das es lieben will, das es empfunden sein will? — Du mich

empfinden? — Wer bist Du, das ich's von Dir verlangen muß — Ach!

(*Goethes Briefwechsel Mit Einem Kinde: Tagebuch* 56).

(. . . do the plants yearn? — do they strive to blossom as my heart to-day strives to love, to be felt? — thou! to feel me? — who art thou that I must ask it of thee?— Alas!) (*Goethe's Correspondence with a Child: The Diary* 1838, 64)

Brentano-von Arnim's repetitive, ecstatic use of the second-person singular was a defining feature of the *Diary*, and one that would have occasioned considerable discomfort in most contemporary readers. Somewhat scandalously, she dramatized a reverence bordering on the erotic. In translating this intimacy as “thou,” Brentano-von Arnim continually reminded nineteenth-century English readers that the work before them was not English, but a language haunted by the author's sensual and transgressive German.

Diary and Brentano-von Arnim's English Reception: A Language “Too Essentially German”

In England, reviews of the *Diary* registered deep ambivalence. At turns admiring and virulent, the English critics ultimately dismissed Brentano-von Arnim's translation: “We hardly know whether is the more remarkable,” writes a reviewer in the *Athenaeum*, “the rhapsodical and mystical poetry of certain passages, or the comicality of the Anglo-German Malaprop in which they are rendered...” (Collins and Shelley 120). Over and

over again, reviewers marvel at the strange new English and its exceptional lyricism only to dismiss the translation as an untenable transgression—“too essentially German” (114).

In 1838, a reviewer for *The Foreign Quarterly Review* reported that even though Brentano-von Arnim had been warned by “good judges, that the warmth of the unrestrained effusions of a glowing imagination, which marks Bettina’s correspondence, so far exceeds the bounds authorized by the English laws of decorum, that the work faithfully translated, would not be tolerated on the table of any English family, she has nevertheless persisted in her design. . . .” (“A Letter from Berlin. . . .” 211). Brentano-von Arnim’s sensual genius was also her greatest impertinence among the English. In carrying over the peculiarities of her “voluptuous” letter-book, Brentano-von Arnim had adopted—and deepened—Schleiermacher’s method of moving the reader towards the foreign author. In the process, however, she rendered *Diary* incompatible with the canons of criticism in Victorian England.

“How Much I and My Friends Owed Her:” Brentano-von Arnim’s Reception in the Transcultural U.S.

In her ground-breaking study on Brentano-von Arnim, Marjanne Goozé concludes that English readers were ultimately unreceptive to the author’s ambitious translation; that her “hope of transplanting Goethe to foreign soil was disappointed” (299). The only translation study on the author to date, Goozé’s essay focuses solely on Brentano-von Arnim’s English reception. Brentano-von Arnim’s reception in the U.S., however, is a

remarkable tale of influence and merits careful analysis. It was a history relegated to footnote and archive for over a hundred years until Collins and Shelley published their important reception study on Brentano-von Arnim in 1962. Those findings, though significant, exercised little influence on scholarship in the monolingual fields of twentieth-century English literature and American Studies. In recuperating that history here, I demonstrate that Brentano-von Arnim's popularity in the U.S. reveals as much if not more than her failure in Victorian England.

It is no coincidence that Brentano-von Arnim's foreignizing translation met with great success in the transcultural U.S., where multiple languages circulated in print and translations proliferated. Schleiermacher's 1814 lecture on translation provides one of the best explanations for the dramatic difference between Brentano-von Arnim's English and American receptions:

As the desire to translate can originate only when a certain ability for intercourse with foreign languages is widespread among the educated part of the population, just so the art will develop and the aim be set higher and higher, the more love and knowledge of foreign products of the spirit spread and increase among those elements of the population who have exercised and trained their ears, without specializing in the knowledge of foreign products" (Lefevere 76).

In uncanny fashion, Schleiermacher anticipated the exact language situation of the transnational U.S. at mid-century: a culture precariously balanced between its profoundly

multilingual history and an increasingly English-only nationalism (Ferguson and Heath 11).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Brentano-von Arnim was first introduced to the U.S. reading public by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a disciple of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* (world literature) and little-known "pioneer in the exploration of Germany and German literature" (Collins and Shelley 151). An unlikely hero of foreignizing translation, Longfellow was in fact a vocal critic of domesticating translation. He edited the massive and unprecedented translation anthology, *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845), in which many of the first free-verse poems circulate under the guise of translation. Importantly, Longfellow was the first to reconstruct Brentano-von Arnim's reception in print, calling her *Briefwechsel* "singular" (151-152). His praise was modest. Yet, unlike English reviewers, Longfellow offered no objections on grounds of immorality (152). This was a substantial shift in reception.

Emerson and the Transcendental "Bettine"

Longfellow's appraisal pales in comparison to the reputation Brentano-von Arnim achieved among the Transcendentalists. Though it has long been held that the New England Transcendentalists owed a great deal to the literature and philosophy of German Romanticism, Brentano-von Arnim's particular influence is now a forgotten chapter in U.S. history. In fact, Brentano-von Arnim enjoyed nothing less than cult status among the Transcendentalists (Capper 26). Journalist, critic, and feminist pioneer Margaret Fuller first introduced Brentano-von Arnim to her close friend Ralph Waldo

Emerson in 1838. Together, they educated a generation of U.S. writers in the literary unorthodoxy that was “Bettine.”

Emerson’s career-long enthusiasm for Brentano-von Arnim’s work was virtually boundless. After reading the three-volume English edition of the *Correspondence* (1839), he wrote to Fuller, declaring:

Bettina’s book [Diary of a Child]...moves all my admiration. What can be richer and nobler than that woman’s nature. What life more pure and poetic amid the prose and derision of our time....It seems to me she is the only formidable test that was applied to Goethe’s genius. He could well abide any other influence under which he came. Here was genius purer than his own...and [he] mainly does not make one adequate confession of the transcendent superiority of this woman’s aims and affections in the presence of which all his Art must have struck sail. (*Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 1 210)

This was high praise indeed—as well as an early and insightful feminist critique. In 1836, Emerson had yet to compose the majority of his influential works—only *Nature* had found its way to print. His landmark collection, *Essays*, does not follow until 1841. When Emerson first encountered Brentano-von Arnim’s “New English” translation of the *Correspondence* in 1839 he was in the midst of developing the style that defined a movement and inspired the likes of Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman. Though rarely acknowledged in literary studies, Brentano-von Arnim was in fact one of the most frequently cited literary figures in Emerson’s notebooks (G. Johnson 8). He

would ultimately place in her league with Dante and Cervantes as one of the great masters of world literature (“Progress of Culture,” *Letters and Social Aims* 207).

Perhaps inspired by the song-settings of Brentano-von Arnim,²² Emerson went on to make a number of pioneering translations of the Persian poet Hafez based on German adaptations, including translations by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1812) and the free adaptation of Goethe (1819). Emerson’s landmark “Essay on Persian Poetry” (1858), which contained numerous translation excerpts, exerted considerable influence on U.S. poetry, encouraging further study of Eastern and Middle Eastern literature.

Brentano-von Arnim’s popularity among the New England Transcendentalists was such that, in 1839, Emerson arranged for the American reprint of the three-volume *Correspondence* (Collins and Shelley 158). In 1841, Daniel Bixby brought out the first American edition (based on the London edition) in two volumes. New England’s most formidable German scholar, Fuller wrote to Brentano-von Arnim on behalf of her intellectual circle as well as her nation:

I write to you in the name of many men and many women of my country for whom you have wrought wonders....Thou art dear to us, thou art the friend of our inmost mood...Though expressed by an obscure individual it is the desire of many hearts, I would say of a new world...Write to me or print it in a book (qtd. in Bauschinger 42).

Fuller had not exaggerated Brentano-von Arnim’s literary or political influence in the U.S. Brentano-von Arnim’s work proved critical to Transcendentalists, for whom

poetry had likewise become synonymous with freedom from convention, free expression, and the pursuit of social justice. Actively meeting as of 1839, The Transcendentalist Club included the regular members Emerson, Fuller, Frederic Hedge, Samuel Ripley, Theodore Parker, Henry David Thoreau, and the publisher Elizabeth Peabody, among others; George Bancroft also visited occasionally, as did Elizabeth Hoar, Sarah Bradford Ripley, and Sarah Clarke (G. Cooke 53). Bound by a “cult of friendship [they] were collectively drawing from Goethe, Bettina [von Arnim], and de Stael,” these intellectual and literary luminaries had a tremendous influence on U.S. culture (R. Richardson 338). When Brentano-von Arnim died in 1859, Emerson wrote to her daughter Gisela: “I mourned that I could not earlier have established my alliance with your circle, that I might have told [your mother] how much I and my friends owed her” (Collins and Shelley 156).

A New Critical Mode: Fuller, Feminism, and G nderode

In July 1841, Margaret Fuller, serving as *Dial* editor, acknowledges that “the *Correspondence* is as popular here as in Germany” and expresses her hope that Brentano-von Arnim will translate her forthcoming letter-book, *Die G nderode*, into the same “German English,” which had so impressed the U.S. avant-garde (Collins and Shelley 158). In the absence of a response, Fuller authors her own translation modeled on the idiosyncrasy and poetic acuity of Brentano-von Arnim’s compounded English. A sister-book to the *Correspondence*, *Die G nderode* served as a partially fictionalized account of Brentano-von Arnim’s intimate friendship with the gifted poet, Karoline G nderode.

Brentano-von Arnim's second book—and its English translation—represent significant documents in early feminism. In letters to Emerson, Fuller expressed her critical reservations regarding the *Briefwechsel*, particularly Goethe's flagrant condescension and Brentano-von Arnim's disturbing portrayal of "Bettine" as an inferior and submissive child (Zwarg 81). In translating *Günderode*, Fuller hoped to "[expand] the critical faculties of the American audience" by carrying into English more progressive models of gender and genre alike (80-82). With *Günderode*, Fuller argued, "the pure products of public and private literature are on par" (87).

In the "Translator's Preface" to *Günderode* (1842), Margaret Fuller echoes Brentano-von Arnim's "Preamble," demonstrating her equally strong opposition to the "bigoted precision" of domesticating translations:

[Bettina Brentano-von Arnim's] original is not a work subject to the canons of literary criticism....Its negligent familiarity is one of its chief charms, but one difficult to reproduce without in some degree *offending established rules of taste*....Neither have I sought, with bigoted precision, to render these wild graces of style, willing or unwilling, into *pure English, which many persons wish the translator to do at any sacrifice*....The style thus formed is, at least, a transcript of the feelings...and a likeness, if a *caricature*. Such translations please me best, —foreign works "done into English," as was the simple phrase of an earlier day, when the preservation of thought was the grand object. Now

people are as impatient of *peculiarity of style*, as in dress or manners
(emphasis added; vi).

There is a strong correlation, here, between foreignizing and feminist translation, which resists the conventions of gender encoded in “pure English” and the “canons of literary criticism” themselves. In the U.S., Fuller is the first to enlist a foreignizing method in the service of feminist translation and critique. In a remarkably complex articulation of the cultural biases shaping translation, Fuller addresses the relationship between Brentano-von Arnim’s unorthodox *Günderode* — which resisted conventions of canon abroad— and its ideal counter-part in translation, which requires Fuller to “offend established rules of taste” at home. In this way, Fuller foregrounds the power and responsibility of the often invisible translator.

Like Brentano-von Arnim and Schleiermacher, Fuller shows a surprisingly modern awareness of standard language as cultural construct—a system “impatient of peculiarity” in society and literature alike. A German scholar of some repute, Fuller likely encountered Schleiermacher’s theory along with Schiller’s, but she would not have needed it. As her U.S. reception demonstrates, Brentano-von Arnim had not only tried Schleiermacher, she had proven him. Like Brentano-von Arnim, Fuller knew the dangers of “peculiarity” in translation, but preferred to place herself under the authority of the source and its “wild graces.”

At the time of their translation, both the *Diary* and *Günderode* were unprecedented in English literature. In the nineteenth century U.S., the publication of private correspondence was rare, especially within the correspondent’s lifetime. Even

within the more permissive literary culture of German Romanticism, it was unheard of for a woman to edit and selectively rewrite her own letters and private diaries for print publication. In the U.S., published correspondences served as supplementary histories and chronicled the public lives of public figures, most of whom were men. As Christina Zwarg argues, “Fuller’s decision to translate *Günderode* registered a gathering interest in the production of literary texts by women and constituted the first stage of her argument...that women, not men, would lead the way in the development of a new critical mode” (86). Following its U.S. debut in 1839, Brentano-von Arnim’s work appears to have sanctioned a new genre of “American” literature: there is little doubt that *Correspondence with a Child* and *Günderode* inspired some of the century’s most important personal narratives including those by Fuller, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Lucy Larcome, Maria Edgeworth, and Sarah Orne Jewett.

Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, and the Legacy of the Transcendental “Bettine”

When Fuller published her foreignizing translation of *Günderode* in 1842, Dickinson was only twelve years old—and Brentano-von Arnim had officially achieved the status of cult figure among the New England Transcendentalists. Dickinson discovered Brentano-von Arnim through Susan Gilbert (Dickinson) and editor, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who considered Brentano-von Arnim “along with Wordsworth and Thoreau, one of the “three human foster-children who have been taken nearest into Nature’s bosom” (St. Armand 11). A passionate work of “letter-poetry,”²³ Fuller’s Englished *Günderode* earned Dickinson’s deep and lasting admiration.

Fuller's *Günderode* figured prominently in the imaginations of both Emily Dickinson and her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson, with whom Emily enjoyed a passionate and life-long correspondence (Hart and Smith, *Open Me Carefully* xi). In their early letter-exchange, Emily and "Sue" even employed a code based on Brentano-von Arnim's work (St. Armand 11). Emily and Susan's reverence for *Günderode* is hardly surprising given the poetic genius of both Brentano-von Arnim and Karoline von Günderode—as well as the erotically and intellectually-charged relationship between them. It is not difficult to imagine how Brentano-von Arnim, with her expansive sense of self and poetry, helped liberate Dickinson's own unorthodoxies. The author of *Günderode* would have cleared the way for any number of Dickinson's experiments. Brentano-von Arnim's radical ethics and trans-generic experiments, her lyric sensuality and unprecedented use of speech rhythm—all these would have resonated deeply with Dickinson's own genre-confounding inclinations, her un-common meter, and poetics of infinite variation.

In particular, *Günderode*'s lyric letter-work and unorthodox German-English offered an early model for Dickinson's own transgeneric letter/poems. By Thomas H. Johnson's calculation, Dickinson circulated close to 600 poems in letters, a "figure which underestimates the interconnectedness of Dickinson's poems and letters" (Burr 50). Echoing Brentano-von Arnim's work, these writings blur the line between poetry and prose, literature and letter. As part of her 1842 *Günderode* translation, Fuller highlighted Karoline Günderode's "Ein apokalyptisches Fragment" (An Apocalyptic Fragment), which Brentano-von Arnim includes as part of the semi-fictionalized exchange between

her autobiographical characters “Günderode” and “Bettine.” Following are the first two “stanzas” in Fuller’s English:

1. I stood on a high rock in the Mediterranean sea; before me, the East; behind me, the West; and the wind lay still upon the sea.

2. The sun sank; scarcely was it hid from sight, than the dark of morning began to rise. Morning, noon, evening, and night chased one another in giddy haste across the dome of heaven. . . . (14)

Arguably one of the first non-metrical “prose poems” to circulate widely in the U.S., the poem’s significance to Dickinson’s own irregular metric cannot be underestimated. The fragment licensed linguistic, formal, and personal freedom unprecedented in nineteenth-century English poetry—a fact not lost on Fuller, who cited Günderode’s “poetical fragments” as evidence of a genius equal to the radical intellectuals Goethe, Kant, and Schelling (“Translator’s Preface” x-xi).

A testament to Brentano-von Arnim’s enduring significance for Susan and Emily Dickinson, Susan cited *Günderode* as the only generic model adequate to the task of rendering Dickinson in print (Lokke 160). Unlike Brentano-von Arnim, Emily Dickinson never had the opportunity to edit and introduce herself for the press. Susan must have felt keenly the weight of this responsibility to Emily—particularly in light of the parallels Susan drew between herself and Brentano-von Arnim. Like Susan Dickinson, Brentano-von Arnim had once faced the difficult question of how best to represent the complex genius of her friend Günderode, who committed suicide in 1806 at the age of 26.

Following Dickinson's death, however, Susan's ambitious plans for a multi-genre volume including Emily's letters, poems, fragments, and illustrations were thwarted when Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd rushed to print with a far more conventional volume (Smith, "Susan and Emily Dickinson" 59-60). Dickinson's "astonishing range," as Martha Nell Smith has called it,²⁴ was thereby translated into a flat and fluent print-verse, where it remained obscured for over half a century.

I would be remiss in concluding my discussion of Brentano-von Arnim's influence without adding a word on Walt Whitman. Brentano-von Arnim's fame was such that her work could hardly have escaped his notice. She was after all the hero of Whitman's hero (Emerson) and had become part of the atmosphere of Transcendental New England. And while I have yet to locate any direct mention of Brentano-von Arnim's work in Whitman's letters or diaries, there is a clear kinship in passages like this one—taken from Fuller's translation of "Ein apokaliptisches Fragment" (An Apocalyptic Fragment):

14. I was released from the narrow limits of my being and no single drop more; I was restored to the all, and the all belonged to me. I thought and felt, flowed as waves in the sea, shone in the sun, circled with the stars; I felt myself in all, and enjoyed all in myself.

15. Therefore, who has ears to hear, let him hear. It is not two, nor three, nor a thousand, but one and all; it is not body and spirit separately, one belonging to time, the other to eternity, but one, belongs to itself, and is, at

once, time and eternity, visible and invisible, constant and change, an infinite life. (*Günderode* 15-16)

Upon reading the *Günderode* fragment, one cannot help but recall the famous opening lines of *Song of Myself* with their non-metrical prosody and philosophy of the universal self:

I celebrate myself and sing myself,
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
 I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.... (Leaves of Grass 18)

Perhaps most compelling are the similarities between *Günderode's* adaptation of the biblical verset—her unprecedented use of extended syntax and parallelism in creating a consistent rhythm—and Whitman's own experiment in cadenced verse. Considering the commonplace literary history that Whitman had all but invented himself, his idiom, and free verse itself, we would do well to study the possible influence of the Transcendental "Bettine"—as well as Fuller's highly visible (and radical) translation of *Günderode*.

Conclusion

Despite the real threat of persecution, Bettina Brentano-von Arnim continued to work for social justice and individual liberty throughout her life. In 1844, she began

conducting interviews of factory workers. She documented inhumane living and working conditions among the Silesian weavers and had plans to publish her findings in book form but abandoned the project when a female informant was tragically shot (Frederiksen and Goodman 26). Brentano-von Arnim also opposed capital punishment, advocated for prison reform, and defended the equal rights of German Jews (Krimmer 168). She was even sentenced to prison for her political dissidence, though later acquitted. For Brentano-von Arnim, these were the material circumstances out of which the seemingly abstract practices of literature and translation arose.

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to show how Bettina Brentano-von Arnim's radical ethics powerfully shaped her experiments in literature and "reluctant" translation alike—writings which ultimately found purchase in the multilingual and transnational soil of the U.S. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to document fully the influence Brentano-von Arnim exerted on the Transcendentalists and their heirs, it is hoped that the history recovered here will inspire further study.

Not coincidentally, it was the transatlantic scholar and journalist Margaret Fuller who paved the way for Brentano-von Arnim's success in the U.S. One of the nineteenth-century's most important feminists, Fuller actively fostered an American literature not limited to one nation, one language, or one sex. Beside Fuller stands Emerson, whose life-long regard for Bettina Brentano-von Arnim's work burns like a signal-fire in American literature. Like Fuller, Emerson guides us toward the forgotten importance of the *Correspondence* and *Günderode* translations. As early as 1839, Emerson had named "Bettina & Beethoven" his "sponsors" (Lepencies 73). Clearly, Brentano-von Arnim's

poetics of infinite particularity “struck sail” in Emerson, the unorthodox American writer and abolitionist who also registered deep suspicion of social conventions, believed in the “sovereignty of ethics” above all else,²⁵ and summed up his central philosophy as “the infinitude of the private man” (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* 342). This is the Emerson who had gone to school to Bettina, whose writings run like an “invisible filament”²⁶ between the seemingly opposite inclinations of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, the nineteenth century’s most important U.S. poets.

Chapter 2: Longfellow's *Poets and Poetry of Europe*: Anthologizing an "American" Genre

Introduction

Long before Ezra Pound's famous translation experiments, nineteenth-century poets and scholars working within and across U.S. borders began to adapt translation to the exigencies of an intensely heterogeneous national literature. In doing so, they helped prepare the ground for modernist revaluations of literary tradition. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on the lesser-known translation work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in order to bridge a critical gap in our thinking about the relationship between nineteenth and twentieth century poetry—and the evolution of modern free verse in English. Longfellow's unorthodox approach to editing and translating, I argue, helped popularize and redefine translation as a national genre with special relevance to the transcultural U.S.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is perhaps one of the most significant though rarely acknowledged champions of "foreignizing" translation which, in Lawrence Venuti's formulation, "entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language" ("Strategies of Translation" 242). There is much to gain in rereading Longfellow's influential translation projects within this context—particularly his massive and understudied translation anthology, *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845).

What is “American” Language and Literature?: Longfellow in Historical Context

In an 1815, the *North American Review* ran an article entitled “Essay on American Language and Literature” in which Walter Channing advocates a monolingual national literature as a means of compensating for the United States’ colonial origins and lack of “originality.” It is worth quoting at length:

The genuine patriotism which the political institutions of this country might have produced, and even with the aid of the English language, might have lent its aid to the rise of literature among us, has been lost in a servile dependence on foreign politicians ... and a love for the mere descriptions of foreign poetry.... There is something peculiarly opposed to literary originality, in the colonial existence which was unfortunately so long the condition of America. This is mentioned incidentally under the head of the importance of a peculiar language to national literature. This circumstance precluded the possibility of our possessing such a language. All that can be expected from such a colony, made up of all sorts of materials, speaking not only the dialects of the original language, but the different languages of the three different nations from which it sprung, is to preserve a purity in one of them. It must first choose one, then guard it from even the least corruption to which it would be remarkably liable (312).

Channing’s argument highlights the interrelated and integral role played by politics and poetry in nineteenth-century nation-building—and the threat posed by so-called “foreign

politicians” and “foreign poetry.” As this representative passage of the period demonstrates, monolingual nationalism was fueled by the insecurities of a colony-nation that feared its own foreign identity as much as any other.

In the multilingual nineteenth-century, “foreign” was a deeply vexed and unstable term—for who and what is foreign in a nation of foreigners? We would do well to recall the etymology of the word “foreign,” a kind of keyword with special relevance in the U.S. Circa 1800, “foreign” literally meant “not of one’s own household” and carried numerous secondary meanings, including “irrelevant, inappropriate;” “belonging to other persons or things, not one’s own;” “derivative of another country;” and even, in scientific terms, “that element or organism which threatens the health of the body” (*OED*). In addition to the many languages and dialects circulating in the U.S. from its inception, prominent political languages like French and German could hardly be called “foreign.” For English-only advocates in the U.S., however, multilingualism was thought to inhibit the creation of a national literature, which must choose a “single language” and then guard it from “corruption.” As a result, the historical and material existence of the U.S. contrasted sharply with the agenda of monolingual nationalism, thereby producing a tremendous anxiety in literary discourse of the period.

Between 1818 and 1821, *The North American Review* published many more translations and articles on foreign literatures, including those by the century’s most prominent American poet and translator, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. By mid-century, however, a palpable change was underway. In an 1847 journal entry Longfellow writes: “much is said now-a-days of a “national literature.” Does it mean anything?...We have, or

shall have, a composite one, embracing French, Spanish, Irish, English, Scotch and German particularities....In other words, whoever is most universal is also most national” (S. Longfellow, *Life of H. W. Longfellow* 73-74). Circa 1847, the nation’s most popular poet voiced serious concerns about a monolingual “national literature,” and predicted instead a multilingual literature in which English was merely one of many literary languages of the U.S. This “composite” literary tradition has, for the most part, been lost to us despite its significance in the nineteenth-century U.S.

Though not commonly known, Longfellow was Pound’s great-uncle. Hugh Kenner called it an “unimportant taxonomy” and left it at that (263). T.E. Lawrence, a contemporary of Pound’s, went so far as to suggest that Pound spent much of his early career living down the Longfellow connection. And certainly, when set side-by-side, the anthologized Longfellow and Pound have little in common. But whatever fault Pound may have found with Longfellow’s more genteel, popular verse, there is an undeniable kinship in their approach to translation, in their belief that “writing poems...[meant] not Romantic self-expression but participation in a public conversation conducted across decades, cultures, classes, and languages” (Irmscher 173).

Until recently, Longfellow’s translations attracted little critical notice despite the fact that they number in the 400’s according to his 1882 bibliography (Scharnhorst 269). In the first book-length study of Longfellow’s work since 1966, Christopher Imscher offers a compelling new perspective on the United States most broadly-read and commercially successful poet. With a few obvious exceptions, nineteenth-century poetic output is typically dismissed as disastrously sentimental and formulaic. This was only

one facet, however, of a surprisingly translingual literary culture in which oppositional translation sanctioned some of the first free verse experiments. As one of the century's most influential transnational scholars, Longfellow (and the literary and academic institutions he shaped) helps refocus our understanding of this important period in U.S. history. His work as a translator and editor also sheds new light on foreignizing translation as an American genre in its own right.

Unlike most of his intellectual contemporaries, Longfellow apprenticed himself in extensive travel abroad. The most influential modernists will follow suit. At nineteen, Longfellow travelled through France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, mastering the languages of the countries in whose cultures he voluntarily immersed himself. He spent over three years in Europe in order to prepare himself for a new job as professor of Modern Languages at Bowdoin College (Irmscher 147). At the time, “[t]he idea that the study of modern languages could form any serious part of a college curriculum was... a new one” (Page 669). Longfellow considered the study of languages among the most critical intellectual pursuits and by the age of twenty-eight had also acquired reading competence in Swedish, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian, Dutch, and Portuguese (C. Johnson 327). In 1836, Longfellow began his post as Harvard's second-only Chair of Modern Languages, profoundly influencing the study and practice of literature in the U.S.

Longfellow's insistence on the importance of literal and literary travel owes much to his hero, Goethe, whose notion of “Weltliteratur,” or “cosmopolitan literature” greatly impressed him (Irmscher 157). However, as Irmscher argues, Longfellow's cosmopolitanism “crucially depended on what Tzvetan Todorov has described as a

‘plunge into the particular,’ the willingness to get to know, describe, and respect, in all their uniqueness, different local traditions, customs, languages, and literatures” (158). In many ways, Longfellow anticipated the twenty-first century shift towards postnational and cosmopolitan scholarship, which reads literature as a practice with relevance both within and beyond the nation—a practice shaped by individual and cultural differences alike (Walkowitz 5).

Though relegated long ago to the small print of footnotes, Longfellow’s groundbreaking work as a popular editor and translator of foreign literature suggests a prominent multilingual culture in the nineteenth-century U.S. Longfellow welcomed this diversity as distinctly “American” at a time when many of his fellow scholars began to work—at the institutional level—to exclude “the foreign” and ensure the dominance of Anglo-Saxon English in the U.S. “Longfellow’s many translations,” Irmischer argues “rendered fluid the boundaries between national cultures, just as they blurred the line dividing so-called original literary work from an activity mocked as merely reproductive” (3-4). That Longfellow once advanced such a radical approach to the reading and writing of literature has long been forgotten.

As Dana Gioia points out, “modern literary criticism on Longfellow hardly exists in the sense that it does for more overtly difficult poets like Dickinson, Stevens, or Pound...There is no substantial body of criticism...Consequently, many central aspects of his work have never been examined in any detail...and misconceptions about his work abound” (59). Longfellow is often charged with a lack of originality, Europhilia, and pulp popularity. Until very recently, he was all but dismissed from the English literary canon

as an outmoded and irrelevant figure. In fact, many of the critical assumptions we make about Longfellow's relevance stem from the modern anthology's narrow frame, which typically excludes translations. As a result, we have tended to overlook Longfellow's most experimental and influential contributions as translator, scholar, and editor.

Longfellow's iconic poem, "A Psalm of Life," offers an illuminating history of the "authorized" Longfellow and its non-canonical counter-part. Widely reprinted in school-books and anthologies, the poem first appeared in his debut collection of verse, *Voices of the Night* (1839). It is characteristic of Longfellow's original verse—as well as the popular nineteenth-century tastes to which it appealed:

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,

Life is but an empty dream!—

For the soul is dead that slumbers,

And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!

And the grave is not its goal;

Dust thou art, to dust returnest,

Was not spoken of the soul. (5)

Here we have the Longfellow of neat and predictable song. Concrete description is thin—the poem circles around itself, abstracting and elevating as it goes from material to spiritual, “dust” to “soul.” The lines frame a pleasing and genteel symmetry. The “numbers” that “slumber,” the “dreams” which “seem,” fail to materialize, are never meant to materialize: bodies and whole continents disappear. In the face of great social and political uncertainty, nineteenth-century verse often avoided local and realistic detail in favor of a tidy, universal sublime.

What few modern readers realize, however, is that “A Psalm of Life” debuted in *Voices of the Night* alongside numerous translations. In fact, Longfellow’s translations—from the Spanish, French, Italian, and German—outnumber the original poems. Among those poets featured are the famous pre-Renaissance writers Lope de Vega and Dante Alighieri. Over sixty years before Pound, Longfellow praised these poets for their unorthodox adaptations of a “simple and direct” vernacular (*Poets and Poetry of Europe* 630). He was, in fact, largely responsible for making these poets, and the Modern Languages curriculum that included them, available to Pound and his generation. Like Dante, Lope de Vega had extolled the virtues of the “native tongue,” (as opposed to Latin), arguing that “the true poet... writes in his own language, and it is therein that he shows his excellence” (Morel-Fatio 122). In his own biography of the poet and dramatist, Longfellow praised Lope de Vega’s ability to free himself of “excessive artifice and affectation in language and expression” (*Poets and Poetry of Europe* 630).

Perhaps not surprisingly, *Voices of the Night* met with ambivalence. Longfellow’s mixed-genre debut was unconventional to say the least. Though eager to praise the

already popular and promising Longfellow, reviewers were nonetheless uneasy about the emphasis he placed on “translations from the foreign modern languages” (Rev. of *Voices of the Night*, *North American Review* 266). In 1840, an anonymous reviewer for the *North American Review* protested that certain linguistic choices in Longfellow’s “Voices of the Night” translations were “too foreign to the English idiom to be defensible, even in translation; and it demands notice so much the more, as translations are notoriously the great corruptors of the purity of a language” (Rev. of *Voices of the Night*, 269). The *North American Review* appeared equally ambivalent about Longfellow’s “solemn pathos” which, they were quick to assure readers, he “[utters] in the most melodious and picturesque language” (266).

At the margins of those neat and vacuous poems, however, were the material hardships of everyday life in the nineteenth-century U.S.—the constant threat of poverty, disease, and violent disintegration. In 1850, the average life expectancy for all persons living in the United States was 36.5 years for men and 38.5 years for women (Klein 101). Out of every 1000 live births, 216 infants died (114). Prior to the Civil War, violence increased dramatically across the U.S. fueled by “racial tensions in the South, labor problems in the North, and Native American warfare and unsettled conditions in the West” (Miethe et al 70). Cities in the East and Midwest saw massive growth as European immigrants entered the country in unprecedented numbers (68). As the population became more diverse, ethnic and racial tensions worsened (68). In response to an increasingly violent society, the discourse of social control proliferated (69). Wherever the United States threatened to reveal itself as an uncivilized and tenuous “colony” of

immigrants, poetry could be made to testify otherwise with its pastorals and psalms, its orderly, genteel line: in short, a poem edited and abstracted to within an inch of its life.

Of course, this is the Longfellow that oppressed a generation of modernists with its paucity and politeness. But there were, as I have suggested, a series of Longfellows. And Pound will say 100 years later, no one can “learn English, one can only learn a series of Englishes” (*Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, “Cavalcanti: Medievalism” 193-194). Some languages we authorize, some we suppress; some Longfellows we have read, others we are just beginning to read. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a letter Longfellow wrote to his sisters while travelling abroad in 1826:

Paris is a gloomy city, built all of yellow stone, streaked and defaced with smoke and dust; streets narrow and full of black mud, which comes up through the pavements, on account of the soil on which the city is built; no sidewalks; cabriolets, facres, and carriages of all kinds driving close to the houses and spattering or running down whole ranks of foot-passengers; and noise and stench enough to drive a man mad... (S. Longfellow, *Life of H.W. Longfellow* 81-82)

Here is a surprisingly modern English. Form giveth and it taketh away. What’s possible in private manuscript-prose, it seems, is not yet possible in the popular print poem of the nineteenth century U.S.: a close and concrete description in which the image prevails, in which object replaces idea—a poetic diction closer to the register and rhythm of speech.

In 1915, Pound will make his urgent case for a new poetry founded on the same principles:

no book words, no paraphrases, no inversions. It must be as simple as De Maupassant's best prose, and as hard as Stendhal's....Rhythm MUST have meaning. It can't be merely a careless dash-off, with no grip and no real hold to words and sense....no straddled adjectives (as "addled mosses dank"), no Tennysonianness of speech, nothing—nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance, in the stress of some emotion, actually say." (*Selected Letters* "60: To Harriet Monroe" 48-49)

In the private prose addressed to his sisters, this Longfellow: "yellow stone, streaked and defaced with smoke and dust; streets narrow and full of black mud." Without book words, periphrases, inversions, this is the paratactic language of modernism, a preface to H.D., *Imagiste* (1913):

Apples on the small trees

Are hard,

Too small,

Too late ripened

By a desperate sun.... ("Hermes of the Ways" 119)

And Gertrude Stein (1914): “The resemblance to yellow is dirtier and distincter. The clean mixture is whiter and not coal color, never more coal color than altogether” (*Tender Buttons* 12).

And Pound (1915):

The leaves fall early in autumn, in wind.

The paired butterflies are already yellow with August

Over the grass in the West garden;

They hurt me. I grow older. (“The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter” 12)

And Eliot: (1915)

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys, (“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” 130-131)

Of course, in the vast majority of his poems Longfellow retained an elevated register and genteel tendency towards generic image and abstract idea. There are a few remarkable exceptions, all of which arise in the process of translation; or to be more precise, a certain approach to translation. Reconsider, for example, that first stanza of

Longfellow's popular poem, "A Psalm of Life:" "Tell me not, in mournful numbers/ Life is but an empty dream!—/For the soul is dead that slumbers,/And things are not what they seem." Now compare that stanza with Longfellow's first attempt at rendering the *Divina Commedia* in English, a translation fragment that appeared alongside "A Psalm of Life" in *Voices of the Night*:

Already my slow steps had led me on
 into the ancient wood so far, that I
 Could see no more the place where I had entered. ("The Terrestrial
 Paradise," *Voices of the Night* 103)

Here is an unrhymed stanza that reads more like 1939 than 1839. As a translator, Longfellow was clearly capable of a less formulaic, more idiomatic English line. Not surprisingly, his debut translations drew considerable fire from reviewers like Francis Bowen, who dismissed his so-called "literal" versions as "harsh, obscure, unmusical, ill-adapted to an English taste, still deformed by idiomatic peculiarities of the language whence it was drawn" ("Longfellow's Poets and Poetry of Europe" 202).

Yet Dante's idiomatic peculiarities were exactly what Longfellow hoped to carry across. Among Longfellow's earliest publications is a series of articles on European languages that ran in *The North American Review* between 1832-1833 and served as an introduction to "the linguistic and literary peculiarities of different languages and literatures" (Boggs, "Translation" 24). Longfellow intended his articles to "popularize foreign literature" without domesticating it and "tried to translate in a way that showed his readers how the language worked in the original text" (24). In his 1832 essay,

“History of the Italian Language and Dialects,” Longfellow underscores Dante’s unorthodox use of the vernacular as part of a larger argument about the importance of studying the modern (spoken) languages, which were only beginning to find a foot-hold in the college curriculum. The genius of the *Divina Commedia*, Longfellow insisted, arises from Dante’s interlingual practice:

Dante did not confine himself exclusively to any one dialect, but drew from all whatever they contained of force and beauty. In the words of Cessaroti, in his Essay on the Philosophy of Language, “the genius of Dante was not the slave of his native idiom...The creator of a philosophic language, he sacrifices all conventional elegance to expressiveness and force...” In this way, Dante advanced the Italian to a high rank among the living languages of his age. Posterity has not withheld the honor, then bestowed upon him, of being the most perfect master of the vulgar tongue, that had appeared: and this seems to strengthen and establish the argument, that the Italian language consists of the gems of various dialects. . . . (“History of the Italian Language and Dialects,” *North American Review* 299)

In effect, Longfellow’s translation strategy served as an argument in composition. He had begun mounting a serious defense of Dante’s heterogeneous vernacular and its relevance for the multilingual U.S., then poised for its own literary renaissance.

In 1832, Longfellow also wrote an article for *The North American Review* in which he reviewed the recently republished edition of Sir Philip Sydney’s *The Defence of*

Poesy. Longfellow uses the opportunity to make an impassioned plea for a more concrete and local “American” poetry:

...let us have no more sky-larks and nightingales. For us they warble only in books. A painter might as well introduce an elephant or a rhinoceros into a New England landscape. We would not restrict our poets in the choice of their subjects, or the scenes of their story; but when they sing under an American sky, and describe a native landscape, let the description be *graphic*, as if it had been *seen* and not imagined.”

(emphasis added) (“Defense of Poetry,” *The North American Review* 75)

And then, in a striking rhetorical turn, Longfellow cites the “language of our Native American Indians” as the ideal model of a more graphic and “characteristic” poetic idiom:

Our readers will all recollect the last words of Pushmataha, the Choctaw chief, who died at Washington in the year 1824. ‘I shall die, but you will return to your brethren. As you go along the paths, you will see the flowers, and hear the birds; but Pushmataha will see them and hear them no more. When you come to your home, they will ask you, where is Pushmataha? and you will say to them, He is no more. They will hear the tidings *like the sound of the fall of a mighty oak in the stillness of the wood.*’ (Longfellow’s emphasis) (75)

The italics are Longfellow's. Whether or not this represents a faithful transcription of Pushmataha's last words is unclear, but Longfellow is clearly invoking the text's *graphic* "clearness" and "force" in order to demonstrate the limitations of the Genteel tradition with which he is so often associated.

One thing is for certain, "Pushmataha's" English is not prescriptive Anglo-English, whatever its provenance. In citing the text, Longfellow was proposing something like an "English-plus"²⁷ poetic idiom for "American" poetry—a language circulating among and affected by a whole range of non-English languages and dialects. That Longfellow rarely achieved that idiom in his original verse does not diminish the profoundly radical nature of the insight or its substantial impact on the less regulated category of translation.

Let us return once more to the stanza from Longfellow's early translation-adaptation of the "Purgatorio, XXVIII":

Already my slow steps had led me on
 into the ancient wood so far, that I
 Could see no more the place where I had entered. ("The Terrestrial
 Paradise," *Voices of the Night* 103)

Of no small consequence, Longfellow was the first to abandon Dante's terza rima with its interlocking rhyme scheme. Long before William Michael Rosetti's translation of *The Inferno* appeared in blank verse, Longfellow had identified the pitfall of domesticating Dante and chose to adopt unrhymed iambic pentameter instead. He did so in a bold

attempt to bend and fit the English to Dante's Italian, not the opposite. In addition to abandoning rhyme, Longfellow's method of translation lead him to adopt a hard-enjambed line. These formal choices set the poem apart from most if not all contemporary poems then circulating in English—original or translated. As a result, the lines lack the mannered inversions of much nineteenth-century verse.

Although Longfellow was not the first U.S. scholar to translate Dante, he was the first translator to create a national reading public for him, securing Dante's influence on U.S. letters (Koch 36). Longfellow would later write in his journal: "In translating Dante, something must be relinquished. Shall it be the beautiful rhyme that blossoms all along the lines like honeysuckle in a hedge? I fear it must, in order to retain something more precious than rhyme, namely, fidelity—truth—the life of the hedge itself" (*Life of H.W. Longfellow* 35). Though Susan Bassnett has read this statement as taking "the literalist position to extremes,"²⁸ it is important to remember that Longfellow took a substantial risk in relinquishing rhyme in the mid-nineteenth century—even for the purposes of translation. He did so, not with a "severely limited" sense of his task, but with a profound appreciation for Dante's vernacularist experiment—the sonic and linguistic diversity that *Divina Commedia* brought to Italian literature and language. Having stood the test of time, Longfellow's *Divine Comedy* is still in print and considered among the most accomplished English translations available.

This first effort at translating Dante will later culminate in Longfellow's complete translation of the *Divina Commedia*. "The writings of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in the vulgar tongue," Longfellow argued,

produced so great a revolution in public taste, and raised the language in which they were composed into such repute, that those uninitiated in the mysteries of learning began to jeer the wisdom of the schools, and to point the finger of ridicule at all who walked before them in the strange and antiquated garb of Latin.” (*Poets and Poetry of Europe* 503)

Longfellow’s in-depth knowledge of Italian literature and language had taught him the particular significance of Dante’s unorthodox linguistic experiment; it could not be rendered closely unless one broke with the conventional line and freed the English to accommodate the peculiarity of the multi-dialectic vernacular Italian.

In this way, translation begins to advance the possibilities of the idiomatic line in English. Dante had, in effect, invented and authorized the Italian language through translation and adaptation of the vernacular dialects. In perhaps one of the earliest attempts to produce a foreignizing translation, Longfellow attempts to “signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text” by reconfiguring the conventional poem in English (18). Readers will recall the *North American Review*’s severe chastisement of Longfellow’s *Voices of the Night* translations, which, they claimed “were “too foreign to the English idiom to be defensible, even in translation....” (Rev. of *Voices of the Night* 269). Longfellow adopted his retrograde translation strategy despite increasing institutional pressure to produce first and foremost a “beautiful English poem,” and to limit the practice of American poetry to “original” works of verse in genteel English (Bowen, “*The Poets and Poetry of Europe*” 203).

The Poets and Poetry of Europe: An “American” Anthology

At the height of his career, Longfellow edited the massive *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (1845), one of the nineteenth century’s most influential—and popular—poetry anthologies. With nearly 400 poems drawn from ten languages, including Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, Danish, Swedish, German, Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, the anthology was “unique in English literature” (Rev. of “*Poets and Poetry of Europe*,” *Christian Examiner* 230). With savvy humility, Longfellow underplays the unorthodoxies of his anthology, declaring in his preface that “it has not been my purpose to illustrate any poetic definition, or establish any theory of art. I have attempted only to bring together, into a compact and convenient form, as large an amount as possible of those English translations which are scattered through many volumes, and are not easily accessible to the general reader” (*Poets and Poetry of Europe* v). This turns out to be a vast understatement.

In and of itself, the anthology’s critical apparatus is nothing short of groundbreaking. Drawing on a variety of sources, Longfellow provides lengthy headnotes on the history of each language as well as biographies of the individual poets. It is not uncommon for Longfellow to quote conflicting critical viewpoints on translation strategy, the history of a language, or its poets. Wherever he felt his own expertise wanting, Longfellow quoted extensively from a range of respected scholars while at the same time carefully documenting his sources. It is a strategy he will repeat in his translation of *The Divine Comedy*, where he forgoes the typical introduction in favor of some 200 pages of endnotes, including a history of critical perspectives on the *Divina Commedia* throughout

time. Of no small consequence, his philosophy of editing seems designed to educate and empower the reader, who may undertake further study or form her own judgment based on the diverse materials presented.

The U.S. Reception of The Poets and Poetry of Europe

In 1847, *The United States Democratic Review* published a review praising *Poets and Poetry*'s exceptional editorial apparatus: "the accompanying references to the sources from which they are drawn, will enable any one disposed to prosecute the study further, to do so with considerable facility. We cordially thank the editor for this portion of his labors in particular" ("*Poets and Poetry of Europe*" 123). When the anthology was reprinted in 1855, the journal ran another review reiterating that

the importance of such a work to the student of literature cannot possibly be overestimated; it places in juxtaposition, and with every facility for comparison the ideals of beauty formed by the majority of polite and cultivated races; it opens up to him in every chapter a new field of ideas, and, by enlarging his knowledge of humanity, enlarges those human sympathies which lie at the base of all poetic success and all intellectual command." ("*The Poets and Poetry of Europe*," *The United States Democratic Review* 68-69)

Though defined narrowly within the discourse of white western supremacy, Longfellow's anthology marks the first stirrings of American comparative literature, Transnationalism, and even Cosmopolitanism.

By contrast, the *North American Review* editor Francis Bowen sharply criticized Longfellow's anthology for its foreignizing tendencies: he admonished Longfellow for printing so-called "literal" translations that forsook the principles of pleasure and fluency, thereby "[offending] the reader who is trying the poem by a taste formed exclusively upon English models" (206). Bowen clearly assumed the superiority of those Anglo models on behalf of his readers. Longfellow, however, wasn't interested in exclusively English models—nor did he count them superior. The anthology openly flouted popular tastes by defending foreign-bent methods like those of the German poet, Johann Heinrich Voss (1751-1826), which were widely viewed as distortions of the German language. In his defense of Voss, Longfellow writes: "...whatever may be the defects of Voss' style as a translator, he at least led the way to more close and faithful adherence to the original than had been common before his day" (*Poets and Poetry of Europe* 301).

Though the *North American Review* rarely missed an opportunity to celebrate the nation's most popular poet (and regular contributor), Bowen's 1845 review of *Poets and Poetry of Europe* openly criticized Longfellow's view of translation: "Mr. Longfellow's theory of translation," he declared, "does not coincide with our own" (206). This was a clear statement of dissent and censure—Longfellow had gone too far. "The true law of poetical translation," Bowen argued, "we hold to be this: to produce such a work on the given topic, and with the given materials of thought, as the author probably would have

written, if he had been of the same country, and had spoken the same language, as the translator” (205). Echoing Channing’s 1815 essay on “American Language and Literature,” Bowen was expressing a common fear that (foreignizing) translation á la Voss corrupts English—as well as the English poem.

Bowen’s objections were hardly new, having been institutionalized by the 1755 preface to Samuel Johnson’s influential *Dictionary of the English Language*:

The great pest of speech is frequency of translation. No book was ever turned from one language to another, without imparting something of its native idiom; this is its most mischievous and comprehensive innovation; single words may enter by thousands, and the fabrik of the tongue continue the same; but new phraseology changes much at once; it alters not the single stones of the building, but the order of the columns. If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our style, which I, who can never wish to see dependence multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy, let them, instead of compiling grammars and dictionaries, endeavour, with all their influence, to stop the license of translators, whose idleness and ignorance, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble a dialect of France.” (xvi)

The same argument was advanced by the critic Wolfgang Menzel (1798-1873) with regards to the German language. Not surprisingly, Bowen quotes Menzel extensively in support of his case against both Voss and Longfellow: “[Voss’] translations...are often so slavishly close, and therefore, *not German*, that they are unintelligible, until we read the

original...Whether Voss translates Hesiod, Homer, Theocritus, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Shakespeare, or an old Minnesong, everywhere we hear only the goat-footed steed of his *prose* trotting along” (emphasis added) (204-05).

Menzel’s cautionary tale, as retold by Bowen, reveals the primary concern associated with foreignizing translation in the nineteenth-century U.S.: that it had the potential to render English “not English” and poetry, “prose.” Bowen was reiterating Channing’s argument that translation posed a significant threat to the already fragile institution of English-only “American literature.” In his review of the German poetry featured in *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, Bowen explicitly argues against foreignizing translation—particularly from the German—where translators’ “strange mutations” had exerted a considerable influence on the practice of poetry in the U.S.:

Much indeed, of the mere talent of versifying, which exists among us, is directly expended upon translations from the German. In this volume, nearly a hundred pages, closely printed in double columns, are occupied with versions from the poets of this period alone; and the quantities might with ease have been increased tenfold. Trained in such exercises, it is not surprising that the more original efforts subsequently made by these translators should still bear a deep impress derived from their German studies. In this way ... would we explain some of the strange mutations which English poetry has undergone since the opening of the present century.” (217)

If Bowen's argument expresses the anxiety of German influence specifically, it also raises the unarticulated anxiety over non-Anglo influence generally: how might translation alter English poems in the U.S., where the literatures of numerous languages and cultures were already in circulation and competition?

Foreignizing Translation and Poetic Innovation—Two Cases: Beowulf and Faust

In the most important sense, *The Poets and Poetry of Europe* was a uniquely “American” anthology created largely for and “by” Americans. Printed by the esteemed Philadelphia publisher, Carey and Hart, nearly all of the commissioned translations were penned by scholars living in the U.S. Despite its critically ambivalent reception, the anthology sold well in the U.S., reflecting as it did the nation's multilingual and cross-cultural populace.

As Colleen Boggs argues in her own reading of the anthology, “translation both pays tribute to the original, and in that very process, produces new American poetry that maintains different nations as reference point, but also exceeds them” (*Transnationalism* 119). Of course, numerous poetry translations were printed in the U.S. across the last two centuries and the majority of them had little to no effect on the language and form of “original” poetry. In fact, most translations intentionally maintained the status quo—they “looked” and “sounded” just like their contemporary original counterparts in English and were accordingly praised for their “fluency.” This brings us back to Longfellow's radical

and unpopular approach to translation. It seems translation's power to rewrite the target language poem is directly related to its departure from fluency and linguistic convention.

For Longfellow, translation method was ultimately a matter of ethics. As Venuti argues, foreignizing alters the way translations are made and read "because it assumes a concept of human subjectivity that is very different from the humanist assumptions underlying domestication" (*Translator's Invisibility* 20). While the humanist approach suppresses difference and stresses "semantic unity" and "intelligibility," the foreignizing translation reveals language to be culturally and historically inflected and "locates discontinuities at the level of diction, syntax, or discourse" (21). As a form of ethical writing, reluctant translation highlights the differences between cultures—and individuals—without seeking to assimilate or resolve them. That methodology has important political implications, implying the right to free expression and dissent within the literary *and* social body.

Foreignizing translation also hungers after equitable communication between language-cultures—a side-by-side or *en face* relation. In moving towards the foreign rather than away, a number of the translations featured in Longfellow's anthology dispensed with conventions of rhyme scheme and meter. These poems helped legitimize a variety of speech styles for poetry, which in turn shaped the possibilities of the poetic line. In this sense, Longfellow's work as a foreignizing editor and translator paved the way for modernist literary practice, though we have been slow to recognize the debt.

Even Venuti dates the emergence of translation as a “key practice” in Anglo-American literary culture to the early twentieth century:

the dominance of transparent discourse in English-language discourse in English-language translation was decisively challenged at the turn of the twentieth century, when modernism emerged in Anglo-American literary culture. The experimentation that characterized the literature of this period brought with it new translation strategies that avoided fluency by cultivating extremely heterogeneous discourses, principally in poetry translations, but also more widely in poetic composition. Translation now became a key practice in modernist poetics, motivating appropriations of various archaic and foreign poetics to serve modernist agendas in English. (*The Translator’s Invisibility* 187)

This history somewhat underestimates the already influential role of foreignizing translation in the nineteenth century—and the extent to which, in the U.S. and elsewhere, the earliest modernisms are intimately bound up with unorthodox translations. As Longfellow’s first volume of poetry illustrates, in the nineteenth-century U.S., original and “translated” poems circulated together in an unprecedented manner. In 1829, Samuel Kettel’s *Specimens of American Literature* invented a taxonomy of American literature that included translations, setting a precedent in which translation “counts as a specimen of the language and culture into which the text is translated” (Boggs, *Transnationalism* 116).

If we turn to an authoritative source on poetic form such as the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, one finds the following commonplace history regarding the development of free verse: that a form of verse partly freed from “the constraints of traditional meter” begins in the seventeenth century with the French and La Fontaine (Wesling and Bollobás, “free verse” 425). The encyclopedia goes on to argue that avant-garde free verse has “no direct roots in the metrical tradition...meter is what this self-conscious, self-proclaimed free verse is free of” (425). This type of free verse is then said to originate with Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (1855), which “brought back into poetry strong stress at unpredictable places, grammatical emphasis and parallelism, anaphora, and long lines. His oral-derived form is expansive, asymmetrical, mixing dialects and modes, and above all, personal” (425). Yet Whitman himself may have identified other, earlier models of free verse in English translation.

Declining “with sincere regret” an invitation to read a poem on the 333rd anniversary of Sante Fe’s founding, Whitman sends this letter instead on “the Spanish Element in Our Nationality:”

We Americans have yet to really learn our own antecedents, and sort them, to unify them. They will be found ampler than has been supposed, and in widely different sources. Thus far, impress’d by New England writers and schoolmasters, we tacitly abandon ourselves to the notion that our United States have been fashion’d from the British Islands only—which is a very great mistake. (*Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* 1146)

For Whitman, Longfellow was clearly somewhat of an exception among “New England writers.” In a series of journal entries later published as *Specimen Days* (1882), Whitman reflects on Longfellow’s death, declaring that “I should have to think long if I were ask’d to name the man who has done more, and in more valuable directions for America. I doubt if there ever was before such a fine intuitive judge and selector of poems. His translations of many German and Scandinavian pieces are said to be better than the vernaculars” (*Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* 918). Whitman is referring to the many translations circulated by Longfellow, including those published in *The Poets and Poetry of Europe*. He is also making a claim for the power of editing and translating as an activity related to the development of “American” poetry. The kind of translations Longfellow selected and produced, Whitman implies, became English-language poems which in some way exceeded the “foreign” originals, influencing America in “valuable directions.”

An American Beowulf: Longfellow’s New Line

As Whitman’s journal testifies, Longfellow’s translations of German and Scandinavian poetry were influential and well-known English poems in their own right. In 1838, Longfellow became the first American to translate from the epic Anglo-Saxon poem, *Beowulf*. He later reprinted several of his groundbreaking translation excerpts in *Poets and Poetry of Europe* along with a landmark introduction to Anglo-Saxon literature and language (1845). A significant turning-point in literary history, Longfellow’s critical insights into Anglo-Saxon literature helped revive a tradition with markedly different

poetic values. Not coincidentally, *Beowulf*'s rhymeless yet highly rhythmic line anticipates and facilitates the turn towards free-verse, though we have both naturalized and erased its origin in nineteenth-century translation. Indeed, Ezra Pound's influential translation of "The Seafarer" owes much to Longfellow's *Beowulf*—indirectly if not directly. In order to appreciate Longfellow's unprecedented achievement, however, it is necessary to sketch briefly *Beowulf*'s translation history.

Serious translations of the poem begin with the English scholar John Josias Conybeare and his *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1826). The volume included extracts from the Anglo Saxon translated into English blank verse and Latin prose. Utterly obscuring the four-beat alliterative meter, Conybeare's Miltonic rendering represents little more than a loose paraphrase of the Anglo-Saxon (Tinker 32). Where *Beowulf* is austere, Conybeare is ornate. As Chauncey Tinker's critical bibliography (1903) humorously attests,

Nearly every adjective is supplied by the translator: in Old English the 'sword' is 'bloody,' in Conybeare the 'gallant sword drops fast a gory dew'; the cave becomes a mansion; the 'floor' is 'dust'—dust in an ocean cave!—'heaven's candle' becomes 'heaven's glorious torch.' The poem is tricked out almost beyond recognition. (32)

Conybeare's stated aim in translating was not scholarly, though he corrected many mistakes made by his predecessor, Grimus Johnssen Thorkelin. He hoped, rather, to endear the English public to a previously unknown poem (31). In adopting an ornate Miltonic line, Conybeare was consciously appealing to readers unlikely to welcome the

spare style of the original. It was, in Lawrence Venuti's formulation, a "domesticating" translation, which sacrificed much to the tastes and conventions of the national market (*Translator's Invisibility* 20).

In 1835, John Kemble became the first scholar to produce an extensively researched prose translation from *Beowulf*. Though under-recognized, Kemble's work is of great importance in the history of English-language translation and literature. Kemble had studied under the German philologist Jakob Grimm, the father of comparative literature and an influential figure in German Romanticism. A devoted student of Grimm's, Kemble brought an extensive multilingual education to his translation, including in-depth knowledge of Old English prose and poetry as well as Old Norse, Gothic, Old High German, and Old Saxon (35). In adopting Grimm's comparative method, Kemble consciously defied popular print conventions favoring "fluent" verse translation.

In a rare effort to make translator intervention visible—and distinguishable—Kemble carefully explained his critical apparatus. He provided an extensive glossary and extensively footnoted translator choices, potential variants, and historical contexts:

A few transpositions of words, &c. caused principally by the want of inflections in New English (since we have now little more than their position by which to express the relations of words to one another) are all that I have allowed myself, and where I have inserted words I have generally printed them in italics. ("Postscript" to the Preface, i)

Kemble's approach contrasted sharply with Conybeare's ornate Miltonic verse paraphrase, to say the least. Take, for example, the following excerpt from Kemble's translation:

So Healfdene's son continually seethed the sorrow of the time; nor might the prudent hero turn away the ruin; the struggle was too strong, loathly and tedious, that had come upon the people, inevitable mischief grim with malice, the greatest of night-evils. That from *his* home heard Hygelac's thane, good among the Geáts, *he heard of* Grendel's deeds: he of the race of men was strongest of might, in the day of this life; noble and full-grown. He commanded to make ready for him a good ship: quoth he, he would seek the war-king over the swan's path; the renowned prince, since he had need of men. This journey prudent men somewhat blamed, although he were dear to them.... (9)

Unlike Conybeare, Kemble attempted to give “word for word, the original in all its roughness: I might have made it smoother but I purposefully avoided doing so, because had the Saxon poet thought as we think, and expressed his thoughts as we express our thoughts, I might have spared myself the trouble of editing or translating his poem” (“Postscript” to the Preface, i).

For Kemble, a “word-for-word” translation highlighted rather than hid important differences in the structure and content of the Anglo-Saxon poem. This was an uncommonly self-critical approach for the period—one that located significant value in cross-cultural comparison. As a result of his expertise, Kemble was also the first

translator to recognize and carefully describe the poem's meter and form—its distinct use of half-line, alliteration, compound, and kenning (34). Not surprisingly, Kemble's *Beowulf* greatly impressed Longfellow, who was in many ways the midwife of comparative literature in the U.S.

In 1838, Longfellow wrote a lengthy article on Anglo-Saxon literature for the *North American Review* in which he recommended a number of recent books on the topic, including Conybeare's metric translation, Kemble's word-for-word prose translation, and Joseph Bosworth's *Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language* (1838).²⁹ Longfellow himself had a thorough knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon language and had made an in-depth study of the history and linguistic structure of the Old German language family. He was likewise well-versed in the scholarship on Anglo-Saxon Literature, having read the current authorities on *Beowulf* in Danish, English, and Latin, including the works of Conybeare and Kemble.

Longfellow clearly endorsed the scholarship behind Kemble's translation. Instead of choosing between an English verse form or literal prose, however, Longfellow adopted another strategy altogether. He aimed to translate *Beowulf* with the highest possible degree of fidelity to all identifiable features of the original poem, including word-for-word semantics, syntax, and verse form. The division of form and content was artificial, Longfellow maintained—a false distinction. Neither Conybeare's Miltonic line nor Kemble's prose had captured the highly complex poetic principles of *Beowulf*, including “the structure of the verse; the short exclamatory lines, whose rhythm depends on

alliteration in the emphatic syllables, and to which the general omission of the particles gives great energy and vivacity” (Longfellow, “Anglo-Saxon Literature” 100).

Like Conybeare, Longfellow anticipated the domestic prejudice of the *North American Review* audience: “We fear, that many of our readers will see very little poetry in all this; for which we shall be very sorry” (106). Longfellow, however, refused to pander to popular domestic tastes and instead printed the following excerpt from *Beowulf*, a translation so foreign to prevailing poetic norms that it risked its own reception as “poetry.” Circa 1838, Longfellow had begun to see and hear “poetry” in range of rhythmic forms, not simply those governed by ballad meter and end rhyme:

Thus then, much care-worn,

The son of Healfden

Sorrowed evermore,

Nor might the prudent hero

His woes avert.

This war was too hard,

Too loath and longsome,

That on the people came,

Dire wrath and grim,

Of night-woes the worst.

This from home heard

Higelac's Thane,

Good among the Goths,

Grendel's deeds.

He was of mankind

In might the strongest,

At that day

Of this life,

Noble and stalwart.

He bade him a sea-ship,

A goodly one, prepare.

Quoth he, the war-king,

Over the swan's road,

Seek he would

The mighty monarch,

Since he wanted men.

For him that journey

His prudent fellows

Straight made ready,

Those that loved him. . . . (“Anglo-Saxon Literature” 104)

Longfellow, like Kemble, adopted word-for-word translation as his standard, compromising absolute fidelity to the Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter. But he also abandoned the conventional and popular iamb in an effort to approximate *Beowulf*'s distinctive rhythms.

Wherever possible, Longfellow constructs a four beat line divided into strong-stress spondees in an effort to approximate the Anglo-Saxon strong-stress meter; the spondees are sometimes separated by an unaccented syllable suggestive of the Anglo-Saxon caesura. When his word-for-word approach allowed for it, Longfellow also reproduced alliteration, compound, and kenning. In order to accomplish all of the above, Longfellow plays havoc with standard prescriptive English and frees himself of conventional poetic diction. He creates neologisms, alters word order, and shifts verbs into antiquated or atypical positions. Longfellow was particularly interested in conveying the poem's “voice sepulchral,” its simple, straight-forward structure. His translation turns on its nouns and verbs, the skeleton of English. In approximating the somber restraint of the Anglo-Saxon syntax, Longfellow employs adjective and adverb sparingly; articles and conjunctions appear only when absolutely necessary. Taken as a whole, this method laid an early foundation for free verse.

In 1845, Longfellow reprinted his translation excerpt along with four other *Beowulf* passages in his *Poets and Poetry of Europe* anthology. Importantly, Longfellow was one of the few U.S. literary figures who could have seen to press such radical breaks with English-language convention—even in the form of translation. As professor of Modern Languages at Harvard and the nation’s most popular poet, Longfellow’s reputation was unimpeachable. His massive anthology contained much to satisfy the popular taste for traditional rhyme scheme and meter. However, as the history of reception demonstrates, powerful editors like Bowen did not hesitate to discourage imitation of Longfellow’s retrograde rhythms, unrhymed lines, and visceral vernacular idiom.

In order to appreciate the bold achievement of Longfellow’s translation circa 1845, it is useful to set his version alongside the 1849 translation by the English scholar and professor of Anglo-Saxon, A. Diedrich Wackerbarth. Adopting the popular ballad meter, Wackerbarth was the first to translate the *Beowulf* manuscript in its entirety:

Thus then did Healf-dene's valiant Heir
 Seeth with continued Grief oppress'd,
 Nor could the prudent Hero's Care
 Avoid the devastating Pest,
 For that the Struggle was too strong,
 Too loathly and withal too long,
 The People that so sore bested

With Malice grim and Vengeance dread,

Of nightly Woes most drear:

Till, from his Home, did Higelac's

Thane, 'mongst the Geáts renown'd, th' Attacks

Of Grendel's Fury hear.... (*Beowulf* 8)

As Tinker points out, if there is a meter less suitable to the translation of *Beowulf* than Miltonic blank verse, it is surely Wackerbarth's ballad meter. Gone is the solemn restraint, the terse economy of syllable and syntax. In its place, Wackerbarth gives a blithe ballad, which turns awkwardly from one forced rhyme to the next, all the while pandering a gluttony of adverbs and adjectives—very few of which appear in the original poem.

In defense of his verse translation, Wackerbarth explains:

Some may ask why I have not preserved the Anglo-Saxon alliterative Metre. My Reason is that I do not think the Taste of the English People would at present bear it. I wish to get my book read, that my Countrymen may become generally acquainted with the Epic of our Ancestors wherewith they have been generally unacquainted, and for this purpose it was necessary to adopt a Metre suited to the Language. . . . (ix)

There could not be, I think, a more straight-forward admission of domesticating intent—or the economic, cultural, and political pressures driving translation methods. Not

surprisingly, Wackerbarth's translation achieved popular and commercial success, though it is now considered untenable.

Editing Goethe in the Multilingual U.S.: Longfellow and the Case of Faust

A fact easily forgotten today, Longfellow's audience was predominantly multilingual. Prior to 1850, most educated Americans could read one or more European languages in addition to English. In their book-length study of language in the U.S., linguist Charles Ferguson and anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath conclude that linguistic diversity was the national norm prior to 1900 (7). Knowledge and use of multiple languages was encouraged in "public and private schools, newspapers, and religious and social institutions" (7). More than a mere byproduct of foreign dependency or Europhilia, the proliferation of non-English literatures in the U.S. reflected the deeply-rooted interests of a multilingual and transcultural nation (7-8). Longfellow's *Poets and Poetry of Europe* is a testament to the prominence of German literature in particular: the section devoted to translations from the German is by far the most extensive. There are several important reasons for this.

First, Longfellow conceived of the anthology directly following intensive literary and linguistic study in Europe—and Germany in particular. In letters to his father, Longfellow repeatedly expressed his conviction that the study of German must take precedence over other European languages due to the superiority of its intellectual and literary achievements (Long 164). Second, Longfellow compiled his anthology with a

predominantly national audience in mind. In the nineteenth-century U.S., German language and culture had secured a strong foot-hold. German literature became increasingly popular—especially among progressive intellectuals, many of whom had been educated in Germany. The majority of educated Americans could read German, and journals frequently printed reviews of notable German publications not yet available in English translation. German immigration was also on the rise. In the seventeenth-century, Germans began immigrating to the United States in large numbers and, between 1850 and 1900, never represented less than a quarter of the foreign-born population (Thernstrom et al. 406).

Longfellow's approach to editing Goethe proved particularly important to the practice of poetry in the United States. Prior to 1840, Goethe was by far the best-known German author in the U.S. and *Faust*, his most popular if controversial work. *Faust* featured some of the first sustained experiments with unmetered verse or *freie rhythm* (free rhythm), a concept first introduced by the German poet, Friedrich Klopstock. Klopstock's innovation greatly influenced Goethe, who further developed the practice of free rhythm in his own poetry between the years 1772-1775. Though rarely acknowledged in U.S. literary histories after 1900, the close translation of Goethe's *freie rhythm* became an early and powerful model for free verse in English. The prominent journalist and translator, Margaret Fuller, first introduced Goethe to Emerson and the Transcendentalists, for whom *Faust* became an important model of philosophic and poetic unorthodoxy.

Longfellow, it should be emphasized, broke new ground as both a foreignizing translator *and* editor. The anthology's Goethe selections were preceded by Longfellow's massive critical introduction and three excerpts from *Faust*—all penned by different translators. A kind of New Historical precursor, the introduction places Goethe within the cultural and literary landscape of his time and includes critical and biographical sketches from authors as diverse as the German iconoclast Bettina Brentano-von Arnim to German critic Wolfgang Menzel, whose infamous critique of Goethe's work Longfellow considered "truly ferocious" (Hauhart 183). These sources bridged continents, countries, and critical perspectives, including those of U.S. scholars, thereby introducing a new, multidimensional model of editing literature—and translations—in English.

Longfellow's unique critical apparatus encouraged a comparative and critically sophisticated reading of the Goethe translations, particularly *Faust*. Written in a mixture of prose and verse styles, the original German *Faust* is fundamentally a "poetic battleground between poetry and antipoetry" (Salm xv). As translator Peter Salm points out, "[t]he modes and moods of Goethe's dramatic discourse are never for long the same or reliably predictable" (xiii). From strict metrics to free rhythms to course prose, from the free-filling syllabics of the German Kittle to the irregular rhyme and line length of the Madrigal, *Faust* exhibits a prosody "capable of the most comprehensive scale of modulations" (Mason 52). Goethe's polyvalent prosody likewise allowed him to move up and down the register of human experience, significantly broadening the expressive possibilities of literature—and poetry in particular.

Of no small consequence, Longfellow's comparativist introduction to Goethe's works frustrated prejudicial and one-dimensional readings of *Faust* and other poems, while simultaneously discouraging readers from accepting the English translation as a substitute for Goethe's idiosyncratic German. In order to appreciate Longfellow's foreignizing approach to editing, it is helpful to start with the source text. Here, in Goethe's original German, are the first thirteen lines of Faust's *Dom* (Cathedral) scene, a free-verse passage Longfellow considered exceptional:

Böser Geist.

Wie anders, Gretchen, war dir's,
 Als du noch voll Unschuld
 Heir zum Altar tratst,
 Aus dem vergriffnen Büchelchen
 Gebete lalltest,
 Halb Kinderspiele,
 Halb Gott im Herzen!
 Gretchen!
 Wo steht dein Kopf?
 In deinem Herzen?
 Welche Missetat?
 Betst du für deiner Mutter Seele, die
 Durch dich zur langen, langen Pein hinüberschlief?
 Auf deiner Schwelle wessen Blut?
 Böser Geist.

Wie anders, Gretchen, war dir's,
 Als du noch voll Unschuld
 Heir zum Altar tratst,
 Aus dem vergriffnen Büchelchen
 Gebete lalltest,
 Halb Kinderspiele,
 Halb Gott im Herzen!
 Gretchen!
 Wo steht dein Kopf?
 In deinem Herzen?
 Welche Missetat?
 Betst du für deiner Mutter Seele, die
 Durch dich zur langen, langen Pein hinüberschlief?
 Auf deiner Schwelle wessen Blut?
 — Und unter deinem Herzen
 Regt sich's nicht quillend schon,
 Und ängstet dich und sich
 Mit ahnungsvoller Gegenwart? (*Goethe's Werke: Vollständige
 Ausgabe Letzter Hand* 199)

The *Böser Geist* (Evil Spirit) speech is a good example of the *freie rhythm* Goethe practiced between 1772-1775. The preceding lines have no set meter or end rhyme, nor are they rendered in prose, having been broken into distinct verse lines. Instead, Goethe

develops an irregular pattern of rhythm within and between lines through the repetition of words and sounds (as with his marked use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance).

Goethe also enjambes or end-stops lines according to the logic of the poem and its rhythmic pattern. Circa 1840, the sustained use of enjambment is virtually unheard of in “original” English poetry. If free verse has a number of initiations, this is surely one.

Prior to 1833, most Americans familiar with Goethe read *Faust* in the original German or the English verse translation of Lord Francis Gower (1823). The only “complete” translation available until 1833, Gower’s version was read widely in England and the U.S. despite its many errors and excisions (Hauhart 99). Here are the same lines from the Cathedral scene, as translated by Gower:

Margaret, how different thy lot
 When kneeling at the altar’s foot
 In thy young innocence;
 When, from the mass-book, snatched in haste,
 Thy prayer was utter’d;
 Prayer which but half displaced
 The thought of childish pastime in thy mind.
 Margaret!
 How is it with thy brain?
 Is it not in thy heart
 The blackening spot?
 Are thy prayers utter’d for thy mother’s soul,
 Who slept, through thee, through thee, to wake no more?

Is not thy door-stone red?
 Whose is the blood?
 Dost thou not feel it shoot
 Under thy breast, e'en now,
 The pang thou darest not own,
 That tells of shame to come? (227-228).

As if checking off the prerequisites for popular poetry of the period, Gower offered a translation replete with the mannerisms of Elizabethan English, sermonizing melodrama, and couplet rhyme. Clearly, no matter how awkward or inaccurate the version, a verse translation held great popular appeal. In this case, the rhyme is supplied despite the fact that Goethe had intentionally employed *freie rhythmien* for the speech of his *Böser Geist* (Evil Spirit). With numerous deletions and additions to the original lines, Gower's translation utterly obscures Goethe's subtle rhythm, register-mixing, and descriptive precision. In short, the relationship between Gower's "translation" and Goethe's German is tenuous at best. This was not the stuff of poetic revolution.

Not surprisingly, when selecting *Faust* excerpts for his translation anthology, Longfellow excludes Gower's distorted, if popular version. Instead, he excerpts from the groundbreaking "prose" translation by the English intellectual, Abraham Hayward (1833). Hayward made his complete translation in consultation with renowned German scholars, vetting his version through an unusually rigorous review process. Before releasing the translation to the general public, Hayward first circulated a private edition among the German authorities on Goethe and German literature, including the intellectual Elisabeth von Goethe (Goethe's mother) and Johann Ludwig Tieck, a founder of the

German Romantic movement (Hauhart 106). Hayward also sought the advice of the preeminent translator Wilhelm Schlegel and linguist Jakob Grimm and was aided by suggestions of the formidable English translators Thomas Carlyle and Sarah Austin (106).

As a result of this exceptional method, Hayward was the first to translate Goethe into a version acceptable to native Germans and English readers alike. In stark contrast to Gower, here is Hayward's foreignizing translation of the same Cathedral scene:

How different was it with thee, Margaret,
 When still full of innocence
 Thou camest to the altar there—
 Out of the well-worn little book,
 Lisperdst prayers,
 Half child-sport,
 Half God in the heart!
 Margaret!
 Where is thy head?
 In thy heart
 What crime?
 Prayest thou for thy mother's soul—who
 Slept over into long, long pain through thee?
 Whose blood on thy threshold?
 ---And under thy heart
 Stirs it not quickening, even now,

Torturing itself and thee

With its foreboding presence? (176)

As the excerpt illustrates, Hayward has done more than render a mere prose translation. In order to convey the variety of versification in “Faust,” Hayward gave a “sort of rhythmical arrangement to the lyrical parts” (Hauhart 107). Unlike Gower, Hayward recognized Goethe’s intentional use of *freie rhythmten* as well as its significance to the work as a whole. He therefore translated those “lyrical parts” into what we would now call free verse—a bold choice considering the metric conventions of English poetry in 1833.

Hayward’s expertise and highly collaborative methods enabled him to translate this critical and tremendously influential distinction, which Longfellow affirmed and secured for his own audience in the U.S. The importance of Longfellow’s choice cannot be stressed enough: circa 1830, there existed no English equivalent for *freie rhythmten*. As a literary concept and term, “free verse” did not even enter the language until the late nineteenth century.³⁰ “Poetry” was still synonymous with rhyme scheme and meter—or the occasional use of blank verse. Anything else was prose—or the so-called compromise of literal translation.

Conclusion

Without question, *Poets and Poetry of Europe* had a lasting influence on American poetry. In 1904 the *American Library Catalog* listed *Poets and Poetry of Europe* as one of only two recommended poetry anthologies. As Whitman testified, Longfellow’s translations helped pave the way for his own unorthodox poetics.

Whitman's early reception alone demonstrates the powerful nineteenth-century bias against free verse—and the paucity of models for practice. When first published in 1855, *Leaves of Grass* was famously ridiculed as the “disjointed babbling” of “some escaped lunatic, raving in pitiable delirium” (J. Grossman 107).

Due in large part to Longfellow's work, foreign-bent translation began to form a discreet “American” genre situated somewhere between original poem and copy, source and target languages. Mirroring the unique language situation of the nineteenth-century U.S., these “English-plus” poems dramatized the confluence of cultures—and the literature born of that convergence. More than any of his contemporaries, Longfellow recognized and defended the importance of moving towards the foreign on its own terms, a basic tenet of comparative literature. As Dana Gioia has argued, we are just beginning to appreciate the debt to Longfellow:

Although Eliot did not take his mission directly from Longfellow, he developed it in the Harvard humanities curriculum that Longfellow helped create.... Rejecting his forebear's aesthetics, [Pound] nonetheless wholeheartedly embraced Longfellow's notion of the poet's education, especially the importance of learning poetry in foreign languages and mastering verse technique.... (66)

Prominent early modernists like H.D., Eliot, Pound, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, and Langston Hughes ensured that Longfellow's comparative approach to literature became a guiding philosophy of the American avant-garde. This transnational imperative is evident in W.H. Auden's early poetry—and the work of midcentury poets

like Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Kenneth Rexroth, Weldon Kees, and Randall Jarrell—poets “who saw themselves as mediators between American and European culture” (66).

Following in Longfellow’s footsteps, foreignizing translation also became the cornerstone of “deep imagist” movement. Unlike the generation before them, translator-poets like Robert Bly, Denise Levertov, James Wright, and Galway Kinnell helped popularize the oppositional and under-recognized poetry of Latin America and Eastern Europe. From 1958-1968, Bly’s *The Fifties & Sixties* published forty-eight foreign language poets in over 140 translations from twelve countries and ten languages in an exclusively bilingual format.

For Longfellow and Bly alike, the limitations of American poetry were those of prescriptive English itself—a complacent and genteel uniformity. In his own radical acts of translation and editing, Longfellow sought means to signal the source language and form to the greatest extent possible. Ultimately, Longfellow seems to have practiced a kind of “abusive fidelity” (P. Lewis 41). As Venuti has argued, this type of translation

directs attention away from the conceptual signified to the play of signifiers on which it depends, to phonological, syntactical, and discursive structures, resulting in a “translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own”³¹ (Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 18).

As the case studies on *Beowulf* and *Faust* demonstrate, Longfellow understood that certain forms of translation which prized English fluency above all else rendered the foreign original invisible—and unnecessary.

The nation's first and most influential poet, comparativist, and chair of modern languages, Longfellow imagined a “composite” U.S. literature in which English-language poems, translations, and non-English poems would circulate together (*Life of H. W. Longfellow* 73-74). Though the modernists and their successors may not have recognized the significance of that legacy, they nonetheless built on and “continued a poetic tradition pioneered by Longfellow in *Voices of the Night* and *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (Gioia 67). A great innovator in his own right, Longfellow placed foreignizing translation squarely within the domain of “American” literature, thereby altering the practice of both translation and poetry in the U.S.

Chapter 3: Translating the T'ang: Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* and the Origins of *Vers Libre*

Au Bord de la Rivière

[Selon Le-Taï-Pé]

Des jeunes filles se sont approchées de la
rivière; elles s'enfoncent dans les touffes
de nénuphars.

On ne les voit pas, mais on les entend
rire, et le vent se parfume en traversant
leurs vêtements.

Un jeune homme à cheval passe au bord
de la rivière, tout près des jeunes filles.

L'une d'elles a senti son cœur battre, et
son visage a changé de couleur.

Mais les touffes de nénuphars l'envolp-
pent.

Judith Gautier, *Le Livre de Jade* (1867).

Beside the River

[After Li-Taï-Fé]

The young girls have gone
down to the river; they sink
among the tufts of lilies.

They cannot be seen, but
their laughter is heard, and
the wind blows perfumes from
their dresses.

A young man on horseback
passes by the edge of the riv-
er, close to the young girls.

One of them has felt her
heart beat, and her face has
changed color.

But the tufts of lilies close
around him.

Trans. Stuart Merrill from the French of
Judith Gautier; *Pastels in Prose* (1890).

Introduction

Few American readers will recognize Judith Gautier’s “Au Board de le Rivière” or its English translation. For some, the poems may recall Ezra Pound’s modernist debut, *Cathay* (1915), which also featured translations from the Classical Chinese masters. Published in 1867, well before the advent of Symbolist *vers libre*, Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade* (“The Book of Jade”) seems almost implausible for the period—more like twentieth-century poetry than nineteenth-century verse. Even the translation of French-American symbolist Stuart Merrill (1863-1915) predates Imagism by an astounding quarter-century. Indeed, if “Au Board de la Rivière” or its Englishing read like early free verse, there is good reason: the French Symbolists prized and imitated *Le Livre de Jade*. Many of the early Modernists followed suit, reading the poems in Gautier’s foreignized French and/or Merrill’s oppositional English. Despite their significant influence on both Symbolism and Imagism, however, Gautier and Merrill are virtually unknown outside of France today.

Judith Gautier’s impressive oeuvre includes poetry, fiction, memoir, biography, musicology, literary criticism, and translation. Her work received the highest praise from fellow *littérateurs* Charles Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Catulle Mendès, and Remy de Gourmont—many of whom championed *Le Livre de Jade* as a landmark work of *vers libre*. It was also the first Western attempt at literary translation from the Chinese. In 1885, Gautier published *Poèmes de le Libellule* (“Poems of the Dragonfly”) and became the first literary translator of Japanese poetry in the West,

thereby introducing yet another “kind of concise, quintessentially affective text that would serve Mallarmé and the Modernists” (Hokenson 119).

Though better known in France, Gautier is considered a minor figure at best. Her contribution has largely been obscured by critical focus on the influential men with whom she was connected, including her father, the great Parnassian poet Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) and his famous disciple Catulle Mendès (1841-1909), to whom Gautier was briefly married. Though rarely featured in histories of music, Gautier was also France’s first Wagner scholar and later became the composer’s friend and advisor. The connection between Gautier’s innovative poetics and her early interest in Wagner turns out to be important. Wagner’s belief in the strong affinities between music and poetry had also attracted the interest of Bertrand and Baudelaire—forerunners of *vers libre* who consciously tested the limits of formula and genre.

As Joseph Acquisto has argued, “music as a model for reshaping the nature of verse itself extends, of course, beyond Verlaine’s *vers libéré* (liberated verse) and includes also the theorists and practitioners of *vers libre*” (9). Like most contemporary scholars, Acquisto is unaware of Judith Gautier’s extensive work with and on Wagner, her early and radical experiments in *vers libre* and their subsequent influence on Verlaine and the French Symbolists. In general, Gautier’s biography has attracted far more attention than her unprecedented work as writer, translator, and musicologist.

Due in large part to the recuperative emphasis in Feminist Studies, Judith Gautier’s oeuvre has slowly begun to receive more critical attention.³² Since the eighties, two book-length biographies of Gautier have appeared (J. Richardson, 1986; Knapp,

2004). In critical studies, the landmark scholarship of Muriel Detrie and Jan Hokenson has helped re-establish Gautier as one of the most influential translator-poets in the West.³³ Unfortunately, Detrie's most important essay on Gautier remains untranslated and Hokenson's discussion of Gautier focuses primarily on her translations from the Japanese. Apart from preliminary efforts like these, Judith Gautier is all but missing from literary scholarship. We have no critical monograph devoted solely to her extensive, multi-genre oeuvre in either French or English. There is likewise no sustained analysis—on either side of the Atlantic—of Gautier's pivotal role in the development of *vers libre* and free verse. This is surprising given the transnational reputation of *Le Livre de Jade* between 1867 and 1920.

Like most of his French contemporaries, the early symbolist and French-American poet Stuart Merrill considered Gautier's book a landmark of modern poetry. Merrill translated fourteen poems from *Le Livre de Jade* for his volume, *Pastels in Prose* (1890), the first English-language anthology of Symbolist poetry. Preceding Arthur Symons study, *Symbolist Verse*, by almost a decade, *Pastels in Prose* made its debut in the U.S., giving the nation's readers their first real introduction to French Symbolism, the "prose poem," and Chinese poetry in translation.

Both *Le Livre de Jade* and *Pastels in Prose* represent missing links in the history of transcultural modern poetry; when recuperated together, they allow us to theorize Gautier and Merrill's significant contributions to the development of *vers libre* and free verse. As books of imitation and translation, they also demonstrate the importance of foreignizing translation to avant-garde modernism.

Le Livre de Jade: Foreignizing French Translation

Just a few years prior to the appearance of *Le Livre de Jade*, the sinologist Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys (1832-1892) published his influential *Poesies de l'Epoque des Thang* (Poetry in the Tang Era, 1862)³⁴. It was the first Western anthology and historical survey of Classical Chinese poetry and poetics (Detrie, "Translation and Reception" 45). Prior to this study, Chinese poetry attracted little sustained attention from Western translators. During the eighteenth-century, Jesuit-sinologists translated only a few Chinese poems for their supposed ethnographic value (45-46). Treated primarily as historical documents, these translations rarely conveyed poetic values. Undoubtedly influenced by his predecessors in sinology, Saint-Denys "gave preference to...poems that were especially rich in realistic details about Chinese customs but that often have little poetic value, judged by Chinese standards (47).

Without question, Saint-Denys performed a great service by introducing an unprecedented number of Chinese texts to the West. He offered literal prose translations (at the level of word and phrase) as well as lengthy historical notes. He did not, however, attempt to render Classical Chinese verse or verse form, nor does he employ the use of rhyme, rhythm, line, stanza, or a host of other devices which typically distinguish poetry as a literary form. As Muriel Detrie points out, it is no wonder that Chinese poetry exerted little influence on Western poetics until the publication of Judith Gautier's volume, *Le Livre de Jade* ("Translation and Reception" 48).

While Gautier's volume is clearly indebted to Saint-Denys' scholarship, her variations are informed tributes to the lyric mastery of Classical Chinese poetry. The two

volumes have only a handful of texts in common, a testament to Gautier's very different method—and objective—in translating. Gautier strove to highlight the unique literary achievement of China's master poets, not the customs of a nation. For the first time, a Western writer had begun to demonstrate the possibilities of lyric poetry modeled on Classical Chinese language and poetics. With the publication of Gautier's literary renditions, Saint-Denys' scholarly volume became even more accessible and valuable to a broader Western audience.

In the wake of Stuart Merrill's highly visible translation anthology, Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* became almost exclusively known in English as a collection of "prose poems." This is a questionable classification considering that Gautier's variations in no way resembled the work of the volume's other contributors. Gautier herself did not present *Le Livre de Jade* as prose or even "poèmes en prose," nor was the volume received that way by her French contemporaries who unanimously viewed it as an innovative work of poetry. Gautier also refrained from designating her volume as a work of *traduction* ("translation"). In fact, examples of her highly unorthodox form first circulated in the coterie journal, *L'Artiste* (1er Juin 1865), under the title "*variations sur des thèmes Chinois*" ("variations on Chinese themes") (Bradbury 51).

In mid-nineteenth-century France, "variation" would have signaled a distinctly French literary genre situated somewhere between the literal prose "traduction" of the Jesuit sinologists and original verse. As scholar Jan Hokenson has argued, we have tended to "overlook several peculiarly French outlets for literary texts, that is, translation not as a scholarly literalism but as literary version" (110). Unlike most of her French

predecessors and contemporaries, however, Gautier was not content with what Lawrence Venuti has called “domesticating strategies,” which efface the source text and its language (*Translator’s Invisibility* 19). In her effort to move contemporary French towards the Classical Chinese of T’ang masters like Li Po, Gautier adopted a highly oppositional method of formal and textual representation, making her one of the nineteenth-century’s most influential translators—and poets.

Judith Gautier devoted herself to intensive study of the Chinese language and Chinese poetics alike. Over a period of four years, she spent countless hours in the archives of the Bibliothèque Impériale with her native Chinese tutor Ding Dunling (?1830–1886)³⁵. Whatever its shortcomings, *Le Livre de Jade* was not an attempt on Gautier’s part to exoticize her original poetry, nor did she circulate Classical Chinese sources as her own. Even in 1867, when Gautier published *Le Livre de Jade* in its entirety, she did not adopt the term *traduction* (“translation”) but instead adopted the open-ended title, *Le Livre de Jade*, allowing readers to determine the matter of genre for themselves.

Unlike most nineteenth-century translators, Gautier did not paper over the provenance of her 1867 variations. Using the designation “selon” (meaning “after” or “in the manner of”) instead of “par” (“by”), she attempted to signal each poem’s indebtedness to a particular Chinese poet—as well as its difference and distance from the source. For modern scholars like Pauline Yu that ambiguity—and Gautier’s many departures from literal translation—are questionable. Where the matter of “fidelity” is concerned, however, one should keep in mind that Gautier had entered uncharted

waters as the West's first literary translator of Chinese poetry, "a task which made the most informed sinologists flinch" (qtd. in J. Richardson 25). Even Yu concedes the problem inherent in assessing "fidelity," a vexed concept at best—particularly, I would add, where the translation of logographic verse is concerned (218).

From French Romanticism to Early Symbolism: Judith Gautier and Her Period

Théophile and Judith Gautier both took up uncommonly serious study of Chinese culture, which they viewed as an antidote to the worst excesses of French Romanticism: in particular, a predilection for abstraction, melodrama, and sycophancy. A well-documented hero of Symbolism and Imagism, Théophile Gautier became known as the master of "perfectly realised material splendour"—a great "reflector of the visible world"—but importantly "without genuine sympathy for humanity" (Huneker 241). Building on her father's tour de force volume, *Emaux et Camées* ("Enamels and Cameos," 1851), Gautier strove to translate into French poetry a similar descriptive precision and tonal restraint, but she also departed from the elder Gautier in a number of critical ways. First and foremost, Judith Gautier was a master of the empathic imagination. Like the Chinese masters she imitated, Gautier foregrounds the human condition and the problem of suffering. *Le Livre de Jade* also makes a dramatic break with the elder Gautier's unyielding formality in adapting for verse the rhythmic flexibility and speech idioms of prose.

When Gautier published *Le Livre de Jade* in 1867, the twelve-syllable alexandrine still reigned supreme in France. A fixed and repeating rhyme scheme was also a defining feature of serious verse—even among those poets we now think of as the forerunners of *vers libre*, including Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Verlaine. In 1857, Baudelaire published the first edition of the landmark *Les Fleurs de Mal* (“*The Flowers of Evil*”). A work of *vers libéré*, *Les Fleurs* contained metrically regular, if unorthodox, rhymed verse; as Keith Waldrop reminds us, it was a book condemned on moral rather than formal grounds (xvii).

Take, for example, the opening stanza of Baudelaire’s “Les Plaintes D’Un Icare” (“The Laments of an Icarus”) published as one of the poet’s “nouveaux fleurs de mal” in the first of Alphonse Lemerre’s highly influential three-volume collection, *Le Parnasse Contemporain* (1866):

Les amants des prostituées
 Sont heureux, dispos et repus;
 Quant à moi, mes bras sont rompus
 Pour avoir étreint des nuées. (79)

(The lovers of prostitutes
 Are happy, rested and sated;
 As for me, my arms are broken
 From having embraced the clouds.) (translation mine).

Practicing a form of *vers libéré* (the “liberated verse” that anticipates *vers libre*), “Les Plaintes D’Un Icare” jettisoned the alexandrine in favor of the less restrictive if classically deployed octosyllable; Baudelaire flirted with enjambment but maintained the principles of regular patterned rhyme and isosyllabism (wherein each line contains the same number of syllables). Though actively shaping the syntax and register of the modern lament, Baudelaire is still working within and against the constraint of traditional verse.

In 1869, Baudelaire’s most formally experimental volume, *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, was published posthumously as part of the *Oeuvres Complètes*—two years after the publication of *Le Livre de Jade*. Though a few of Baudelaire’s prose poems circulated prior to the publication of *Le Livre de Jade*, they read more like narrative sketches and lacked the rhythmic patterning and rhetorical compression of verse. Take for example, “Les Bienfaits de la Lune” (“The Blessings of the Moon”), which first appeared untitled in *Le Boulevard* on June 14, 1863 and was the last prose poem Baudelaire published before his death on August 31, 1867. The poem was printed again in *Revue Nationale* in September 1867 just a few months before the publication of *Le Livre de Jade* (see fig. 2).

toutes les vérités comme avec toutes les erreurs. Il appelle à lui les peuples du monde entier, et, pour les attirer plus sûrement, il admet dans son sein les croyances diverses qui se partagent le globe; on peut devenir mormon, sans cesser de vénérer Mahomet, Confucius ou Brahma. Une foi aussi compréhensive n'est qu'une indifférence religieuse déguisée, et l'indifférence n'a jamais été un principe d'action ni de vie.

La dissolution, d'ailleurs, menace déjà cette société dont l'épanouissement a été si merveilleux et si rapide. En niant les vérités chrétiennes qui ont enfanté les civilisations libres et frères de l'Europe et de l'Amérique, les Mormons ont cru s'affranchir; ils n'ont fait que courber la tête sous un joug lourd et avilissant; les deux erreurs extrêmes, celle des Mahométans et celle des Saints des derniers jours, ont abouti au même résultat pratique, la négation de la liberté humaine par le despotisme, la négation de la famille par la polygamie. Nul autocrate à Moscou, nul calife à Bagdad, n'a jamais exercé un pouvoir plus illimité que celui de Brigham Young. « Il vaudrait mieux pour un homme, disait M. Dixon un patriarche mormon, aller tout droit en enfer, que d'encourir la disgrâce du Prophète. » — « Frère Brigham, ajoutait un autre, peut faire ce que bon lui semble, il a créé cette église, il lui appartient d'en disposer. » Chez les Hindous et les Kirghiz, continue le spirituel auteur de *l'Amérique Nouvelle*, un tel asservissement m'eût paru étrange, mais dans ce libre pays, parmi les compatriotes des Washington et des Sydney, dans la bouche d'un écrivain qui possède à fond la littérature moderne, qui est assez imprégné des mœurs américaines pour porter constamment deux revolvers dans sa poche, une pareille déclaration est plus qu'étrange, c'est un signe. »

Nés dans un pays chrétien, élevés au milieu des saines traditions de la famille, les Mormons resteront-ils longtemps le jottet d'aberrations grossières? Nous ne le croyons pas. L'Amérique est une terre d'expériences hasardeuses, mais le bon sens yankee n'est pas éteint chez les habitants de l'Utah, les œuvres qu'ils ont accomplies en font foi, et tôt ou tard ils rejeteront les erreurs qui tendent à les corrompre. Déjà, malgré les efforts de Brigham Young, malgré le prestige qui entoure cet homme extraordinaire, une vive opposition se forme, dans le sein même de la secte, contre la polygamie. Vingt mille Mormons se sont, pour cette seule cause, séparés du Prophète, et parmi ceux qui reconnaissent son autorité, un grand nombre objectent contre la doctrine de la pluralité des femmes l'exemple même du fondateur de la secte, Joseph Smith, auquel on ne connut jamais qu'une seule épouse.

Les Etats-Unis commettraient donc une grave imprudence si, sortant de la neutralité qu'ils ont observée jusqu'à ce jour, ils employaient la force pour détruire un état de choses qui est en désaccord avec leurs lois sociales; les Mormons ont été trompés par une parole de mensonge, une parole meilleure peut les sauver, c'est l'œuvre de la persuasion, non de la violence. La persécution n'a jamais vaincu personne, elle n'a fait qu'exalter le fanatisme.

Nous avons étudié aujourd'hui la secte qu'une des grandes revues anglaises appelle : « l'archange de l'erreur; » dans un prochain article nous passerons en revue les autres sociétés religieuses qui se forment en Amérique.

ÉMILE JONVREUX.

LES BIENFAITS DE LA LUNE.

A MADEMOISELLE B.

La lune, qui est le caprice même, regarda par la fenêtre, pendant que tu dormais dans ton berceau, et se dit : « Cette enfant me plaît ! »

Et elle descendit moelleusement son escalier de nuages, et passa sans bruit à travers les vitres. Puis elle s'étendit sur toi avec la tendresse souple d'une mère, et elle déposa ses couleurs sur ta face. Tes prunelles en sont restées vertes, et tes joues, extraordinairement pâles. C'est en contemplant cette visitéuse que tes yeux se sont bizarrement agrandis; et elle t'a si tendrement serrée à la gorge que tu n'as gardé pour toujours l'envie de pleurer.

Cependant, dans l'expression de sa joie, la lune remplissait toute la chambre comme une atmosphère phosphorique, comme un poison lumineux; et toute cette lumière vivante pensait et disait :

« Tu subiras éternellement l'influence de mon baiser. Tu seras belle à ma manière. Tu aimeras ce que j'aime et ce qui m'aime : l'eau, les nuages, le silence et la nuit; la mer immense et verte; l'eau informe et multiforme; le lieu où tu ne seras pas; l'amant que tu ne connaîtras pas; les fleurs monstrueuses; les parfums qui font délirer; les chats qui se pâment sur les pianos, et qui gémissent comme les femmes, d'une voix rauque et douce !

« Et tu seras aimée de mes amants, courtisée par mes courtisans. Tu seras la reine des hommes aux yeux verts, dont j'ai serré aussi la gorge dans mes caresses nocturnes; de ceux-là qui aiment la mer, la mer immense, tumultueuse et verte, l'eau informe et multiforme, le lieu où ils ne sont pas, la femme qu'ils ne connaissent pas, les fleurs sinistres qui ressemblent aux encensoirs d'une religion inconnue, les parfums qui troublent la volonté, et les animaux sauvages et voluptueux qui sont les emblèmes de leur folie ! »

Et c'est pour cela, maudite chère enfant gâtée, que je suis maintenant couchée à tes pieds, cherchant dans toute ta personne le reflet de la redoutable divinité, de la fatidique marraine, de la nourrice empoisonneuse de tous les *lunatiques* !

CH. BAUDELAIRE.

LA REVANCHE DU SOLDAT.

NOUVELLE.

I

Il faut premièrement te faire savoir, me dit un jour le vieil André Fayol, qui depuis longtemps devait me conter une histoire, que Jacques Fayol, mon père, Dieu ait son âme ! était mort jeune après une longue et coûteuse maladie, où toutes les petites épargnes de la maison avaient passé, laissant à la charge de sa veuve trois enfants : Eustache, l'aîné, qui n'avait qu'une dizaine d'années, moi, qui n'en comptais guère plus de huit, et la petite Laurence, à qui ma mère donnait encore le sein.

Si la tâche fut rude pour la bonne femme, qui n'avait d'autres ressources que le travail de ses bras, c'est ce que je te laisse à penser. Elle s'en tira cependant, sans faire un écu de dettes, et sans tendre la main à personne.

A la vérité, elle nous mit en service, mon frère d'abord, moi ensuite; mais ce ne fut guère qu'à l'âge où nous en eûmes vraiment la force : et d'ailleurs, Dieu sait si elle eut soin de nous placer chez de bonnes gens, et si, pour être hors de chez elle, nous fûmes livrés à l'abandon, comme tant de pauvres enfants dont les parents ne s'inquiètent plus, du moment qu'ils leur ont trouvé quelque misérable condition.

Following are the first two paragraphs of Baudelaire's prose poem in English. Stuart Merrill translated and published the poem in its entirety for his 1890 anthology, *Pastels in Prose*:

The Moon, that is caprice itself, looked through the windows as thou wert sleeping in thy cradle, and said to herself, "That child pleases me."

And she softly descended her stair-way of clouds and passed noiselessly through the panes. She then stretched herself upon thee with the supple tenderness of a mother, and she laid her colors on thy face. Thy pupils have since remained green, and thy cheeks extraordinarily pale. It was while contemplating that visitant that thine eyes so oddly widened; and so tenderly did she clasp thee by the throat that thou hast felt, ever since, the desire to weep. . . . (176)

As the 1867 version of "Les Bienfaits de la Lune" (and its translation) illustrate, Baudelaire's prose poems approximated neither line nor stanza but adopted the conventional units of sentence and paragraph. *Petits Poèmes en prose* was an homage to Aloysius Bertrand's genre-confounding *Gaspard de la Nuit* (1842), a book typically credited with introducing the prose poem as a form. A bridge between a late-blooming French Romanticism and early Symbolism, Baudelaire's work retained many of the rhetorical mannerisms and conventions of the Romantic sketch. Here, Baudelaire's diction is high, multisyllabic, and heavily modified; description is ornate—even sentimental. Though unquestionably the most important forerunner of *vers libre*, Baudelaire never wrote free verse as we know it.

The Forgotten French Classic: Le Livre de Jade and the Origins of Vers Libre

Though certainly influenced by the poetic prose of Bertrand and Baudelaire, Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* charted an entirely new course. At this critical juncture, there was simply no French poet more formally unorthodox than Baudelaire. Yet, by contrast with Baudelaire's well-known experiments in prose and verse, let us consider Gautier's *L'Ombre Des Feuilles D'Oranger* ("The Shadow of the Orange Leaves") (see fig. 3). Because Gautier was among the first Western poets to employ the printed page itself as a unit of composition, it is critical to study her poem as it appeared in the Alphonse Lemerre edition of 1867.

LES AMOUREUX. 7

L'OMBRE DES FEUILLES D'ORANGER

Selon Tin-Tun-Ling.

LA jeune fille qui travaille tout le jour dans sa chambre solitaire est doucement émue si elle entend tout à coup le son d'une flûte de jade ;

Et elle s' imagine qu'elle entend la voix d'un jeune garçon.

8 LE LIVRE DE JADE.

A travers le papier des fenêtres, l'ombre des feuilles d'oranger vient s'asseoir sur ses genoux ;

Et elle s' imagine que quelqu'un a déchiré sa robe de soie.



Fig. 3. "L'Ombre Des Feuilles D'Oranger" in *Le Livre de Jade* (1867), p.7-8.

For comparison's sake, I give the poem in English translation below, reproducing as nearly as possible the unconventional spacing employed by Gautier:

The girl who works all day in
her solitary chamber is moved to tenderness
if she suddenly hears the sound of a jade
flute;

And she imagines that she hears the voice
of a boy.

Through the paper of the windows, the shadow
of the orange-leaves comes to rest on her
knees;

And she imagines that someone has torn
her silken dress. (Cefalo with Lauth)³⁶

More like French verse than Baudelaire's poetic prose, Gautier's form is highly condensed and lyrical. In fact, I would argue that the compositional unit governing Gautier's poems is not the prose sentence or paragraph but more likely the *verset*, a type of lyrical free verse employed in sixteenth-century French translations of biblical verse—particularly the Psalms (Kitto 910-911). Unlike the highly regulated French verse forms of the period, Gautier's *verset* modeled a “measured prose that allows the sentence to dominate, as in prose, checked by a sense of line that restricts it” (Waldrop xxiv).

Driven by the exigencies of foreign-leaning imitation and variation, Gautier attempted to bend French verse towards the Classical Chinese and its formal principles. As Muriel Detrie has noted of Gautier's adaptations, “generally speaking, each verse line of the [Chinese] originals is reproduced into one prose line (in most cases one prose line is made up of one sentence, but sometimes it is made up of two or three short sentences), and its rhythm is carefully calculated” (“Translation and Reception” 51). Detrie's notion of a “prose line” and its distinction from the prose paragraph is critical. Following the print conventions for period verse, Gautier and Lemerre chose to leave more than ample space between each “line” or “stanza.” We are now a long way from Baudelaire's lyric paragraphs.

The original rhythms of Chinese being very difficult to approximate in French (or English), Classical Chinese poetry has a history of inspiring translation into what Kenneth Rexroth has called “a special kind of free verse” (Weinberger 209). It cannot be

emphasized enough: that history begins with Judith Gautier, a fact acknowledged by Rexroth but overlooked by most scholars in English. Gautier could just as easily have rendered the Chinese poems in literal prose or the rhymed Alexandrine—or even the poetic prose of Baudelaire. Instead she developed a serviceable model for the verse we now call free.

As *Le Livre de Jade* demonstrates, what Gautier achieved was entirely new—an oppositional French verse born of deep commitment to and knowledge of the Chinese source. Not unlike Whitman in English (who also borrowed much from biblical verse), Gautier was the first of her contemporaries to adopt a nonmetrical prosody for modern French poetry. Importantly, Jules Laforgue did not translate Whitman until 1886, at which point *Leaves of Grass* became a major influence on Symbolist *vers libre*. By this time, Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade* had helped ensure that modern French poetry was formally oriented more towards verse than prose.

“It’s More Real and Intense Poetry:” Contemporary Reception of *Le Livre de Jade*:
1867-1904

When *Le Livre de Jade* appeared in 1867, it astounded the French literati. Though recognized as a work of imitation and variation, the French public simultaneously embraced the volume as extraordinary French poetry by a French poet of immense talent. Deeply impressed, Verlaine authored the first review: “Je ne connais d’analogue à ce livre dans notre littérature que le *Gaspard de la nuit*....Et encore, si l’on me donnait à

choisir, préférerais-je de beaucoup *le Livre de Jade* pour son originalité plus grande, sa forme plus pure, sa poésie plus réelle et plus intense” (“I know no analogue to this book in our literature other than *Gaspard de la nuit* . . . And yet, if you asked me to choose, I would prefer *Le Livre de Jade* for its greater originality, its purer form, its more real and intense poetry” (“Le Livre de Jade,” *Oeuvres Posthumes* 302; translation mine).

As Verlaine’s review illustrates, at this point in the nineteenth century the French considered it possible to author an “original” work of translation (Hokenson 110). It was also possible to author a literary “*version*” on par with the best contemporary French literature. In an 1867 letter to Judith Gautier, Victor Hugo declared *Le Livre de Jade* an “exquisite work. . . . I see France in this China, and your alabaster in this porcelain” (qtd. in Knapp 76). The prominent Parnassian poets Laconte de Lisle, Jose-Maria de Heredia, and Francois Coppée also expressed great admiration for Gautier’s innovative verse style (Knapp 75). Gautier’s intention to author an innovative work of French literature while paying tribute to her Classical Chinese sources had set her apart.

Several decades after *Le Livre de Jade*’s sensational debut, French poets and critics began to theorize Gautier’s influence on Symbolism and its place in French literary history. In his exhaustive 1903 study, *Mouvement poétique française de 1867 à 1900* (The French Poetic Movement from 1867-1900), the renowned Parnassian poet Catulle Mendès argued that “one should perhaps—in speaking of the origins of free verse—take into consideration above all *Le Livre de Jade* of Madame Judith Gautier” (qtd. in Hokenson 437). Mendès’ boldly reinforced this argument by dating the revolution in French poetry to 1867, the year in which *Le Livre de Jade* first appeared. Like Mendès,

the formidable critic and novelist Anatole France placed Gautier's book on par Baudelaire's "*petite poèmes en prose*," crediting her with "a style as resplendent as pure light" (qtd. in Knapp 76). "From that moment on," wrote France "Judith Gautier had found her form. She had a style of her own, a style that was serene and sure, rich and placid..." (qtd. in J. Richardson 58).

In 1904, the influential writer and critic Remy de Gourmont published the first literary biography of Gautier, further substantiating her impact on French poetry: "No one wanted to believe that this so very original and disdainfully impersonal literature was the exclusive work of a woman. It was [Theophile] Gautierlike, but purer, with greater irony, and greater tenderness" (qtd. in Knapp 75). In one fell swoop, de Gourmont—who greatly influenced both Eliot and Pound—had elevated daughter above father. It becomes increasingly difficult to believe that the *Imagistes* (as they first called themselves *en français*) had not absorbed the French literary genealogy in which Judith Gautier became the descendent of Baudelaire and the predecessor of Rimbaud.

Another way to measure Gautier's influence on early Symbolism is to look closely at the poetry published in the wake of *Le Livre de Jade*. Prior to 1867, Verlaine and Mallarmé were publishing what we now consider their immature poetry. In 1869 and 1875, both poets published watershed volumes. Consider, for example, this representative stanza from Verlaine's "L'Heure du Berger" published in *Poèmes Saturniens* (1866):

La Lune est rouge au brumeux horizon;

Dans un brouillard qui danse, la prairie

S'endort fumeuse, et la grenouille crie

Par les joncs vert où circule un frisson; (N. Shapiro 18)

(The Moon is red at the foggy horizon;

In a dancing mist, the meadow

Sleeps hazily, and the frog croaks

By green reeds run through with chill;) (translation mine)

Achieved largely through adverb and adjective, Verlaine's description reads more like scenery than scene and has an almost decorative quality when set next to "L'Ombre Des Feuilles D'Oranger." As previously noted, Verlaine was among the first and fiercest champions of *Le Livre de Jade*. He prized the book as an unparalleled achievement in French poetry and though the connection is rarely made, Gautier's influence is palpable in Verlaine's next collection, *Fêtes Galantes* (1869), a breakthrough-volume which appeared just two years after Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade*. Take, for example, one of the book's most accomplished pieces, "Les Coquillages" ("The Shells"):

Chaque coquillage incrusté
Dans la grotte où nous nous aimâmes
A sa particularité,

L'un a la pourpre de nos âmes
Dérobée au sang de nos coeurs
Quand je brûle et que tu t'enflammes;

Cet autre affecte tes langueurs
Et tes pâleurs alors que, lasse,
Tu m'en veux de mes yeux moqueurs;

Celui-ci contrefait la grâce
De ton oreille, et celui-là
Ta nuque rose, courte et grasse;

Mais un, entre autres, me trouble. (MacIntyre 64)

(Each incrusted shell
In the grotto where we made love
Has its particularity,

One has the purple of our souls
Stolen blood of our hearts
When I burn and you catch fire;

This other affects your languor

And your paleness when, tired,

You scold my mocking eyes;

This one counterfeits the grace

Of your ear, and that one

Your pink neck, short and thick;

But one, among them, troubled me.) (translation mine)

By comparison to *Poèmes Saturnines*, “Les Coquillages” is a revelation in restraint and descriptive precision. The poem’s cool erotic melancholy—its more intimate and idiomatic French—are signatures of *Le Livre de Jade*, which Verlaine himself described as “without analogue ... in our literature” (qtd. in Schwartz 47).

Like Seth Whidden, I question Clive Scott’s history of French *vers libre* in which Kahn and Laforgue are cited as “the first to write and publish free verse consistently and with a developed awareness of what they were trying to do” (74). A recent editor of the French poet Marie Krysinska, Whidden points to the under-theorized innovations of Krysinska’s volume, *Rythmes Pittoresques* (1890). Krysinska began publishing her *vers libre* poems in the early 1880s. Whidden thus divides the credit for the invention between Rimbaud, who he argues “was was the first to write it, and Krysinska, the first to publish it” (14).

Like most scholars writing in English, Whidden and Scott appear unfamiliar with Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade* and its reputation as a signal work of *vers libre*. Though

Rimbaud and Krysinska scholars hotly debate which poet deserves credit for the “invention” of *vers libre*, I am not alone in nominating Judith Gautier as their predecessor and pioneer in the form. As Enid Starkie has argued, Rimbaud’s *vers libre* “phrases” in *Illuminations* surely owe a great deal to Gautier’s versets (241-242). “It is impossible” Starkie reminds us “that Rimbaud should not have known [*Le Livre de Jade*], which Verlaine compared to *Gaspard de la Nuit* by Aloysius Bertrand, and in which Catulle Mendès sees one of the sources of *vers libre*....” (242). Even Mallarmé read and acknowledged Krysinska’s *vers libre* but preferred Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade*, which influenced his own experiments in the form (Hokenson 441). Today, however, Judith Gautier’s role in the development of Symbolist *vers libre* and Imagism is a history hard to find, leaving us with countless distorted histories of modern free verse.

Starkie also directs our attention to the little-known “original prose poems” of Judith Gautier, many of which “appeared in *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique* between June and December 1872,” some fourteen years before Rimbaud’s own prose poems debuted in *La Vogue* (242). “Rimbaud must have read them,” Starkie maintains, “for he knew the paper, in which he published himself his poem “Les Corbeaux” on 15 September 1872” (242). According to Starkie, Gautier’s original poems bear a striking resemblance to *Illuminations* and likely served as models for Rimbaud. Though Starkie is unable to devote more than a page to Gautier’s influence (her declared subject is Rimbaud), this is groundbreaking research and reaffirms the fact that “Judith Gautier deserves more recognition in the history of French poetry than she has yet received” (242).

Le Livre de Jade and its Transatlantic Travels

Not surprisingly, *Le Livre de Jade* was “widely translated and imitated” (Mindford and Lau 758). A little-known fact, Judith Gautier established a literary reputation among the English-speaking avant-garde long before 1890. Reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic had enthusiastically welcomed the publication of *Le Livre de Jade* in 1867. In 1873, a selected translation of *Le Livre de Jade* appeared in German, followed by its Italian counterpart in 1882. Although Stuart Merrill is typically credited with introducing *Le Livre de Jade* to the English-speaking world, the first translations from Gautier’s French appeared in the U.S. only two months after *Le Livre De Jade*’s debut.

In June, 1867, the New York weekly, *The Albion* (1822-1876) ran an article-length review entitled “Chinese Poetry.” It featured three selections from *Le Livre de Jade*, translated as “On the River Tchou,” “A Girl Before her Mirror,” and “The Eternal Characters.” In contrast to original English verse of the period, *The Albion* translations are dramatically oppositional: each poem is rendered in informal English without rhyme scheme or meter. Compare, for example, Gautier’s “Une Femme Devant Son Mirror,” (see fig. 4) and its 1867 translation into English:

LA LUNE. 59

UNE FEMME DEVANT SON MIROIR

Selon Tan-Jo-Su.

Assise devant son miroir, elle regarde le
clair de Lune.

Le store baissé entrecoupe la lumière; dans
la chambre on croirait voir du jade brisé en
mille morceaux.

60 LE LIVRE DE JADE.

Au lieu de peigner ses cheveux, elle relève
le store en fils de bambou, et le clair de Lune
apparaît plus brillant ,

Comme une femme vêtue de soie qui laisse
tomber sa robe.



Fig. 4. Judith Gautier's "Une Femme Devant Son Mirror" in Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* (1867), p. 59-60.

Although *The Albion* translator took some liberties with spacing, punctuation, and word order, "A Girl Before Her Mirror" is surprisingly bent towards Gautier's idiomatic French and *vers libre* form (see fig 5).

A GIRL BEFORE HER MIRROR.
She is seated at her mirror gazing at the moonlight
The lowered blind intersects the light and showers it into the
room like jade broken into a thousand pieces.
She combs not her hair but raises the blind of bamboo fibre
and the moonlight appears more brilliant,
Like to a woman robed in silk who lets fall her dress.

Fig. 5. "A Girl Before Her Mirror" translated from the French of Judith Gautier for "*The Albion: A Journal of News, Politics and Literature* (1867). "Chinese Poetry," p. 275.

Though I have been unable to discover the identity of the translator, she cites Gautier's skill and scholarship as proof that "we *Parisiennes*" [a female native of Paris] often have "if not a pair of blue stockings, at least well-stocked bookshelves, and a student's desk in a quiet corner of her home." Perhaps most importantly, *The Albion* translator has retained Gautier's unique sense of line, rendering her emphatically-spaced "stanzas" in the long lines which the verset convention suggests. The result is idiomatic free verse with no "original" precedent in English apart from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), which may in fact have served as the translator's model.

There is no evidence that either Dickinson or Whitman saw the Gautier translations; however, we do know that *The Albion* first "outed" Whitman as his own reviewer in September 1855 (Folsom 78). Without question, *Le Livre de Jade* circulated in New England during a prolific and defining decade for both American poets—innovators who, like Gautier herself, would become famous for deconstructing the metric.

Strictly speaking, the development of French *vers libre* cannot be attributed to any one poet. Evolving across many decades and under historically-unique pressures, it took many forms and is more accurately a convergence—the expression of a period and culture, not an individual. That being said, Judith Gautier was ambitious innovator in the form. Building on the heroic genius of many French writers, including Bertrand, Baudelaire, and her own father, Théophile Gautier, Judith Gautier bent the French poem towards the T'ang. The result of that effort was *Le Livre de Jade*, a volume which forever altered the practice of poetry and literary translation in—and beyond—France.

Chapter 4: Translating *Vers Libre*: Judith Gautier, Stuart Merrill, and the Origins of Imagism

Introduction

An American-born binational and formidable symbolist poet, Stuart Merrill was Judith Gautier's second and best-known English translator. Published in the U.S., *Pastels in Prose* (1890) featured Merrill's translations of so-called "prose poems" by the century's leading French Decadents and Symbolists, including Aloysius Bertrand, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Judith Gautier. The anthology was, in effect, the United State's first introduction to Symbolism—and the prose poem's debut in English. Appearing nearly a decade before Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Merrill's groundbreaking book "remained for a generation the only anthology to offer readers in English a substantial insight into the revolutions in sensibility and aesthetics being wrought in France" (Foster 7).

By including Judith Gautier's variations in an anthology of "original" poems, Merrill reasserts the status of *Le Livre de Jade* as a French classic with far-reaching influence. The table of contents alone is a testament to Gautier's literary reputation in fin-de-siècle France. Except for the section devoted to Bertrand—the father of the prose poem in French—Judith Gautier's poems commanded more space than any other contributor, including Baudelaire.

The U.S. Reception of Pastels in Prose: The Advent of Prose Poetry in English

The leading U.S. periodicals greeted Merrill's groundbreaking anthology with excitement and high praise. Based on the number of extant copies in British and U.S. libraries, *Pastels in Prose* sold well (Foster 7). Favorable reviews ran in *The Nation*, the *North American Review*, *The Dial*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Book Buyer*, *The New York Times*, and *Publishers Weekly*, among others. Critical documents to the history of free verse and prose poetry alike, these reviews record the earliest attempts to define nonmetrical verse in English.

William Dean Howells' introduction to *Pastels in Prose* offered a perceptive analysis of the "prose poem" and helped secure a sympathetic readership for many decades. Throughout his career, Howells was a regular contributor to the *North American Review* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. He wielded a great deal of power in literary circles, but his notoriously "heterodox" criticism and realist leanings also "precipitated an avalanche of indignant protest" from conservative intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic (D. Cooke 41). As scholar Delmar Cooke vividly put it, "the battle began in earnest with Howells quartered in the 'Editor's Study' of *Harper's Magazine*" from 1886-1892 (41).

When confronted with the genre-confounding *Pastels in Prose*, the nation's most prestigious journals and newspapers quoted Howells' introduction at length in an effort to define this "striking species of literary composition:"³⁷

[F]irst of everything the reader will notice the beautiful reticence which characterizes [the pieces], as if the very freedom which the poets had found in their emancipation from the artificial trammels of verse had put them on their honor, as it were, and bound them to brevity, to simplicity; as if they felt the responsibility they were under to be even more laconic, more delicate, more refined, than they might have been, in openly confessing the laws of prosody. What struck me most was that apparently none of them had abused his opportunity to saddle his reader with a moral. He had expressed his idea, his emotion, and then left it to take its chance, in a way very uncommon in English verse, at least, and equaled only, so far as I know, in some of the subtile felicities of Henreich Heine. (*Pastels in Prose* vi-vii)

The introduction would become one of Howells' best-known essays and reads much like an early Imagist manifesto, as Robert Kern has noted in his own discussion of *Pastels in Prose* (176). A clear favorite among critics, Gautier's poems were often cited or even reprinted in U.S. reviews as exemplary models of this new nonmetrical literary form.

The skill and importance of Merrill's renderings were not lost on reviewers, many of whom extolled the virtues of the new and "purely modern" "prose poem:" "The translation is as well done as one could wish, which is saying a good deal; for these are

really untranslatable things....(*Pastels in Prose*, *The Nation* 342). Predicting the value of Merrill's foreignizing translation, *The Nation* concluded that: "the hope of the book lies in the familiarizing of English writers with a possible use of daring language which so few have any conception of...." (342).

"Shadow of the Orange Leaves:" From Vers Libre to Free Verse

In 1890, amidst a flurry of enthusiastic reviews, the *New York Times* reprinted an entire book-leaf from *Pastels in Prose*. Merrill's translation, "Shadow of the Orange Leaves," was meant to illustrate the radical French literary form now making its debut in English. For many U.S. readers, the poem came to stand for a promising new genre in English and a whole movement in French literature. Singling out the Gautier translations, the *New York Times* reviewer hailed Gautier's work as the "the truest poetry of prose" (*Pastels in Prose*, *Book News* 319). *The Methodist Review* followed suit, as did a number of other journals who referenced "Shadow of the Orange Leaves" by name.

Seventy years later, Kenneth Rexroth reprints the same poem in his essay on "The Influence of French Poetry on America" in order to demonstrate the profound impact of Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* and its equally radical Englishing. Because of its significance and relative visibility in English literature, "Shadow of the Orange Leaves" merits close reading (see fig. 6). The poem and its publication history also demonstrate how Merrill's translation method extended Gautier's influence—and the influence of Chinese poetry at large.

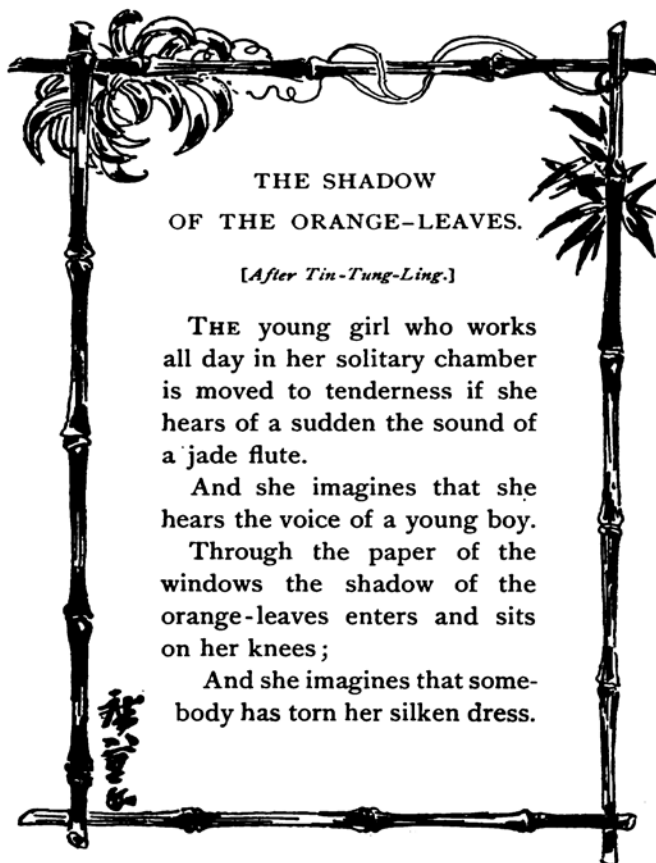


Fig. 6. "The Shadow of the Orange Leaves" translated from the French of Judith Gautier by Stuart Merrill, *Pastels in Prose* (1890) p. 87.

Unlike most translators of his period, Merrill attempted to convey as much of the original French form and language as possible. This produces certain disfluencies like, "if she hears of a sudden the sound of a jade flute," which serve to remind the reader of the poem's complex provenance in both French and Classical Chinese. In France, *Le Livre de Jade* had been received as a watershed work of poetry and had paved the way for Symbolist *vers libre*. For Stuart Merrill, domesticating *Le Livre de Jade* into Genteel

rhyming iambs would have rendered the work meaningless. An avant-garde symbolist in his own right, Merrill's primary aim was two-fold: first, to capture Gautier's primary innovation—an irregular but consistent rhythmic pattern within and across stanzas; and second, to approximate her finely calibrated, idiomatic French with as close to word-for-word translation as possible. These translation strategies yielded a non-prescriptive and highly oppositional English poem that would serve the modernists well.

Why, then, did Merrill include Gautier in a volume of "prose poetry" if she was in fact the mother of *vers libre*? First, we must remember that Merrill intended *Pastels in Prose* to serve as an introduction to the literary rebellion then underway in France. For a ballad-loving American audience largely unacquainted with the poetic revolutions of the French avant-garde, the title "poem in prose" made the anthology palatable. It was, in effect, a salable compromise made for a culture which had not yet arrived at "free verse"—in either form or name. The ideological implications of both movements were vast. In the mid-nineteenth century, poetry increasingly became, as Julia Kristeva has argued, the "place where the social code is destroyed and renewed" (132). Theorizing the possibilities of "poetic language," Kristeva calls "radical" those practices which negate and disrupt conventional syntax and thereby erode the linguistic conventions upon which the whole "Symbolic Order" rests (Hebdige 187).

Where nineteenth-century poetry is concerned, the strict enforcement of rhyme scheme and meter—be it the English sonnet or French Alexandrine—also served to reinforce the beliefs encoded in prescriptive language. "[Unseating] the metrical inverts of Empire"³⁸ meant more than making a new line. The emergence of modernist free verse

signaled a dramatic shift in cultural values: the triumph of process over closure; infinite adaptation over fixed stasis; disruption over unity; and the value of “fissure” and fragment over unity and wholeness (Hebdige 187). Translators like Gautier and Merrill felt an ethical obligation to approximate the already unorthodox source by radically reforming target conventions. This method rendered the translation doubly disruptive, helping create what we might call an “inflationary instability” within nineteenth-century prescriptive language—a period of rapid expansion and linguistic possibility.

Composing in “the Sequence of the Musical Phrase:” Translating Gautier’s Verset

First, let us consider Merrill’s handling of Judith Gautier’s formal innovations. In 1890, Merrill would have been working from the first edition of *Le Livre de Jade*. As the rhythmic pattern and idiosyncratic spacing of the 1867 “L’Ombre Des Feuilles D’Oranger” demonstrated, Gautier was approximating “stanzas,” not paragraphs (see figs. 3 and 4, p. 129-129).

Long before Mallarmé, Gautier had begun experimenting with the page as a literary unit. In addition to the devices of punctuation, alliteration, and syntactic parallelism, she employed syllabic patterning and white space to score and pace the poem’s rhythm within and between the one-line stanzas (or “monostichs”). Like the French original, Merrill’s simulation is rhythmically and visually stunning—particularly when set against the other, heavily narrative “pastels in prose,” such as Merrill’s

translation of Baudelaire's "*Les Bienfaits de la Lune*" (The Blessings of the Moon) (see fig. 7).

176

PASTELS IN PROSE.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE MOON.

THE Moon, that is caprice itself, looked through the windows as thou wert sleeping in thy cradle, and said to herself, "That child pleases me."

And she softly descended her stair-way of clouds and passed noiselessly through the panes. She then stretched herself upon thee with the supple tenderness of a mother, and she laid her colors on thy face. Thy pupils have since remained green, and thy cheeks extraordinarily pale. It was while contemplating that visitant that thine eyes so oddly widened; and so tenderly did she clasp thee by the throat that thou hast felt, ever since, the desire to weep.

Yet in the expansion of her joy the Moon filled all the chamber like a phosphoric atmosphere, like a luminous poison; and all

Fig. 7. An excerpt from "The Blessings of the Moon," translated from the French of Charles Baudelaire by Stuart Merrill, *Pastels in Prose* (1890), p. 176-178.

In translating from *Le Livre de Jade*, Merrill did not reproduce the unique and airy spacing of the Alphonse Lemerre edition. He did, however, make every effort to imitate Gautier's rhythmic pattern within and across stanzas. "The Shadow of the Orange Leaves" is no exception: in Gautier's four-stanza original, the syllabic pattern is 33/14/25/15. Merrill's four-stanza translation imitated the alternating long-short sequence with a pattern of 35/14/26/16. Merrill also followed word order closely, reproducing Gautier's numerous syntactic (and rhythmic) parallelisms like "elle entend tout à coup le son d'une flûte de jade..." and "elle entend la voix d'un jeune garçon" (*she hears of a sudden the sound of a jade flute. . . . she hears the voice of a young boy*). Merrill made a concerted effort to render Gautier's masterfully subtle alliteration and assonance, a kind of internal "rhyme" that will prove critical to *vers libre* and free verse practice alike.

Note for example Gautier's extended repetition of the French "u" (*oo*) in Gautier's "L'Ombre Des Feuilles D'Oranger," an effect Merrill approximates through repetition of the long "u" in English.

Gautier:

La **jeune** fille qui travaille **tout** le jour dans

sa chambre solitaire est **doucement émue**

si elle entend **tout à coup** le son d'**une flûte**

de jade; (*Le Livre de Jade* 7)

Merrill:

The young girl who works
 all day in her solitary chamber
 is moved to tenderness if she
 hears of a sudden the sound of
 a jade flute. (*Pastels in Prose* 87)

Because Merrill is following the sense of each French word so closely, the assonance is less pronounced, but he clearly attempts to make up the difference through strong repetition of the English “d” sounds, ed/end/de/den (as in moved/tend-/sudden/sound/jade), which parallels Gautier’s own repetitive play with the sounds an/am/en/on (as in dans/chamber/entend/son).

Stuart Merrill’s Binational English: Translation and the “Idiomatic” Method

Rather remarkably, Merrill managed to convey both Gautier’s formal *and* linguistic innovations. Much of what made Gautier’s model serviceable for the Symbolists (and Imagists) was her use of heterogeneous and idiomatic French, which Merrill translates into an equally evocative yet “plain-speaking” English. Both intimate and visceral, the language of the 1867 *Le Livre de Jade* had few precedents in French verse apart from Baudelaire. As Paul Verlaine argued in his early review of *Le Livre de Jade*, it was Judith Gautier who brought into French poetry “*la concision*” of form and expression alike (47).

Following the model of China's great Classical poets, Judith Gautier broke with the highly decorative multi-syllabic extravagance of much Romantic verse. Her syntax was fundamental and uncomplicated, driven by concrete and often single-syllable verbs and nouns.

Circa 1867, this extreme verbal economy and tonal reticence produced a quality unique to *Le Livre de Jade* and earned Gautier the title, "Queen of Parnasse." To bring this effect off in English, Merrill had to make an even more dramatic break with the fustian and formulaic verse then circulating in the U.S. and England. Consider, for example, the following stanza written by the powerful Genteel poet and *Atlantic Monthly* editor, Thomas Bailey Aldrich. "Enamored Architect of Airy Rhyme" was widely anthologized in the U.S. and typical of popular print verse circa 1890:

Enamoured architect of airy rhyme,

Build as thou wilt; heed not what each man says:

Good souls, but innocent of dreamers' ways,

Will come and marvel why thou wastest time.... (382)

By contrast to Aldrich's Genteel diction and conventionally executed sonnet, let us consider Judith Gautier's "Au Bord de la Rivière," and Merrill's foreignizing translation of the poem, "By the River." A liberal Li-Po translation, "Au Board de la Rivière" represents one of Gautier's most influential works (see figs. 9 and 10).

LES AMOUREUX. 9

AU BORD DE LA RIVIÈRE

Selon Li-Tai-Pé.

DES jeunes filles se sont approchées de la rivière; elles s'enfoncent dans les touffes de nénuphars.

On ne les voit pas, mais on les entend rire, et le vent se parfume en traversant leurs vêtements.

10 LE LIVRE DE JADE.

Un jeune homme à cheval passe au bord de la rivière, tout près des jeunes filles.

L'une d'elles a senti son cœur battre et son visage a changé de couleur.

Mais les touffes de nénuphars l'enveloppent.



Fig. 8. "Au Bord de la Rivière" in Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* (1867), p. 9-10.

What made *Pastels in Prose* so critical to early modernist poetry was the extent to which Merrill allowed Gautier's French to change the English. There is no question that the Symbolists had greatly impressed and encouraged the London avant-gardes, but the French could not emancipate Victorian English from itself. With the binational translations of Stuart Merrill, however, came a "new language" for poetry, a transnational English or "English-plus,"³⁹ (see Fig. 9).

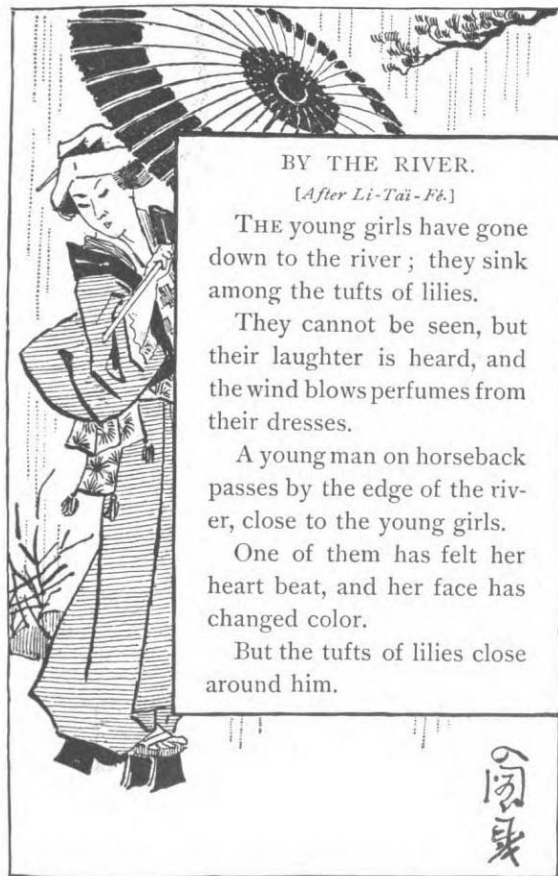


Fig. 9. "Beside the River," translated from the French of Judith Gautier by Stuart Merrill, *Pastels in Prose* (1890), p. 91.

In direct opposition of Genteel prerequisites, Merrill had cut loose of nostalgic inversions and archaisms—the stultifying rhetoric of a prim and anti-realist elite. He stripped the line clean of stock imagery as well as the tendency towards vapid generalization and abstraction. In "Beside the River," the speaker does not moralize or comment on the action. This is the idiomatic free verse we have come to associate with H.D. and Pound, and to a certain extent, William Carlos Williams and T. S. Eliot. As such, Merrill's *Pastels in Prose* represents a critically missing link between the American Renaissance and the "American Risorgimento," between *vers libre* and free verse.

A Missing Link: Judith Gautier, Stuart Merrill, and “Les Imagistes”

In translating Judith Gautier into English, Merrill promoted a general shift in interest towards the T’ang Dynasty, setting the stage for Pound’s own Imagist appropriation of T’ang poetry some 25 years later (Kern 175). As Robert Kern has argued, this very peculiar introduction to Classical Chinese poetry meant that writers in the U.S. first encountered T’ang dynasty poetry “not only in the context of modern French poetry in the symbolist tradition but in that of modern French formal innovation as well, so that a certain kind of ancient Chinese verse makes one of its earliest appearances in the West in the guise of [Judith Gautier’s] modern and formally innovative French prose” (176).

Kern’s impressive study, *Orientalism, Modernism and the American Poem* (1996) broke important new ground and exerted considerable influence in and beyond its field. Though he points to Gautier and Merrill only briefly, Kern was the first contemporary scholar after Rexroth to include them in a discussion of early modernist poetry. It is important, therefore, to correct some of the more common misunderstandings perpetuated by the study—especially those concerning Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade*.

First, Kern appears unaware that Judith Gautier was the West’s first literary translator of Chinese poetry and therefore underestimates her influence from the start.⁴⁰ Second, Kern’s study fails to note that the original 1867 volume was simultaneously received as a translation (*une variation*) and a work of innovative French poetry—*not*

prose translation.⁴¹ Finally, Kern does not seem cognizant of the fact that the French symbolists revered—and imitated—*Le Livre de Jade* as an early model of *vers libre*, or that as the hero of their symbolist heroes, Gautier became required reading among the Imagists between 1908 and 1912 (a point to which I will return).

The Gautier of *Pastels in Prose* was not merely a “precognition” of Imagism, as Kern argues, but one of its defining models⁴². Framed by Howell’s early theory of “free” verse (for that is what it really was), Merrill’s Gautier translations delivered the Imagist poem almost fully formed—with its “laconic style, its speaker who presents the image without commenting on it, and its whole conception of itself as a rapt yet disciplined act of attention, an art, essentially, of omission or condensation meant to foreground things themselves” (Kern 176). Though Kern’s discussion does not do Gautier or Merrill full justice, it succeeded where others failed: in making the work of these important poet-translators more visible within modernist poetry studies. The fault, it seems, lay primarily with twentieth-century scholarship in English. In the twentieth-century U.S., rigid taxonomies classifying texts by period, nation, and language replaced the more fluid notion of literature promoted by nineteenth-century literary luminaries like Fuller, Longfellow, Emerson, and Howells. As a result, most critics theorizing the development of “American” poetry either omit Gautier and Merrill or greatly underemphasize their importance.

The late nineteenth-century U.S. is typically viewed as provincial and resistant to “foreign” literature and its influence. Just one example among many, the U.S. reception of *Pastels in Prose* clearly demonstrates a marked and salable interest in multilingual and

transnational literature circa 1890. When post-mortem studies of Imagism appeared in the 1930's and 40's, scholars with close ties to the modernists began questioning the predominantly nationalist (and monolingual) narratives of literary influence—most notably the minor Imagist John Gould Fletcher and poet-translator Kenneth Rexroth.

In his 1945 essay, “The Orient and Contemporary Poetry,” Fletcher became the first American critic to theorize the influence of translation on Imagism, predicting:

The more eager and persistent student will, sooner or later, come to the deeper problem of why certain literary forms came into being, as well as the question of why certain languages guided them to this achievement—and, allied to this, he will inevitably discover that the attempt on the part of certain literary creators to transpose a given form of literature from one language into another has frequently been responsible for new literary awakenings. . . . (145)

Due to his uneven reputation as a minor—and disgruntled—Imagist, Fletcher’s valuable scholarship has largely been forgotten. Kenneth Rexroth called him “the one American imagist who was thoroughly conversant with the French poetry of his time” (“Influence,” 150). Present at the regular meetings of T.E. Hulme, F.S. Flint, Ezra Pound, H.D., and Richard Aldington (among others), Fletcher witnessed the emergence of Imagist free verse (147).

Of particular importance, Fletcher was the first to chronicle and analyze the movement’s debt to Chinese literature by way of France. “It is now clear,” Fletcher

wrote in 1945, “that the Imagist group, as such, did not derive its impetus primarily from Chinese sources....But if French Symbolism be taken for the father of Imagism, Chinese poetry was its foster-father” (155). As Hugh Kenner wrote of early modernism, “some things were current once that are current no longer” (*The Pound Era* 76). Fletcher was emphasizing a connection well-known among the Imagists but now lost to most English-language studies: *vers libre* and French Symbolism owe a great debt to the translation and imitation of Classical Chinese poetry. In particular, Fletcher cites two texts of great importance to Symbolism and, by extension, Imagism: the Marquis d’Hervey-Saint-Denys’ translation study, *Poesies de l’Epoque des Thang* (1862) and Judith Gautier’s volume of poetry, *Le Livre de Jade* (149).

While Gautier’s volume is clearly indebted to d’Hervey-Saint-Denys scholarship, the two volumes have only a handful of texts in common, a testament to Gautier’s very different objective in translating (Detrie, “Translation and Reception” 49). Marquis d’Hervey-Saint-Denys’ “gave preference to ... poems that were especially rich in realistic details about Chinese customs but that often have little poetic value, judged by Chinese standards” (47). Gautier, on the other hand, strove to highlight the unique literary achievement of China’s poets—and in particular, the T’ang masters. For the first time, a Western writer had begun to demonstrate the possibilities of verse modeled on Classical Chinese language and poetics.

A multilingual translator and poet-scholar at mid-century, Kenneth Rexroth was, like Fletcher, uniquely equipped to bridge the ever-widening distance between French and English literary scholarship. Unlike most of their U.S. contemporaries, Fletcher and

Rexroth read across languages *and* centuries. Rexroth's mid-century essay, "The Influence of French Poetry on American" begins with the apt and revealing quip:

People, especially French and American people, tend to forget that the heart of the United States was once French ... Not only are towns all over the Middle West named such things as Prairie de Chien and Vincennes ... but—something very few people realize—French life survived intact in hundreds of small isolated communities until well into the twentieth century. (143)

Rexroth was what we might call today a post-national or transnational Americanist: a scholar who never lost sight of the fact that "American" literature has always been a multilingual and transcultural practice—a literature both rooted in and exceeding the nation.

We are particularly indebted to Rexroth for recuperating the significance of Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade*, which he considered a "French, or world, classic" (Rexroth, *Love and the Turning Year* 138). He recorded a history repeatedly subject to suppression of various kinds—and helped return Judith Gautier to her rightful place as a major figure in the development of *vers libre* and free verse. Originally meant to serve as the introduction to a French anthology of American poetry in translation, Rexroth's "*L'influence de la poesie francaise sur la poesie americaine*" ("The Influence of French Poetry on American," 1958) appeared in English in 1961. It was a landmark essay on free verse.

With enviable precision, Rexroth summarizes Imagism as “a revolt against rhetoric and symbolism in poetry, a return to direct statement, simple clear images, unpretentious themes, fidelity to objectively verifiable experience, strict avoidance of sentimentality” (151-152). He then proceeds to trace these key features of Imagism back to Judith Gautier’s 1867 *Le Livre de Jade*—and its (selected) translation by Stuart Merrill. No one had yet made that critical connection in English. “There was an important but usually ignored influence,” argued Rexroth:

All the Imagists were familiar with Judith Gautier’s *Livre du Jade* [sic] — that precious minor classic of French letters. From it they got their first intimation of Chinese poetry — a poetry which fulfilled and surpassed the Imagist Manifesto beyond the abilities or dreams of even the best of the Imagists. Amy Lowell’s (with Florence Ayscough) *Fir Flower Tablets*, Witter Bynner’s *The Jade Mountain* (The 300 Poems of T’ang), Ezra Pound’s *Cathay* are translations from the Chinese, and are in each case incomparably their respective author’s best work. Judith Gautier not only was almost certainly the first inspiration for this interest, but she provided the Americans with her special interpretations of Chinese poetry — a mood of exquisitely refined weariness and excruciating sensibility which is not, as a matter of fact, characteristic of Chinese poetry until the eighteenth century. . . . (152)

According to Rexroth, not only were “[a]ll the Imagists” familiar with *Le Livre de Jade* itself, but even those Imagists who could not read *Le Livre du Jade* in French read

beautifully translated selections in Stuart Merrill's *Pastels in Prose*" (152). *Le Livre de Jade* and *Pastels in Prose* circulated together among the early modernists—most likely between 1911 and 1913. Merrill's careful translation of Gautier's French would thus have proved equally critical, providing as it did the most fully realized model of the idiomatic free verse line in English.

There are a couple of things worth noting about Rexroth's argument, here. First, he classifies *Le Livre de Jade* in the same manner as the French—as both a volume of French poetry *and* a work of translation from the Chinese—“*une variation*” that is, in Gautier's hands, a free but informed translation. Unlike most nineteenth-century translators, Gautier did not paper over the provenance of her 1867 variations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she intentionally used the designation “selon” (“after” or “in the manner of”) instead of “par” (by) in order to signal each poem's indebtedness to a particular Chinese poet. For Rexroth, *Le Livre de Jade*'s status as a collection of poetry is never called into question. This is not surprising: from a twentieth-century perspective, it was much easier to identify Gautier's translation work as an early experiment in *vers libre*. Rexroth had the advantage of reading backwards from Rimbaud; he saw the whole line of Symbolism extending outward, as it were, from Gautier's versets, a form which helped secure Whitman's influence in France.

Second, Rexroth assumes that his French audience is well-acquainted with *Le Livre de Jade*—“that precious minor classic of French letters.” Circa 1958, the volume's status as a French classic is still common knowledge in France. Not much recuperation required there. What Rexroth ultimately recovered for his French (and U.S.) readers was

Gautier's powerful influence on Imagist free verse. Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade*, he argues, provided the "first inspiration" for idiomatic free verse in English. Gautier and Merrill alike, Rexroth argues, were the most important models for Pound and H.D. as translators *and* Imagists—or should we say translator-Imagists?—so critical was the relation between foreignizing translation and the emergence of "the new, plain-speaking, laconic, image-driven free verse" (Weinberger xix). The French comparatist S. J. Collier made the same connection in 1956, noting that "the translations from the Chinese by Judith Gautier, and the American Orientalist, Ernest Fenollosa, struck Ezra Pound and the Imagiste group as a revelation –'the perfect reticence'" (528). Of course, the "Imagistes" had discovered Judith Gautier's work several years before Pound gained access to the Fenollosa manuscripts, which, by 1913, served more as a confirmation than an instigation of the new principles.

Unfortunately, Rexroth also perpetuated two myths about Gautier and *Le Livre de Jade* that undermined her reputation in English-language scholarship throughout much of the twentieth-century. The first concerns her credentials and the second, her personal life. In his essay "The Poet as Translator" (1961), Rexroth argues that Gautier and Pound were two of the "greatest translators of Chinese" but "knew less than nothing of Chinese when they did their best translations" (187).⁴³ This is, in itself, curious logic. And, while it is true that Pound could neither speak nor read Chinese, Judith Gautier's achievements as a formidable Orientalist scholar are well-documented (Hokenson).

Unlike Pound, Gautier studied Classical Chinese language and literature with a Chinese tutor over a period of four years prior to publishing *Le Livre de Jade* at the age

of 22 (Yu 220). During that four-year period, Gautier received “almost daily lessons” in Chinese and worked directly with the manuscripts available to her through the Bibliothèque Impériale (220). Scholar Muriel Detrie has raised questions regarding the integrity of the manuscripts themselves, which may account for some of the inaccuracies in Gautier’s translations (“Translation and Reception” 46). As Pauline Yu reminds us, “very little Chinese poetry had been translated into French—or any European language—at this point” (220). Though clearly not fluent by 1867, Gautier had already acquired more Chinese than Ezra Pound would learn in a lifetime. Gautier continued to perfect her Chinese throughout her literary career, revising certain poems for subsequent (and now forgotten) editions of *Le Livre de Jade* (1902, 1908). In 1903, Gautier writes to French novelist Pierre Loti, explaining that she has been “translating a history from the Chinese annals” which she ultimately used as the basis for her play, “La Fille du ciel” (qtd. in J. Richardson 179). Clearly, this is not the work of an individual “who knew less than nothing of Chinese.”

Gautier also became the West’s first literary translator of Japanese poetry, including the tanka and haiku forms, thereby introducing “a new kind of concise, quintessentially affective text that would serve Mallarmé and the Modernists” (Hokenson 119). Though virtually no work has been done tracing the influence of Gautier’s Japanese translations on the Modernists, we know that the Imagists were actively imitating the newly discovered haiku form in 1910 (Fletcher; Flint). In fact, it was Gautier’s *Les Poèmes de Libellule* (“Poems of the Dragonfly”) on which Rexroth based most of his translations for *One Hundred Poems from the Japanese* (1955). Astoundingly, he did so without citing Judith Gautier as the source for his second-hand translations.⁴⁴

The second myth Rexroth carried into English concerned Gautier's Chinese tutor and collaborator, Ding Dunling⁴⁵ (?1830–1886) to whom she dedicated the 1867 *Le Livre de Jade*. Rexroth's essay maintains that "Judith Gautier's lover and informant was a Thai," and himself had "only the foggiest notions of the meanings of the Chinese text" ("Poet as Translator," 187). First, Gautier's tutor was not Thai, but a learned Chinese and quite fluent in his native language (Bradbury 51). Over a period of four years, Ding assisted Gautier in transcribing and translating the Classical Chinese texts housed at the Bibliothèque Impériale. He had, in fact, come to Paris under the sponsorship of the French missionary and interpreter Joseph-Marie Callery in order to assist in the compilation of a French-Chinese dictionary (51).

Second, there is no evidence that Gautier took her Chinese tutor as a lover. I have been unable to locate a single rumor to that effect, much less a credible source. Furthermore, what bearing could that relationship possibly have on Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade*? Beyond its sensational value, the notion that the young writer was sexually involved with her older "Thai" tutor serves only to titillate an all-too willing Western appetite, while insinuating a lack of rigor or accuracy in the translating. Unfortunately, Rexroth was not alone in eroticizing the East or Gautier. Prior to the emergence of Feminist theory and criticism, English-language scholars regularly indulged in speculative fantasies about Gautier's private life while marginalizing her significant contributions to world literature.

By contrast, the formidable French critic and Symbolist Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) publically characterized Judith Gautier's genius in very different terms:

“Judith Gautier knows every language, living or dead, she knows every literature, philosophy, religion....the intellectual part of her being is enriched by several sciences and numerous talents” (qtd. in J. Richardson 178).⁴⁶ De Gourmont was obviously exaggerating—but he was also rehearsing a fact well-known throughout Europe at the turn of the century: like Goethe, Judith Gautier was that rare polymath of literature. Be it musicology, criticism, translation, poetry, fiction, or memoir, all of Gautier’s writings demonstrated exceptional knowledge and skill.

“Environments of the Mind and Eye:” *Le Livre de Jade in London 1908-1912*

T.S. Eliot owned *Pastels in Prose* and began to register its influence as early as 1910 in his “First Debate between the Body and Soul,” an unpublished poem written at approximately the same time as “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (Ricks 233). In his 1917 essay, “The Borderline of Prose,” Eliot clearly demonstrates his familiarity with Merrill’s *Le Livre de Jade* translations: “in the long-forgotten Nineties, when sins were still scarlet, there appeared a little book called *Pastels in Prose*. It was mostly, if not altogether, translations from the French—from Ephraïm Mikhaël, Judith Gautier, Mallarmé, and many less-remembered names. This book introduced to the English reader the Prose-Poem” (qtd. in Murphy 14).

Here, Eliot reaffirms the significance of Merrill’s anthology as well as Gautier’s stature as a French poet on par with Mallarmé, the uncontested hero of Symbolism. That Eliot’s essay goes on to dismiss the “prose poem” as a form is not surprising—he was at

this point mounting a serious defense of free verse as a legitimate verse form with deep roots in the metrical tradition. Apart from Gautier, most of the pieces in Merrill's anthology abandon line and stanza in favor of the conventional prose paragraph. Eliot's aim was the opposite: to disassociate prose and free verse.

By 1913 (if not earlier) Pound had read Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* in one of its many editions (Palandri 5). He won't encounter "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" until 1914 and does not gain access to the Fenollosa manuscripts until 1913; however, between 1908 and 1912, Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* enjoyed a significant revival in Paris and London. In 1902, Gautier oversaw the publication of an enlarged and corrected edition of *Le Livre de Jade*, to which she appended an essay on Chinese poetry. The book clearly sold well. Juven reprinted the edition again in 1908. Two years later, London's Eragny Press issued a selected fine press edition of *Le Livre de Jade* entitled *Album de Poèmes tirés du Livre de Jade* ("Album of Poems from the Book of Jade").

Founded by the avant-garde printmaker Lucien Pissarro and his wife Esther Bensusan Pissarro, The Eragny Press became one of the most innovative and socially progressive print houses in England's private press movement (Fern vii). Son of the great impressionist and French radical, Camille Pissarro, Lucien remained in close touch with the intellectual and artistic life of Paris. Between 1901 and 1911, Pissarro, who considered himself a "channel artist," designed fine art editions of Jules Laforgue, Gerard de Nerval, and Francois Villon—editions which earned him high praise in both London and Paris. Not coincidentally, these poets will become major influences on both Pound and Eliot.

As it turns out, Pound and the Pissarros moved in the same English intellectual circles at a time when the visual arts, literature, and politics had become intertwined by the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1880's (Beckwith 2). This interdisciplinary network and its affiliations would prove critical to the development of modernist poetry. Through his publisher Elkin Mathews, Pound met Ford Maddox Ford and the British Museum curator, Laurence Binyon, who was a member of the Pissarros' Eragny circle (53).⁴⁷ In 1909, Pound began attending the Poets' Club meetings of T.E. Hulme, who had read Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* and was likely the first to introduce the volume to Pound (Bogan 40).

As Louise Bogan argued in 1951, there was at this point "a growing interest in Oriental verse forms, stemming in part from Judith Gautier's translation of Chinese poetry into French" (40). Bogan's history holds up: there is indeed a striking contrast between Pound's poetry before and after 1909, when Hulme introduced him to "the doctrine of the image" (Witemeyer, *Poetry of Ezra Pound* 48). Take, for example, these two excerpts from Pound's *Provença: Poems Selected from Personae, Exultations, and Canzoniere* (1910), a volume which demonstrates the range of Pound's "original" poetry prior to meeting Hulme.

Pound at his most modern:

Day and night are never weary,

Nor yet is God of creating

For day and night their torch-bearers,

The aube and the crepuscule. (45)

And his least:

Sometimes I feel thy cheek against my face

Close-pressing, soft as is the South's first breath

That all the subtle earth-things summoneth

To spring in wood-land and in meadow space.... (18)

The first (and most modern) stanza is an adaptation of a Greek epigram. For Pound, translation licensed greater formal experiment. The diction, however, remained stiff and formal—the syntax, inverted. The ancient Greek had only gotten him so far.

“Camaraderie,” on the other hand, is so much Victoriana—Genteel verse à la Pound.

By the time The Eragny Press published *Album de Poèmes tirés du Livre de Jade* in 1911, the Gautier and Merrill volumes had most likely been circulating in London for at least two years—and were well-known among the Eragny and Hulme circles. Lucien and Esther, who “thought of their books as environments of the mind and eye,” had made Gautier’s experiments with the compositional units of page, space, and typography more explicit than ever before (Beckwith 23). Considered a great achievement in modern hand-printing, the Pissarros’ selected edition of *Le Livre de Jade* would only have reinforced Judith Gautier’s significance among London’s avant-garde poets (Salaman 299). In his 1913 essay “Paris,” even Pound conceded that “practically the whole development of the English verse-art has been achieved by steals from the French, from

Chaucer's time to our own, and the French are always twenty to sixty years in advance" (27). Pound gave an informed estimate: as a pioneer of *vers libre*, Judith Gautier and the Symbolists preceded the free verse innovators Hulme and H.D. by nearly half a century. *Cathay*, Pound's own heavily indebted translation from the Classical Chinese, would follow in 1915.

In 1912, Pound published his watershed volume, *Ripostes*, to which he appended five poems by T.E. Hulme and a "Prefatory Note" announcing "*Les Imagistes*" and their debt to Hulme's "School of Images" (59). Featuring some of the first modernist free verse poems by Pound and Hulme, it strongly suggests the influence of both *Le Livre de Jade* and *Pastels in Prose*. Take, for example, the following poems from *Ripostes*; originally printed in 1908, Hulme's "Autumn" was considered the first Imagist poem:

Autumn

A touch of cold in the Autumn

night—

I walked abroad,

And saw the ruddy moon lean over a

hedge

Like a red-faced farmer.

I did not stop to speak, but nodded,

And round about were the wistful stars

With white faces like town children. (60)

Also echoing Gautier and Merrill, Pound's "Sub Mare" follows close behind (see fig. 10).

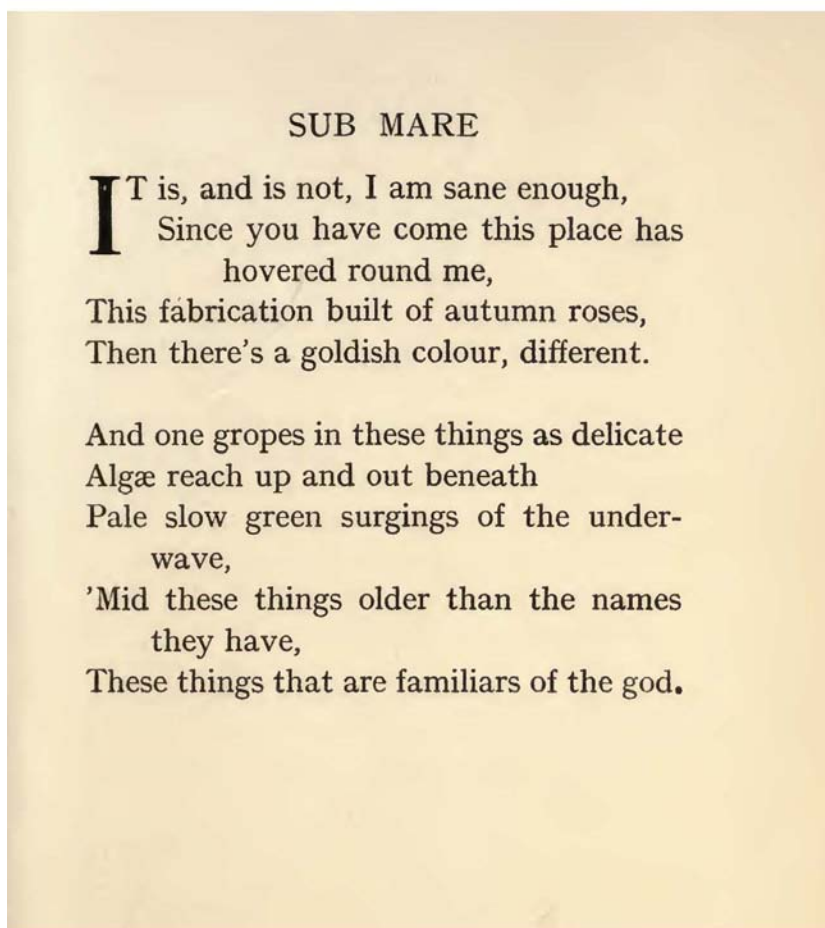


Fig. 10. Pound's "Sub Mare" as it appeared in *Ripostes* (1912), p. 45.

As Rexroth argued, Gautier and Merrill gave the English avant-gardes "a poetry which fulfilled and surpassed the Imagist Manifesto beyond the abilities or dreams of even the best of the Imagists" ("Influence," 152). Indeed, Hulme's "Autumn" is rather an

obvious, if awkward, imitation of the Classical Chinese themes, as well as Gautier's signature interpretation of them. In fact, "*La Lune*" (The Moon) and "*L'Automne*" (Autumn) are two of seven thematic divisions in *Le Livre de Jade*: Gautier's translations, "Le soir d'automne," ("Autumn Night") "Un poète regarde la Lune," (A Poet Looks at the Moon) and "Le clair de lune dans la mer" (Moonlight in the Sea) are just a few potential sources for Hulme's "Autumn."

The influence of *Le Livre de Jade*, however, goes well beyond the thematic. We are now a long way from the Poundian lines of 1909: "Sometimes I feel thy cheek against my face" or "Autumnal breaks the flame upon the sun-set herds."⁴⁸ Following in the footsteps of experiments like "L'Ombre Des Feuilles D'Oranger" and "The Shadow of the Orange Leaves," *Ripostes* "announces the beginning of a more restrained and less theatrical writer. The inversions disappear; the language is freed from exclamations and exhortations in the second person singular; and a new coolness...of surface allow[s] Pound to deal with contemporary material" (Bogan 40).

Also worth noting are Hulme's deliberate deployment of the image and Pound's new-found form—a striking imitation of the *Le Livre de Jade* versets both graphically and musically. Like Gautier's, the lines are loosely syllabic and carefully scored through use of punctuation, parallelism, assonance, alliteration, and line break. Even the indentions within stanzas suggest Gautier's convention.

“Steals from the French:” Le Livre de Jade and the Making of Cathay

This brings us to the subject of *Cathay*, Ezra Pound’s volume of translations from the Classical Chinese and Eliot’s often repeated (if misunderstood) thesis that “Chinese poetry, as we know it today, is something invented by Ezra Pound” (*Selected Poems* 15). A commonplace of modernist literary history, *Cathay* is considered the landmark work of Imagism. Pound claimed to have modeled his translations on the manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, as the volume’s full title suggests: *Cathay: Translations by Ezra Pound for the Most Part from the Chinese of Rihaku, from the notes of the late Ernest Fenollosa, and the decipherings of the Professors Mori and Ariga*. With varying opinions on the integrity, accuracy, and quality of those adaptations, scholars have more or less accepted Pound’s claim of provenance. And, with a title like that, one might conclude there is little more to say regarding origins.

Considered a “Rosetta Stone of American modernism,”⁴⁹ the Fenollosa manuscripts have acquired a near-mythological fame. Yet, as George Steiner astutely observes,

[t]he China of Pound’s poems, of Waley’s, is one we have come fully to expect and believe in. It matches, it confirms powerful pictorial and tonal anticipations. Chinoiserie ... is a product of cumulative impressions stylized and selected. Erroneously or not, by virtue of initial chance or of method, the Western eye has fixed on certain constants—or what are taken

to be constants—of Chinese landscape, attitude, and emotional register. Each translation in turn appears to corroborate what is fundamentally a Western ‘invention of China’. Pound can imitate and persuade with utmost economy not because he or his reader knows so much but because both concur in knowing so little ... Judith Gautier’s ‘le Depart d’un ami’ in *Le Livre de Jade* (1867) differs from Pound’s “Taking Leave of a Friend’ in verbal detail, but the conventions of melancholy and cool space are precisely analogous.... (378)

Of course, as I have repeatedly argued, the conventions are “precisely analogous” because Pound and the other Imagists were actively reading Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade*, which had been reissued in Paris (1908) and London (1911) during a pivotal moment in the history of free verse.

Steiner’s thesis is confirmed by the Chinese translator and literary scholar Steve Bradbury, who has written extensively on the subject of “American” poetry and Chinese poetry in translation. Like Rexroth, Bradbury argues that “Gautier’s prose poems were not only formatted in a way that anticipates *vers libre*; [‘L’escalier de Jade’] is a version of the same Li Po quatrain (chüeh-chü) Pound translated as ‘The Jewel Stair’s Grievance’ for *Cathay*” (43). Pound was, in effect, cribbing from Gautier. Although I quibble with Bradbury’s choice of words—Gautier was composing verse not “formatting” prose—his point is well-taken. Broadly speaking, Pound drew his raw material from Fenollosa, but it was Gautier and Merrill who taught him how to render a Sino-Tibetan tradition in Indo-European form.

Because Gautier was the West's first literary translator of the T'ang and greatly favored the poetry of Li Po and Tu Fu, there is a way in which Steiner's argument applies to most if not all of Pound's *Cathay* translations. We must remember that when Pound translated Li Po, he had little more than the notes, Romanized transcriptions, and crude word-for-word glosses of Fenollosa, as with the following example:

Sho	hatsu	sho	fuku	gaku
Mistress	hair	first	cover	brow

Chinese lady's I or my beginning

My hair was at first covering my brows

(Chinese method of wearing hair) (qtd. in Bradbury 42-43).

Unlike Gautier, he never studied the Chinese sources directly. In arriving at a line like "While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead," Pound had relied heavily on Gautier's visceral and exquisitely reticent interpretations of the T'ang—as well as Merrill's unprecedented modern English line.

Consider, for instance, the following excerpt from Pound's "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter," which clearly built on Gautier's own Li Po variations in and out of English:

At sixteen you departed,

You went into far Ku-to-Yen, by the river of swirl-

ing eddies,

And you have been gone five months.

The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.

By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different

mosses,

Too deep to clear them away!

The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.

The paired butterflies are already yellow with

August....(*Cathay* 11-12)

Now, for comparison's sake, let us turn to Gautier's 1867 "Le Pêcheur" (The Fisherman), in which we find the same tonal reserve, the simple sentence structures—image-driven, concise (see fig. 11).

LE PÊCHEUR

Selon Li-Taï-Pé.

LA terre a bu la neige et voici que l'on re-
voit les fleurs de prunier.

Les feuilles de saule ressemblent à de l'or
neuf et le lac est pareil à un lac d'argent.

2

C'est le moment où les papillons poudrés
de soufre appuient leurs têtes veloutées sur le
cœur des fleurs.

Le pêcheur, de son bateau immobile, jette
ses filets qui brisent la surface de l'eau.

Il pense à celle qui reste à la maison
comme l'hirondelle dans son nid, à celle qu'il
va bientôt aller revoir en lui portant la nour-
riture, comme le mâle de l'hirondelle.



Fig. 11. "Le Pecheur" in Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* (1867), p. 17-18.

Even the sonic contours of Pound's *Cathay* recall Gautier's unique *vers libre* deployment of parallelism, her masterfully scored versets and signature use of alliteration, consonance, and assonance.

The similarities between Pound's *Cathay* and *Le Livre de Jade* are even more palpable in Merrill's translation of "Le Pêcheur," where he adopted a foreignizing method in order to convey Gautier's idiomatic *vers libre* interpretation of Li Po (see 12).



[After Li-Tai-Pé.]

THE earth has drunk the snow, and now are seen once more the blossoms of the plum-tree.

The leaves of the willow are like new gold, and the lake seems a lake of silver.

Now is the time when the butterflies powdered with sulphur rest their velvety heads upon the hearts of the flowers.

The fisherman, from his motionless boat, casts forth his nets, breaking the surface of the water.

He thinks of her who stays at home like the swallow in her nest, of her whom he will soon see again, when he brings her food, like the swallow's mate.

Fig. 12. "The Fisherman" translated from the French of Judith Gautier by Stuart Merrill, *Pastels in Prose* (1890), p. 94.

In fact, the similarity of syntax, diction, and free verse rhythm are such that one translation seems to flow almost indistinguishably into the next. Merrill translating Gautier (translating Li Po): "The leaves of the willow are like new gold, and the lake seems a lake of silver./Now is the time when the butterflies powdered with sulphur rest their velvety heads upon the hearts of flowers./ The fisherman, from his motionless boat, casts forth his nets, breaking the surface of water. . . ." Pound translating Li Po: The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead./ . . . By the gate now, the moss is grown, the

different mosses,/Too deep to clear them away!/The leaves fall early this autumn, in
wind./ The paired butterflies are already yellow with August. . . .”

Like Gautier and Merrill, Pound adopted a simple subject-verb-object structure in which concrete verbs and nouns predominate; for the first time, he made sustained use of the present tense. Like his predecessors in translation, Pound learned to restrain himself from commentary, from the use of artificial or elevated diction; emboldened by Gautier and Merrill’s powerful model, he drew instead on the visual imagination, the visceral language of the concrete world, of bodies and bodies speaking.

Conclusion: Le Livre de Jade and its Transcultural Travels in Translation

Judith Gautier also left her mark on Latin American and Russia modernism. Following in the footsteps of Merrill and Pound, several twentieth-century poets imitated or re-translated *Le Livre de Jade*. Among these were the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario and the revolutionary *modernista*, Jose Juan Tablada, who translated a number of poems from *Le Livre de Jade* for his 1920 *Li-Po y otras poemas ideograficos* (“*Li Po and Other Ideographic Poems*”) (Garcia de Aldridge 149). Tablada is widely considered the father of modern Mexican poetry—a literary revolutionary whose adaptation of French Orientalism dramatically influenced Latin American *vanguardismo* at large (Hokenson 707-709). He never cited *Le Livre de Jade* or the debt to Gautier. Also based on Gautier’s *Le Livre de Jade*, Nikolai Gumilev’s 1918 volume of translations,

Фарфоровый павильон (*Porcelain Pavilion*), became the signal work of Acmeism, the Russian equivalent of Imagism (Painter 86).

As Steve Bradbury has argued, “literary influence *is* often difficult to determine, but this much is certain: none of the free verse poets in the formative years of the American romance with Chinese poetry—not Pound, Amy Lowell, Witter Bynner, nor even Rexroth a generation later—could read the classical poems they translated” (42). But “they *could* read the English translations in the sources they actually worked from” (42). Like Mallarmé and the other Symbolists, they cut their teeth on Gautier’s groundbreaking versets. They imitated Merrill imitating Gautier—and in the process forever altered poetic practice after 1915. As these histories of publication, reception, and translation demonstrate, between 1867 and 1920, Judith Gautier’s work played a critical role in the development of modern poetry and translation. It is time she took her rightful place among the great innovators of modern literature.

Chapter 5: English Plus: Heteroclit Translation and the Post-National Poetry of the U.S. 1907-1915

Introduction

Free verse in English is typically represented as a twentieth-century invention—a reaction against the narrow and nostalgic conventions of the nineteenth-century. This is a neat but misleading division. In U.S. literature, Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are obvious and well-documented exceptions. Even so, trenchant periodization within the academy has discouraged studies of “American poetry” that might otherwise take a broader and more rewarding view. The groundbreaking Imagist movement was unquestionably a rejection of Genteel and Georgian-era verse—and all that it valorized. The idiomatic free verse line in English, however, has a far more complicated genesis with roots running deep into the transcultural nineteenth-century. As previous chapters demonstrate, poetry translation became a kind of minor genre with special relevance to the polyglot U.S. Foreignizing translations in particular both expressed and exceeded “nation;” they fostered oppositional and unconventional forms, moving American practice towards the modern.

The transnational scope of Imagism is now well-documented. As Songping Jin has argued:

It may be overstating a little to say that Modernist poetics are entirely an assimilation of diverse poetic traditions of different cultures. But there seems to be no risk in saying that they are characterized by complex and

heterogeneous aspects, or fragmentation, of different traditions, and these various aspects are “heteroclite elements” (Pound’s term).... (11)

This does not mean, however, that nation becomes irrelevant. Pound adopted the term “heteroclite” in an effort to characterize the contents of the modern mind—but also as an ethical principal. A heteroclite poetics expressed a bricolage diversity, but also deviation from the oppressively conformist and egotistical tendencies in modern “Kultur” (Pound, “Remy de Gourmont” 421)

Surely of great appeal to the vernacularist in Pound, “heteroclite” has its roots in linguistics, where it denotes deviation from prescriptive language. Due to the variety of languages and dialects in contact, language use in the U.S. itself has been marked—even defined—by linguistic irregularity and deviation (Bailey 4). Recalling Venuti’s distinctions between “foreignizing” and “domestic” translation, an oppositional form or idiom is deviant only in relation to the culturally-specific norms of a period. By 1900, the monolingual nationalism of the white upper-class had been fully institutionalized in the U.S., setting narrow and rigid norms for literary publication and study.

This leads me to ask the following question: if a transcultural—and oppositional—impulse defines Modernist poetics, then to what extent did the multilingual and multicultural tradition of American literature drive that shift? Considering the political history of the transnational U.S.—its colonial origins, oppositional constitution, and individualist mythology—deviance has marked national importance, as does the notion of a culturally diverse collective—*E Pluribus Unum*—the many in one. Throughout the nineteenth-century, visible literary figures like Longfellow and Whitman

emphasized the heterogeneous and provisional nature of their country. The idea that a defiant experiment in multicultural nation-building would produce a national literature inclined to linguistic diversity and experiment did not seem far-fetched.

Two recent shifts in American Studies offer a new perspective from which to read the relationship between national and international modernisms: Werner Sollors' "English plus" approach and John Carlos Rowe's "post-national" theory challenge us to think more critically and inclusively about the multicultural and polylingual history of the U.S. and its bearing on literary practice. As Sollors has so convincingly argued, the languages of American literature are many, yet with the exception of Spanish, multiculturalism has only recently begun to pay attention to linguistic diversity within the U.S., past or present (4). Addressing the interrelated concerns of American educational and national policy as well as historical and literary study, Sollors argues against the prevailing "English only" model in American Studies. Instead, he proposes an "English plus other languages" approach to critical thinking about the multicultural U.S. (3).

In the same vein, John Carlos Rowe has called for a "post-national" approach in American Studies, which favors "comparative methodologies that engage but are not limited to the nation" (Boggs 5). Rowe's notion of the post-national builds on Sollors' English-plus approach to U.S. literature; it encourages scholarship that acknowledges both the linguistic and "cultural hybridities that have occurred historically among the many cultures constituting the United States" (*New American Studies* 24). This is a promising critical shift, as both regional and global studies of "American" poetry typically overlook the extent to which the U.S. has always been transcultural both within

and beyond its borders. Neglecting either dimension of the literary U.S. perpetuates impoverished and misleading scholarship. After all, the key terms now equated with global Modernism—transnational and transatlantic—first entered the English language in the nineteenth-century as a means of describing the uniquely transcultural U.S. (*Transnationalism*, Boggs 4-5).

In the following chapter, I adopt an English-plus and post-national approach as my own critical method, but also as a means of describing early modernist experiments with the idiomatic free verse line. Here, “post-national” is enlisted in describing a transnational poetics with strong ties to the polyglot U.S. For my purposes, “English plus” characterizes the literature of the multilingual U.S. It also describes the “idiomatic” impulse of early modernist poetry and its connection with the heterogeneous language situation of the nineteenth-century U.S., where English circulated among a range of non-English languages and dialects.

Importantly, the terms also highlight the oppositional nature of the earliest experiments in modernist poetry; broadly speaking, there are at least two dominant thrusts in the literary culture of the U.S. circa 1900: an institutionalized English-only practice “aligned with the nation-state” and a post-nationalist, English-plus practice which challenged “‘official’ nationalism” and its literary conventions (Rowe et al., *Post-Nationalist American Studies* 2). In Pound’s earliest engagement with translation and the debut of *Poetry*, Harriet Monroe’s influential transatlantic journal, we find a burgeoning post-national poetry. A poetics engaging but not limited to the nation—engaging but not

limited to English—emerges as a defining and understudied method of early modernism, 1907-1912.⁵⁰

The Early Modern(ism): Foreignizing Translation and the Post-National Poetics of Ezra Pound

Any study of translation and modernist poetry must address the phenomenon of *Cathay*, Pound's 1915 translation-adaptation from the classical Chinese, and its reputed role in shaping modern poetry thereafter. How did a book of translations and not an "original" work become one of the most important models for poetic modernism?

Numerous critics have written on the subject of *Cathay*, most notably Singapore Jai, Wai-lim Yip, Zhaming Qian, Yunte Huang, Christine Froula, Eliot Weinberger, and Ming Xie. Establishing translation as a field of inquiry within Pound studies, these scholars focus on Pound's engagement with China and Classical Chinese poetics. Pound's earliest writings and experiments with translation, however, are typically summarized or dismissed altogether—as are the historical context and intellectual community in which they were produced.⁵¹

In 1969, Hugh Witemeyer argued that, when assessing Pound's achievement and poetic development, "we tend to focus on the high points—Imagism and the mature poems from *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1917) onwards without understanding very well how Pound got from one stage to another. This picture is altered when we take the early poems into account" (*Poetry of Ezra Pound* ix). Witemeyer argues for the

“intrinsic value” of the very early work but also shows anxiety over Pound’s sources and influences, contending that Pound’s “entire aesthetic ... was not created by anyone but Pound himself” (27-28). Here, the critical insistence on isolating Pound only obscures the poet’s participation in a broader cultural movement towards translation as method and metaphor for the modern.

In tracing “Pound’s” modernist principles from their earliest origins, I offer the following theses: first, that translation figured prominently in displacing the late nineteenth-century Genteel aesthetic—and far earlier than typically acknowledged; and second, that Pound’s particular interest in translating medieval and early modern vernacular literature was part of a broader preoccupation with heterogeneity and contemporary speech, including the multilingual “vernacular” of the U.S. As such, a critical period for Pound’s work and the development of modernism emerges as 1907-1912—prior to Pound’s receipt of the Ernest Fenollosa papers (which supplied both critical and primary source texts for *Cathay*).

In 1901, when Ezra Pound entered the University of Pennsylvania at age 15, American poetry “lingered in the twilight of the late nineteenth century, unable ... to break with the conventional formulas and sentimental diction of earlier decades” (Beach 1). In the latter half of the nineteenth-century, a formidable group of poets and critics, including George Henry Boker (1823-1903), Bayard Taylor (1825-78) and Richard Henry Stoddard (1825-1903) had carefully enforced a tradition of “aesthetic idealism and cultural conservatism” (Cox 212). Their successors became the nation’s most visible

critics, anthologists, and editors. Edmund Clarence Stedman authored the influential *Poets of America* (1885) and *The Nature and Elements of Poetry* (1892).

In 1900, Stedman also edited *An American Anthology*, which featured a large number of poems by fellow-Genteel poet and *Atlantic Monthly* editor, Thomas Bailey Aldrich. As previously discussed, the following stanza was typical of popular print verse at the turn of the century; it was also the kind of poetry that young writers like Pound were expected to imitate:

Enamoured architect of airy rhyme,

Build as thou wilt; heed not what each man says:

Good souls, but innocent of dreamers' ways,

Will come and marvel why thou wastest time.... (382)

This sonnet, in which Aldrich defends the special status of the Poet, rehearses many Genteel conventions. As the “Defenders of Ideality,” Genteel poets largely rejected notions of “realism” and “real life” as the subject matter of poetry and favored highly stylized odes, elegies and devotionals (Cox 215). Cliché and abstraction prevailed. In his defining *American Anthology*, Clarence Stedman wrote that a poet is “born not made” and believed in the “inborn taste and wisdom of the poet” (Stedman, *Nature and Elements* 47). Primarily written by (and for) the “gently-bred,” “poesy” typically employed fustian and archaic diction in an effort to align itself with an exclusively Anglo-Saxon and Classical tradition. “The effective rise of American poetry, wrote Stedman, was coincident with that of the Anglo-Victorian” (*An American Anthology* xv).

The Genteel reification of the Greek and Latin classics went hand-in-hand with an increasingly English-only nationalism and literary establishment. Despite the intellectual and popular interest in translation throughout much of the nineteenth-century, by 1900 Pound would have encountered a deepening American bias against the modern languages. “Scholars of the classical languages in particular often saw translations from modern languages as frivolous” and decried the highly popular translations produced for the stage (Boggs, “Translation” 25). A Harvard chair and champion of the modern languages, Longfellow had battled regularly with the Greek and Latin faculty who argued that “the simplistic grammatical structures and base literature of modern languages would irreparably harm a student’s capacity for disciplined learning” (25). It was this oppressively narrow literary culture that Pound and other American modernists were “forced to confront when the time came to declare [themselves poets]” (Cox 216).

The Genteel imperative figures prominently in an otherwise cryptic letter of 1907 in which Pound defends the importance of *Il Candelaio*, an obscure Renaissance play by the Italian heretic Giordano Bruno (1548-1600):

Wyncote, Pa, 16 January

My dear Dr. Schelling: I have already begun work on “Il Candelaio” which is eminently germane to my other romance work and in which I have considerable interest.

On the other hand, since the study of Martial there is nothing I approach with such nausea and disgust as Roman life (Das Privatleben).

Of course if you consider the latter of more importance, I shall endeavor to make my hate do as good work as my interest. (*Selected Letters*, “1: To Felix E. Schelling” 3)

At the time, Pound was pursuing a doctoral degree in Romance Languages at the University of Pennsylvania. After the program rejected his proposal to work on Renaissance Latin authors *not* in the curriculum, he chose to write his thesis on the *gracioso* in the plays of Spanish poet and playwright, Lope de Vega (1562-1635). Like Longfellow, Pound admired Lope’s work in the vernacular and tendency towards “actual reproduction of life” (*Spirit of Romance* 216).

While working on his thesis, Pound elected to take a semester of courses in the Department of English, where he managed to infuriate the faculty—and particularly Schelling, the English chair. While enrolled in Schelling’s course on Elizabethan Drama, Pound appears to have (unfavorably) critiqued Ben Jonson’s plays, citing Bruno’s unorthodox comedy, *Il Candelaio* (The Candlemaker), in support of his thesis (Moody 30). Schelling clearly disputed Pound’s thesis, most likely insisting that Roman literature offered the more relevant context for Jonson (30). With thinly-veiled hostility, Pound’s letter dismisses Schelling’s narrow-minded Classicism, implicitly defending the importance of Bruno, the vernacular languages, and the comparative study of literature. Obviously attuned to Schelling’s Victorian bias against the scandalous (and Catholic) Bruno, Pound’s letter rather comically objects to Martial’s lewd epigrams detailing the private lives (“Das Privatleben”) of a morally corrupt Roman society.⁵²

Insulted, Schelling pulled rank, questioning Pound's seriousness as a student and scholar. It was, in effect, the end of Pound's academic career. He resigned from Schelling's course, refusing to sit for examinations in the department. Despite the fact that Pound had amassed a significant amount of original research and writing on Lope de Vega, his fellowship was not renewed and he left the doctoral program without completing his degree.

Though critics have not made much of Pound's early interest in Bruno, the "heresiarch martyr of Nola" (as James Joyce called him) has "long been recognised as one of the seminal influences on the intellectual development of the young Joyce" (Thurston 67). Joyce and Pound began corresponding in 1913, by which time both writers had already begun to weigh Bruno's significance for the modern. As Pound's letter to Schelling demonstrates, Bruno was not then easily accessible to the monolingual student of English literature. His writings were virtually unknown in England and the U.S.⁵³

Pound had "discovered" Bruno's *Candelaio* in large part because he was reading against the grain of English-only nationalism so prevalent in the academic and literary institutions of the U.S. circa 1905. Continuing the tradition of multilingual and comparative American literature institutionalized by Longfellow, Pound committed himself to the translingual study of the "comparative values in literature" (Moody 16). In effect, Pound's culturally and politically-charged commitment to the heretical Bruno radicalized him; Bruno ended one career but instigated another, forever altering the practice of poetry in English.

Recovering Giordano Bruno: Il Candelaio and Vernacular Modernism

A sixteenth-century Italian philosopher, astronomer, mathematician, and occultist, Giordano Bruno's writings anticipated modern science as well as modern literature. Early in his career, Bruno had read two forbidden commentaries by Erasmus and freely discussed the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ; as a result, a trial was prepared against him. Under constant threat of persecution, Bruno travelled abroad to England, France, and Germany in search of a sympathetic intellectual community. He theorized the multiplicity of worlds—an infinite universe of which the earth was not the center. He promoted freedom of religious expression and theorized the equal significance of all that exists, dismissing as artificial the Roman Catholic distinctions between “sacred” and “profane.” Of great importance to Pound and Joyce alike, Bruno's scientific and philosophical unorthodoxy extended to his heterogeneous practice of literature.

In addition to his philosophical and scientific “dialogues,” Bruno wrote the comedy, *Il Candelaio* (his only dramatic work), and three long poems, all of which reflected his radical theories. Against prevailing conventions of his day, Bruno elected to write numerous works in his vernacular Italian despite the literary and scientific dominance of Latin, maintaining that the vernacular came nearer to an accurate expression of “reality” (*Spaccio* 551-52). In his introduction to *Spaccio de la bestia trienfante* (“Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast”), Bruno openly defends his use of the vernacular:

here Giordano speaks in the vernacular, he names things freely, he calls by name those things that nature has brought into being; he does not call shameful what nature renders worthy; he does not hide what she leaves out in the open; he calls bread, bread; wine, wine, a head, a head; a foot, a foot; and other parts by their proper name.... He judges philosophers as philosophers, pedants as pedants, ... leeches as leeches, the useless mountebanks, charlatans, tricksters, cardsharps, playactors, parrots, for what they are, show themselves to be, and are *in reality*; and he judges the industrious, the beneficent, the wise, the heroic for what they are.

(emphasis added; qtd. in Ordine 117).

Circa 1584, the Italian vernacular still drew on a range of languages, dialects, registers—it could be used to express the unlettered, the irreverent, the skeptical. As the translation illustrates, Bruno employed the Italian vernacular deliberately in an effort to re-present reality as a socially-inflected site of contest.

In 1591, Bruno returned to Italy but the political climate had not much improved and he was ultimately arrested. When Roman inquisitors demanded an unconditional retraction of his theories, Bruno refused. In 1600, Pope Clement VIII declared him an impenitent heretic and ordered his execution. Upon hearing his sentence read, Bruno replied that “perhaps your fear in passing judgment on me is greater than mine in receiving it” (Daintin 106). With his tongue bound, Bruno was burnt alive at the stake in Campo de Fiori—a spectacle of warning for the crowds who gathered to see him.

After his execution, Bruno's works were placed on the "Index" of prohibited books and his writings were almost completely erased from public memory for the next two centuries (Moliterno 11). In the early nineteenth-century, German and Italian scholars re-discovered Bruno and did much in the way of recuperating his importance within continental Europe, where interest in Bruno's works grew steadily. In the late nineteenth-century, a sort of "Brunomania" took hold, and Italian intellectuals declared him a national hero, "a martyr for scientific Reason and a hero of freedom of thought" (12). In the increasingly xenophobic and English-only institutions of the U.S., however, Bruno's vernacularist work remained controversial for many of the same reasons.

During his career Bruno published three experimental works concerned with attaining an "intimate knowledge of reality" (Mebane 90). Among these was the vernacular comedy, *Candelaio* (1582), which so interested Pound. "The Candlemaker" was Bruno's sole theatrical work and is first and foremost a play about language. Pound read the play in the vernacular Italian and most likely began a working translation, as no English translation appeared until 1964. In this profound challenge to institutional knowledge

Bruno establishes his distance from the humanistic tradition and from the models of the contemporary culture, literary as well as philosophical and religious. And indeed the comedy is written in a language that is rich in terms drawn from Neapolitan, and that absorbs the realistic and burlesque practice of Aretino and Berni, mixing it with parodic echoes of classical and ecclesiastical rhetoric. (Frajese 318)

In juxtaposing languages and registers—parodied Latin, humanist Italian, and vernacular Italian—Bruno mounted his critique of the “empty formulas of humanist language,” which *Candelaio* reduces to “pure grammatical declination” (319).

With linguistic structures revealed, Bruno was free to probe the institutional foundations of knowledge that prescriptive language rendered natural and invisible—in particular, the Latin of the Roman Catholic Church and its Academy. Echoing Brunoian deconstruction, multilingual sampling will become a signature of poetic modernism—and perhaps “expatriate” modernism in particular—where juxtaposition of registers and language varieties often went hand-in-hand with a profoundly ambivalent (and English-plus) nationalism: “*Patriam quam odi et amo* (fatherland which I hate and love)” (Pound, “What I Feel” 146).

Take for example, *Candelaio*’s three highly irreverent and incongruous prologues in which the period’s theatrical and linguistic conventions unravel before the first scene. Chosen to deliver the so-called “Antiprologue,” an unnamed actor takes the stage only to renounce it, refusing to rescue yet another “shipwreck ... this derelict, smashed-up, broken-down, hole-ridden hulk” (Bruno 67). Representing the intellectual elite in equally scandalous terms, the actor denounces the play’s author as one of many greedy “philosophers, poets and pedants” who shamelessly exploit the working-class:

So much so, that I, from having always served such miserable wretches,
have starved and starved, so that were I to vomit, I could bring up nothing
but my own spirit; had I the strength to shit, I could shit nothing but my

own soul, like a hanged man. In conclusion: I'm off to become a monk and whoever wants a prologue can do it himself. (68)

As the visceral language of the translation suggests, *Candelaio* represents one of the most dramatic examples of Renaissance realism—and the politically radical use of heteroclite vernacular in creating a literature of the otherwise-suppressed social real. The play, its actors, author, audience, and language itself become part of the declared subject—as well as the subject of scrutiny. If *Candelaio* was Bruno's protest against the institutional corruption of his time, it is also a meditation on the ways in which language authorizes and resists that corruption. Considering the anti-realist (and Victorian) values of the American Genteel, one can easily imagine the oppositional attraction Bruno held for Pound, who was, like many early modernists, actively seeking forms in which to express a broader range of contemporary human experience.

Importantly, Bruno is using the vernacular Italian to reveal the limitations of Latin as well as humanist Italian. Anticipating the ultimate crisis of authority in twentieth-century textual studies, fifteenth-century Humanism had become slavishly devoted to the philological study of Classical texts where they served to instruct and construct an ideal Christian society in which man was the center of the Universe (Frajese 319). Humanist Italian bore the mark of that ideological shift. By contrast, the Neapolitan region enjoyed a strong and successful reputation for its literary adaptation of secular dialect—language traded between people in the country and on the streets. In adapting his vernacular idiom, Bruno translated into literature the language of institutional skepticism. A powerful model for avant-garde modernism, Bruno's highly oppositional use of working-

class dialect also valorized material and corporeal existence. Take, for example, *Candelaio*'s concluding prologue, in which the company's janitor issues the final judgment on Bruno's play:

I imagine that if not all, then at least the majority of you will be saying to me: "A pox rot your nose off! Since when are comedies introduced by janitors?" And I'll reply to you: a plague on you all! Before there were comedies, who had ever seen one? And whoever saw you before you existed? And don't you think that a subject like the one presented to you tonight, rightly deserves a very particular kind of introduction? An eccentric baboon, a natural dickhead, a moral fuckwit, a tropological beast, an analogical ass like this one I would think worthy of a field-marshal if not a janitor! (72)

Though difficult to represent in modern English translation, *Candelaio* was nothing if not limit-smashing. The result "is a contamination of linguistic planes, rhetorical levels, and literary genres that yields a violent critique of the learned language, and that transports onto the social plane the coincidence of 'greatest' and 'least,' 'infinitely large and infinitely small' of the cosmos" (Frajese 318).

In Bruno, Pound found a cause worth fighting for. In his anticipation of Galileo's discoveries, in his theory of multiple worlds and religions, Bruno radically reorients and decenters Earth and Christianity. He adapts the Italian vernacular in an effort to unseat not only the Latin language, but its whole way of thinking. Working from macro to microcosmic, Bruno proposed that worlds, nations, religions, and individuals exist, first

and foremost, in relation to one other. Nothing and no one is at the center. Cosmically speaking, Bruno posited, there may not even be “a center.” In many ways, Pound’s Bruno is a uniquely Americanist recuperation and anticipates much of what’s to come—the emergence of a post-national ethics: a line rooted in and exceeding English; a line rooted in and exceeding the nation.

“Driving Whitman into the Old World:” “America “and The Vulgar Metric

Two years after his failed attempt to translate Bruno into the U.S. curriculum, Pound wrote a short essay entitled, “What I Feel About Walt Whitman.” Among his first critical works, it remained unpublished until 1955; in the rarefied literary establishment of 1909, Whitman garnered little respect. The essay shows a young Pound coming to terms with his ambivalence towards his fellow-American—and the poet’s language in particular:

He *is* America. His crudity is an exceeding great stench, but it *is* America. He is the hollow place in the rock that echoes with his time. He *does* ‘chant the crucial stage’ and he is the ‘voice triumphant’. He is disgusting. . . . Yet if Whitman represented his time in language acceptable to one accustomed to my standard of intellectual-artistic living he would belie his time and nation.” (*Early Writings: Poems and Prose* 187-188)

At this point Pound is still composing poetry in a language he will later call “the crust of dead English” (*Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, “Cavalcanti: Medievalism” 193). A recent

student of Bruno, Pound recognized the relationship between Whitman's use of an English-plus vernacular and his poetic genius—his relevance for “his time and nation.” When Pound refers to the limitations of “acceptable” language (circa 1909), he is talking about the prescriptive idiom dictated by upper-class literary establishments on both sides of the Atlantic. Long before he seizes on the potency of the “idiomatic,” Pound is reading Whitman as corrective to work out the connection between diction and the poem's vitality—its responsibility, even, to accurately represent the perception of its time. In the context of a national poetry and his own contribution as an “American” poet, Pound is sifting through the problems of literary register and class dialect; he is talking about a degree of formality, choice of vocabulary, pronunciation, and punctuation—and the narrow “standard of intellectual-artistic living” that language represents.

Whitman had, of course, already identified the perils of Genteel English, of translating language and tradition too narrowly. In his *ars poetica*, “Song of the Answerer,” Whitman underscored the importance of translation as a metaphor and method for “American” poetry:

Every existence has its idiom. . . . every thing has an idiom and tongue;
 He resolves all tongues into his own, and bestows it upon men . . . and any
 man translates . . . and any man translates himself also:
 One part does not counteract another part He is the joiner . . . he sees
 how they join.

(Leaves of Grass, 1855 86)

The “words of true poems,” Whitman argued, join and “balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes” (“Song of the Answerer,” *Leaves* 1897 137). Advocating a kind of Americanist vernacular, Whitman maintained that the “American poet” should join the speech of the President, mechanic, farmer, soldier, sailor, artist, author, brother, sister, the national, and the foreigner (136). As Whitman argued in his 1855 prologue to *Leaves of Grass*,

The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem . . . Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. . . . [T]he genius of the United States is . . . always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships . . . their deathless attachment to freedom . . . their practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states . . . their curiosity and welcome of novelty . . . the fluency of their speech . . . the terrible significance of their elections—the President’s taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry” (4).

For Whitman, the ideal idiom of “American” poetry would reflect idiolect as well as dialect, driving verse into a new territory of diverse and unrhymed lines; it would dramatize the language situation of the U.S. in all its economic, racial, religious, political, sexual, regional, multilingual, and multicultural diversity.

As Pound conceded in 1909, Whitman’s English was, above all else, not a language limited to nostalgic Classicism and Anglophilia:

Entirely free from the renaissance humanist ideal of the complete man or from the Greek idealism, [Whitman] is content to be what he is, and he is his time and his people.... He knows that he is a beginning and not a classically finished work. I honour him for he prophesied me while I can only recognise him as a forbear of whom I ought to be proud. In America there is much for the healing of the nations, but woe unto him of the cultured palate who attempts the dose. (“What I Feel” 187)

At this point, Pound began to acknowledge Whitman (if only in private) as his literary relation: “I read [Whitman] (in many parts) with acute pain, but when I write of *certain things* I find myself using his *rhythms*” (emphasis added; 145). By “his rhythms” Pound means Whitman’s cadenced verse, a model that had proven critical to the development of Symbolist *vers libre*. Then, in a surprising turn, Pound makes a critical connection between Whitman’s idiom and his “rhythms” through analogy to medieval vernacularism: “like Dante, he wrote in the ‘vulgar tongue,’ in a new metric. The first great man to write in the language of his people” (146).

Here is evidence that Pound had begun to perceive the power of the vernacular to transform the poetic line. That he was able to read the “modern” “American” genius of idiomatic Whitman is due in large part to an earlier generation of U.S. comparativists, scholars who introduced Pound to the vernacular works of Arnaut Daniel and the Troubadours, Guido Cavalcanti, Dante, and Giordano Bruno. There are “certain things,” Pound is arguing, which can only be expressed in irregular rhythms, in the adaptation of contemporary speech. In retrospect, Pound would say of his Cavalcanti translations:

What obfuscated me was not the Italian but the crust of dead English, the sediment present in my own available vocabulary.... You can't go round this sort of thing.... Neither can anyone learn English, one can only learn a series of Englishes. I hadn't in 1910 made a language, I don't mean a language to use, but even a language to think in. (*Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, "Cavalcanti: Medievalism" 193-194)

In his desire to "drive Whitman into the old World," Pound began to develop a theory of the "long revolution" in modern poetry.⁵⁴ He began tracing a line of heteroclitite translation that dates to the Troubadours of the twelfth-century when poetry's renaissance became intertwined with political and social upheaval driven in large part by the literary adaptation of "common tongues."

Spirit of Romance: A (Modernist) Treatise on the Common Speech

Pound's early study of comparative values in literature yielded Bruno's example of an oppositional, ultrarealistic, and richly heterogeneous language. Under the mentorship of Lope de Vega scholar Hugo Rennart and the heavy-weight Romance scholar William Pierce Shepard, Pound also received a critical education in the vernacular literary tradition of Pre-Renaissance Latin Europe. Pound's belief in the relevance of this period culminated in a series of lectures which he edited and published as *The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat The Charm of The Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe* (1910). As scholar Lucia Boldrini points out:

the international dimension of modernism, with its thematization of exile, displacement, and unsettling linguistic or cultural encounter, has received much attention. Equally well known is the attention that modernism's three canonical authors, Eliot, Pound, and Joyce, have paid to the Middle Ages Less work has been done on the extent to which past, and in particular medieval, theories of translation and linguistic difference are explored and transposed into a specifically modernist aesthetics. (42)

As scholars make their returns to the modernist scene, we seem increasingly sensitive to the early twentieth-century discourse on translation as an “ethics of difference”—a notion which has great relevance for globalism and global society (Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*).

Importantly, Boldrini makes a rare and critical distinction between Eliot and Pound's appropriation of the medieval vernacular model, arguing that “whereas Eliot praises above all else in medieval literature the proximity to Latin that enables him to establish a hierarchy of linguistic, poetic, and philosophical values, Ezra Pound's interest in the new Romance languages rests on their departure from Latin, and their challenge to its monolingual authority” (48). Indeed, as Pound's essay on Whitmanian vernacularism demonstrates, there are strong English-plus and post-national impulses in Pound's recuperation of medieval vernacular poetics—a tradition in which eclectic linguistic invention accommodated “the coexistence ... of different traditions” and “the cross-linguistic gesture” (50). Unfortunately, Boldrini's essay stops just short of explication and close reading. It is the point of departure for the following analysis, which attempts

to illustrate how Pound's groundbreaking study, *Spirit of Romance*, works to translate medieval vernacularism as an oppositional method for the modern.

Pound's declared subject begins with Arnaut Daniel and the Troubadours; he takes pains, however, to describe two "antelucausal" (hymn sung before dawn) moments in the history of literature which anticipate "forces ... potent in the mediaeval literature of the Latin tongues, and ... still potent in our own" (*Spirit of Romance* v). Though many centuries apart, the tenth-century Provençal "Alba" (which prefigures the Troubadours) and Apuleius' second-century "Metamorphoses" both adapt the "tongue of the people" (2). In doing so, Pound argues, they transform literature. And here Pound begins to constellate his own sources for a modern "Risorgimento:"

In seeking to differentiate between Apuleius' style and that of the classic Latinity, Adlington, who translated him in 1566, describes it as "such a frank and flourishing a stile as he seemed to have the muses at his will to feed and maintain his pen" : "so darke and high a stile, in so strange and absurd words and in such new invented phrases as he seemed rather to set it forth to shew his magnificincie of prose...." (3)

Pound goes on to affirm the descriptive power of a vernacularist Latin—in this case Apuleius' use of a highly idiosyncratic Afro-Latin:

Apuleius writes in a style not unlike Rabelais, a style that would have offended Tacitus and disgusted Cicero and Quintilian. Like Dante and Villon, he uses the tongue of the people, for he writes a new, strange Latin, at a time when the language of the Roman court was Greek. The

Troubadours, Dante and Apuleius all attempt to refine or to ornament the common speech.” (3)

Of great significance to Pound, the Old Provençal used by the troubadours was the first Romance language with a literary corpus.

As Boldrini argues, both the medieval source and its modern recuperation profoundly dramatize the interrelated concerns of politics, ethics, and aesthetics:

when the literary tradition was predominantly Latin, writing in the vernacular was in effect an inter- or trans-linguistic practice based on programmatic translation and ‘invention.’ Vernaculars were both established languages and languages ‘in progress,’ open to various influences and able to appropriate materials for their own expansion. This gave new impetus to the classical concept of invention, not only in the sense of ‘finding’ materials in the appropriate *loci* of the tradition, but also of inventing them through “turning” (*vertere*) and ‘troping’ of the range of available languages. If literary experimentalism means doing something that has not been done before (at least in one’s own literary tradition), then the condition of the medieval vernacular writer is ‘experimental’ almost by definition, and we should not find it surprising that modernism turned to this period for inspiration in its desire to ‘make it new.’ (43)

This was a literary period in which “poetic and philosophical production ... cannot easily be separated” (Heller-Roazen 852). For the Troubadours, the belief in the potentiality of

autonomous speech drove the creation of lyric poetry as first philosophy—a practice in which the material and spiritual, the aesthetic and ethical, are inextricably bound.

Not surprisingly, the Troubadours exerted tremendous influence on the development of lyric poetry in other European languages, including the *dolce stil nuovo* (“sweet new style”) of Dante, who theorized the power of the literary vernacular in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (“Treatise on the Common Speech”). As Marianne Shapiro reminds us, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is a book written in exile and under penalty of death: “it is a product of unrest and alienation, as well as one of extended meditation and the questioning of generic assumptions” (xi). Importantly, Pound would have first encountered the Troubadours through Dante and his politically-charged *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.

In conceiving *Spirit of Romance*, Arnaut Daniel’s under-recognized canzoni proved particularly important to Pound in establishing precedents for his own interest in a more heterogeneous, idiomatic verse line. Generally speaking, the Troubadours—and Daniel in particular—“strove for originality of form almost above all else” (Chambers 123). For Pound, Daniel represented “all that was most excellent in ... Provençal minstrelsy,” a tradition in which the Troubadours “were melting the common tongue and fashioning it into new harmonies depending not upon the alternation of quantities but upon rhyme and accent” (*Spirit of Romance* 13).

Attempting to reinstate the underappreciated Daniel, Pound concludes that the “sum of the charges” against him amount to one primary objection: that he is “difficult to read” (17). Pound locates this difficulty not in his versification but in his “refusal to use

the ‘journalese’ of his day, and to his aversion to the obvious, familiar vocabulary. He is never content with a conventional phrase, or with a word which does not convey his exact meaning; for which reason his words are often hard to translate....” (17). It is worth pausing for a moment to unpack Pound’s emphatic use of the word *journalese*, a term that enters the English language in the late nineteenth-century (“Journalese” def. 1). To Pound it would have suggested the clichéd language of popular and commercially successful print culture—and the mainstream mediocrity that industry implied. Also defined as the opposite of “plain English,” it implied an increasingly abstract and technological language far removed from everyday conversation and the local, material environment.

As Michael Kauffman points out, ‘by the late nineteenth century, the omnipresence of print made obvious the division between speech and print that earlier scholars had papered over’ (29). For leading linguists like Michel Bréal and Otto Jespersen, print “petrified rather than preserved language” (29). This was a tension registered by the nineteenth-century metatextual experiments of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, as well as those of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, Judith Gautier, the French Symbolists, and London’s Yellow Book School. By 1900, the growing discourse dividing speech and print had become a central preoccupation of early modernist experiments by Ford Maddox Hueffer (Ford), Joseph Conrad, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, H.D., Pound, William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost, and Langston Hughes. Thus, “to ignore the printed body of modernism is to ignore one of its most salient aspects” (Kaufmann 16).

In both the *Divina Commedia* and *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante praised “Arnaut” as a superior craftsman in the common tongue; he also pays tribute to Daniel’s considerable lyric skill in the “unrimed stanza” (Pound, *Spirit of Romance* 18). These were credentials Pound was quick to associate in his introduction to Daniel. In the majority of his poems, Daniel invented his own rhythmic patterns,⁵⁵ including that of the sestina, which Pound memorably described as “a form like a thin sheet of flame folding and infolding upon itself” (18). Through Daniel, Pound hoped to valorize the vernacular idiom and its diverse, masterful harmonies. Take for example Pound’s handling of the following canzone by Daniel, which Dante praised as a model of superior construction (see fig. 13):

or grass, indifferently:—thus in Gaelic “RUN” means “mystery” or “the beloved,” and has by this association a poetic meaning quite untranslatable.

However, Daniel’s own poetry is more likely to claim interest than a record of opinions. His canzone, which Dante cites among the models of most excellent construction, opens:

“*Sols sui qui sai lo sobra’an quem sortz
Al cor d’ amor sefren per sobramar,
Car mes volers es tant fermes et entiers
C’anc no s’esduis de celleiei ni s’estors
Cui encubric al prim vezer e puois,
Qu’ ades ses lieis dic a lieis cocbos motz
Pois quan la vei non sai tant l’ai que dire.*”

“Only I know what over-anguish falls
Upon the love worn heart through over-love.
Because of my desire so firm and whole
Toward her I loved on sight and since always,
Which turneth not aside nor wavereth.
So, far from her I speak for her mad speech,
Who near her, for o’er much to speak, am dumb.”

The rimes a, b, c, d, e, f, g, are repeated in the same order six times, with a coda, e, f, g, and the original is perhaps the most musical arrangement of words in sequence, whereof we know. Like all fine poetry it can be well judged only when heard spoken¹; this is true also of the Sestina form invented by Arnaut Daniel, later introduced into Italy by Dante, and into Spain, I believe, by Fernando de Herrera (el Divino), a form like a thin sheet of flame folding and infolding upon itself.

The first four stanzas and the envoi of the Canzone, begun above, run as follows:—

¹ Or sung to its own measure.

I

I am the only one who knows the over-anguish which falls to my lot, to the heart of love suffering through over-love; for my desire is so firm and whole, never turning away or twisting from her, whom I desired at first sight and since, so that now without her I say to her hot words, since when I see her I do not know, having so much, what to say.

II

I am blind for seeing others, deaf for hearing them, for in her alone do I see and hear and marvel; I am no light, false speaker about this, for the heart willeth her more than the mouth saith; for I could not travel roads, vales, plains, and hills enough to find in one sole body so many good gifts as God wills to test and set in her.

III

Sooth, have I stood at many a goodly court; but with her alone do I find worth beyond praising, measure, and sense, and other good matters: beauty, youth, kind deeds and gracious ways. Nobly hath Courtesy taught her and led her forth, so that she is broken off from all things displeasing. I think no thing of good could turn from her.

IV

No pleasure would be for me brief or short, from her whom I pray that which I hope she please to divine, for never through me shall she know it openly, unless the heart shall speak out his hiddenness: for the Rhone, from the water that swelleth it, hath never such turmoil as doth that torrent which pools itself with love in my heart, on seeing her.

Fig. 13. Pound’s foreignizing approach to translating Arnaut Daniel, *Spirit of Romance* (1910), p. 18-19.

Of all that might be said regarding this particular stanza, Pound is concerned to show two things. First, that the lines model exceptional lyric mastery: “perhaps the most musical arrangement of words in sequence, whereof we know” (18). And second, that Daniel achieved that feat without end rhyme. As Pound explains, the “rimes” occur between stanzas, following a six-stanza pattern of abcdefg. They are not proximate or whole. Instead, Daniel’s extraordinary musical rhythm is built within and between the lines of each stanza. Alternating or couplet rhyme, Pound demonstrates, is not a prerequisite of lyric beauty and coherence. This is a matter of no small consequence.

When *Spirit of Romance* was first printed in 1910, it was difficult to find a journal of any repute—on either side of the Atlantic—that did not show an overwhelming bias towards the unvaried deployment of whole rhyme and iambic pentameter. As the Whitman essay and *Spirit* lectures of 1909 demonstrate, Pound was at this point actively making connections between the Troubadour’s use of the mother tongue and the poetic possibilities of his own English-plus vernacular.

In a related way, Pound’s method of translating— and representing translation— reveals a growing resistance to the values implicit in standard print conventions of his day. Pound could have easily dispensed with Daniel’s Provençal, summarizing its pertinent features; instead, excerpts from the original poems precede Pound’s own translations, which quite obviously defy popular convention circa 1910. Pound then offered the rest of Daniel’s canzone in a roughly word-for-word prose translation, a method that distorts prescriptive English of the period even further (see fig. 13).

Pound’s translation strategy has a number of important implications. First, as a comparative approach, the parallel method highlights the source language. In effect, Pound asked his readers to parse and refer back to the original, which likewise dramatizes the critical relation between idiom and form. A fact not lost on Pound, Old Provençal was a language of great sonic diversity, exemplifying the potential of the polyglot: “the *ouos* and *ouns* and *aus* and *olos*; the long flourish of words like *boumbounejaire* and *estranglouioun*, punctuated by the single-syllable grunts of *té* and *bou*, *goum* and *zou*” (Mayle 215). In 1910, Old Provençal would have read much like a hybrid of French and Italian, carrying into print a supremely heterogeneous model for poetic diction.

Pound's parallel texts also sanctioned the use of an alternative verse form. Instead of domesticating Daniel into tasteful Genteel rhymes, Pound's translation showcased the poet's use of parallelism, alliteration, and internal rhyme: "Only I know what over-anguish falls/Upon the love worn heart through over-love." A watershed moment in early modernist poetry, Pound's foreignizing translations introduced into print an early and oppositional example of the idiomatic free verse line. That advance goes hand-in-hand with a more egalitarian practice of reading and interpreting literature. As Jonathan Culler argues:

[t]he concept of text has been central to literary studies, has undergone many mutations as it has travelled from the work of classical philologists, for whom it was and is the object of a powerful disciplinary formation, to postmodern theorists of the text, for whom the concept might be summed up by the title of a fine book by John Mowatt: *Text: The Genealogy of an Antidisciplinary Object*. (99)

Pound's tripartite translation method—original, literary translation, literal translation—foregrounds the process of translation and his particular mediation as translator. In an era heavily invested in authorial intention and textual authority, Pound's emphasis on the "common" speaker was closely tied to his insistence on the common reader—and his or her right to assign meaning independently. An "antidisciplinary" poetics was a radical but inevitable direction for modernism, which coincided with heightened awareness of literature as an unstable and culturally-inflected category.

The “American Risorgimento:” Poetry Magazine, Free Verse, and the Transcultural
(Re)turn in U.S. Poetry

In 1912, author and editor Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry*, the first American magazine devoted solely to modernist verse. Monroe had her own quarrel to make with an increasingly English-only print culture and its deleterious effect on U.S. poetry. Monroe hoped to fill the vacuum left by “popular magazines,” which openly favored nostalgic imitations of late nineteenth-century century Genteel verse (Dubois 11). Often overshadowed by the reputation of the poets she championed, Monroe receives too little credit for her role in expanding the possibilities of modern poetry in and beyond English.

In 1890, when Pound was only five years old, Monroe secured a position as art critic of the *Chicago Tribune* and would thereafter become an important analyst of what she keenly perceived to be “a period of revolutionary change in the arts of painting and sculpture” (qtd. in Parisi 19). Monroe was also attuned to the social and historical context of these changes. In 1900, she wrote a travel piece on France for the *Atlantic Monthly*, observing that “the new age may be irreverent, but it is honest. It is unkind to illusions, intolerant of impracticable theories, but it takes nature and men as they are, and does not try to furbish them with sentiments. It is methodical, exact, and bold in its search for truth....” (Monroe, “Bit of Old France” 60). Monroe’s prediction that modern forms of representation would renounce sentimentality in favor of “the exact” predates early modernist poetry by some twelve years.

In the early twentieth-century, however, American Poetry still remained relatively unchanged by the social realities of the New Age. Like Pound, Monroe had received her

share of rejections from magazines seeking Genteel verse and began to wonder at the significant gap between poetry and its fellow arts, where she found promising models in the shocking experiments of Fauvism, Cubism, and Futurism. Reviewing the famous New York Armory Show, Monroe argued: “better the wild extravagance of the cubists than the lifeless works of certain artists who ridicule them.... They represent a search for new beauty, impatience with formulae, a reaching out toward the inexpressible, a longing for new versions of truth” (qtd. in Parisi 20).

In 1910, Monroe traveled to China where she began an intensive study of Chinese art. Inspired by her studies abroad and the new experiments in Western music and painting, Monroe returned to the U.S. determined to secure donors, subscribers, and contributors likewise committed to a new poetry—one of “high structural simplicity, strict and bare in form, pure and austere in ornament” (“Moody’s Poems” 57). Once more, Monroe’s criteria prefigured the Imagist manifesto, which she published three years later in *Poetry*.

At a time when the general public considered poetry largely irrelevant, Monroe’s proposal for a modern monthly might easily have met with “contemptuous indifference” (Parisi 21). She made it her mission, therefore, to address the problem of a reading public and adopted Whitman’s motto, “To have great poets, there must be great audiences, too.” To her donors, Monroe promised the credit of saving “one of the great humanities” from its American extinction (qtd. in Parisi 23). To her contributors, she promised a serious magazine, wider dissemination, and compensation.

When Monroe contacts the young expatriate Ezra Pound as a potential contributor, he is among the first to respond with enthusiasm, predicting that Monroe and her magazine will help hasten the inevitable “American Risorgimento” in poetry. “That awakening” he concludes in his postscript to Monroe, “will make the Italian Renaissance look like a tempest in a teapot!” (*Selected Letters*, “5: To Harriet Monroe” 10). Monroe’s declared mission was to publish a magazine that would give modern poetry its “own place, [its] own voice” while building a wider, more appreciative audience (*Poetry* 1:1 27, “The Motive of the Magazine”). This greatly impressed Pound, who confessed similar ambitions with little hope of success. He immediately offered Monroe exclusive American rights to his poems as well as assistance with foreign contributions.

Monroe, who was intent on fostering a more transcultural American poetry, had already advertised her magazine abroad and was quick to see the value of Pound’s involvement. Pound’s European contacts and general knowledge of contemporary poetry abroad gave her access to “poems by people otherwise most inaccessible” (qtd. in Parisi 29). In a subsequent letter, Monroe offered Pound the position of Foreign Correspondent and he readily accepted.

Cognizant of the xenophobic tendency in U.S. literary culture, Monroe openly defended the magazine’s unorthodox intention to include foreign poetries: “the American metropolitan newspaper prints cable dispatches about postimpressionists, futurists, secessionists and other radicals in painting, sculpture and music, but so far as its editors and readers are concerned, French poetry might have died with Victor Hugo, and English with Tennyson, or at most Swinburne” (“Notes and Announcements” 32). From its

inception, then, *Poetry* considered itself a “radical” journal. Significantly, Monroe’s vision of a “radical” American poetry is closely modeled on the explicitly transcultural—and political—practice of modern art. Like Pound, she believed that the Genteel suppression of non-English literature had arrested the development of poetry in the U.S. Monroe’s statement of editorial intent is included in the magazine’s paratext as “Notes and Announcements” and is often overlooked in favor of the “poetry itself.” When reading the inaugural volume of *Poetry* as a text in itself, a more complicated picture of early modernism emerges (see fig. 18)

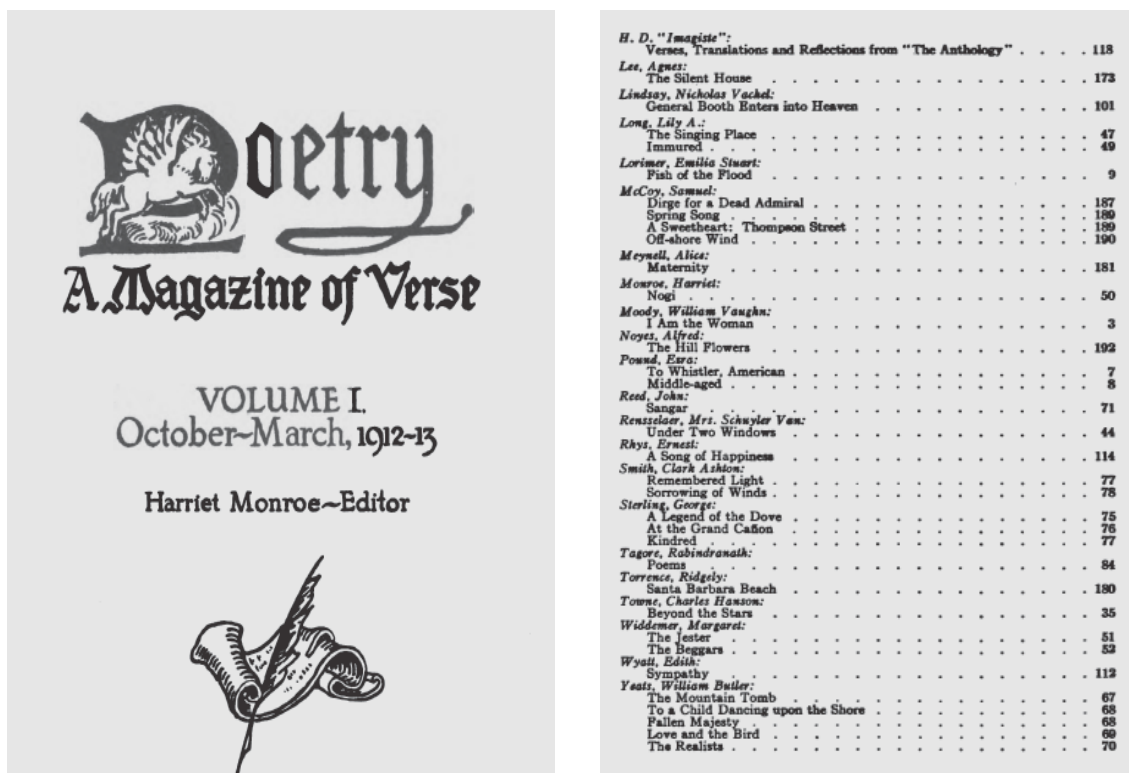


Fig. 14. Title page and excerpt from Table of Contents for the inaugural issue of *Poetry* magazine, 1912-1913.

Feminist Modernism: Harriet Monroe, Alice Corbin Henderson, and Poetry's "Ethics of Difference"

Monroe's founding Associate Editor, Alice Corbin Henderson, has also received little critical attention given her significant contribution to American poetry and literary criticism. Pound had great respect for Henderson as a poet, editor, and critic—and collaborated almost exclusively with her in managing *Poetry's* foreign contributions. An unconventional poet herself, Henderson admired Pound's uncompromising dedication to modern verse and shared his belief that *Poetry* should print and review the best foreign work as a prescriptive for American "mediocrity" (*Letters of Ezra Pound to ACH*, "9: EP to ACH" 28).

As Ira B. Nadel points out, Pound held Henderson in rare and equal regard:

Pound admired Henderson's poetry and independent critical judgment.... Experimenting with meter and quantity while employing the technique of *vers libre*, Henderson's writing was proof to Pound that an American poet could incorporate an international aesthetic, although he did not hesitate to offer criticism." (*Letters xviii*)

Pound also respected Henderson's editorial principals and finesse. In a 1917 letter to Margaret Anderson of the *Little Review*, Pound declares Henderson's "the best American criticism in *Poetry*" (xix). Over the next four years, Pound will primarily address his editorial rants and requests to "A.C.H." instead of Monroe, knowing Henderson to be frank, responsive, and equally intolerant of the sentimental poet. In the end, Pound made

no secret of his preference for Henderson's editorial style, declaring her "the only intelligent element (in that frying pan) 1911-1912 or whenever—only means of getting an idea into ole '[H]Arriet's hickory block. In short Alice my only comfort during that struggle" (xiv).

Though his characterization of Monroe is circumspect, Pound's esteem for Henderson would result in a highly productive collaboration. In their letters, we see an on-going and serious discussion about the fate of American poetry, the magazine, and foreign contributions. Together, Pound and Henderson determine which foreign poets to highlight and to what end. Pound's letters also suggest that Henderson deserves much of the credit for persuading Monroe to regularly represent foreign and expatriate poets—sometimes to the exclusion of certain "Americans" Pound considered "amateurs" (*Letters of EP to ACH*, "20: EP to ACH" 55).

In a letter dated one year after the founding of the magazine, Pound writes to Henderson with a conspiratorial frankness characteristic of their exchange: "You do not advance the arts in the U.S. by tolerating rot," he declares, "but you might do some good by holding up a passable standard" ("20: EP to ACH" 56). This standard, according to Pound, could not be maintained without publishing and reviewing the expatriate and foreign poets. Without them, he argues in letter after letter to ACH, nothing will come of American poetry. Though more invested in national poets than Pound, Henderson shared his post-national conviction that U.S. poetry must and will cross borders. Henderson would later become a translator of Spanish poetry and a champion of the New Mexico

folk traditions, declaring that “as Ernest Fenollosa has pointed out, it has never been sufficiently realized how much the alien is at the root of the national” (Nadel, *Letters* xix).

For her part, Henderson was acutely aware of the importance of translation at home and abroad, particularly its role in shaping U.S. poetries. In her 1912 editorial entitled “A Perfect Return,” Henderson notes the influence of Edgar Allen Poe on Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Mallarmé, “and through them upon English poets, and then through these last upon Americans” (“Editorial Comment” 87). She likewise predicts “a perfect return” of Whitman in the United States, “now that young Englishmen are beginning to feel the influence of Whitman upon French poetry,” and wonders, “must we always accept American genius in this round-about fashion?” (87). The 1912 essay demonstrates Henderson’s considerable knowledge of European poetry, past and present, as well as the critical acumen that led her to the following radical conclusion—an insight beyond most of her contemporaries:

The hide-bound, antiquated conception of English prosody is responsible for a great deal of dead timber. It is a significant fact that the English first accepted the spirit of Whitman, the French his method. The rhythmic measure of Whitman has yet to be correctly estimated by English and American poets. . . . It would be a valuable lesson, if only we could learn to turn the international eye, in private, upon ourselves. If the American poet can learn to be less parochial, to apply the intellectual whip, to

visualize his art, to separate it and see it apart from himself; we may learn to appreciate the great poet when he is “in our midst” (91)

Long before Pound and the other U.S. modernists, Henderson publically instigated the American defense of Whitman and began theorizing the significance of his English-plus free verse.

As Jane Marek has argued, Henderson and Monroe’s transcultural approach to editing poetry was a critical outcome of “women editing modernism” (2). Early feminists, their editorial principals helped shape an “American Risorgimento” fueled by an emerging “ethics of difference” (Venuti, *Scandals* 5). Addressing a feminist group at the opening of the 1932 Republican National Convention in Chicago, Monroe declared “Our work is not so far apart as it may seem. Freedom and equality of opportunity are basically the same in all aspects of life. I hope the Equal Rights Amendment may come in my lifetime” (qtd. in M. Lee 197). As Veronica House has argued, both Monroe and Henderson adopted a ““democratic”” and feminist ethos of editing, which included accepting “virtually all writing submitted by women in order to enlarge the community of women writers” (7). Though their policy may seem extreme in its bias, the discrimination against women writers was, at this time, a nearly insurmountable obstacle.

Take for instance, the following “editorial” statement made by T.S. Eliot: “I struggle to keep the writing as much as possible in Male hands, as I distrust the Feminine in literature, and also, once a woman has had anything printed in your paper, it is very difficult to make her see why you should not print everything she sends in” (qtd. in House 8). Pound showed a similar bias against women writers. In 1915, he expressed the

desire to run his own literary journal, declaring that “[n]o woman shall be allowed to write for this magazine,” and indeed, upon taking over *The Little Review* in 1917, Pound “virtually eradicated women’s writing from the journal” (House 8).

Henderson and Monroe also worked to resist an increasingly xenophobic and monolingual tendency in U.S. poetry. They help expand English, English language practice, and “American” literature by printing comparative essays and editorials, foreignizing translations, and avant-garde poetry. This leads me to an under-theorized moment in early modernism and the advent of the idiomatic free verse line.

In December 1912, Harriet Monroe’s newly minted magazine becomes the first to publish six “lyrics” by the preeminent Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). A then-rare occurrence in the English translation of foreign poetries, *Gitanjali* featured translations authored by Tagore himself. In order to appreciate the sensation caused by Tagore’s translations, it is helpful to compare them with other poetry published in *Poetry*’s first year. Opening the magazine’s inaugural issue were the following lines by Arthur Davison Ficke:

It is a little isle amid bleak seas—

An isolate realm of garden, circled round

By importunity of stress and sound,

Devoid of empery to master these. (1)

Considering the journal's radical mission statement, Ficke's Genteel stanza is a sobering reminder of the state of the art circa 1912. Even Pound, a virtual poster-boy for the international avant-garde, had yet to write idiomatic free verse we associate with Imagism.

By contrast, here is an excerpt from Tagore's sequence, printed in *Poetry* only a few months later:

No more noisy, loud words from me, such is my master's will.
Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on
in murmurings of a song.

Men hasten to the King's market. All the buyers and sellers are there.
But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of
work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time,
and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hum. ("Poems" 84)

Several pages later, Pound reviews the translations, declaring that "the appearance of the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, translated by himself from Bengali into English, is an event in the history of English poetry and of world poetry. I do not use these terms with the looseness of contemporary journalism. Questions of poetic art are serious, not to be touched upon lightly or in a spirit of bravura" ("Tagore's Poems" 92).

One can see why, at this particular moment in the development of modernist poetry, Tagore's translations exercised tremendous influence over English-language

practice. Considering the tastes of his audience, Tagore would have been expected to domesticate his complex rhythmic arrangements, submitting the Bengali to the distorting if popular conventions of a stylized idiom, rhyme scheme, and meter. A renowned vernacularist in his own right, however, Tagore seems to have considered the compromises of domestic translation too great. Indeed, Tagore's foreignizing approach to translation produces something like an English-plus poetics. By the standards of the period, this was hybridized English—one based, in complex ways, on both the Bengali and English vernacular traditions. Tagore represented his Bengali “meters” in highly rhythmic prose, much like Gautier's versets, a translation model with which he might have been familiar—either directly or through the Symbolists, whom he admired.

As Pound's review emphasized, the value of Tagore's model began with the foreign source, the exigencies of which drove the translation into radically new territory. Though afforded little attention in modernist studies, Tagore's lyric prose rocked the literary establishment of its time, and began to circulate as a highly influential exemplar of “modern” poetry in English. As Harriet Monroe astutely predicted:

It may be that alien hands will uncover the new treasure, that in this twentieth-century welter of nations the beauty of the English language must be rediscovered by some Russian immigrant or some traveler from Turkestan. Today it is not a poet of Anglo-Saxon race but a Hindoo (sic) with divinatory power in English, who has the keenest vision of the new beauty, and the richest modern message.... (“Editorial Comment” 25)

Indeed, following the December 1912 appearance of the Gitanjali translations, *Poetry* will publish the first fully realized free verse poems of H.D., *Imagiste* (January, 1913), as well as the now-famous Imagist manifestos (February, 1913).

Conclusion

For *Poetry*'s editors, the fate of an "American Risorgimento" was closely tied to poetries beyond its borders. And though Pound gave Monroe little credit in this regard, she devoted much of her April 1913 editorial comment on "The New Beauty" to a severe chastisement of American poets, many of whom "seem as unaware of the twentieth century as if they had spent these recent years in an Elizabethan manor-house or a vine-clad Victorian cottage" (22). Like Henderson and Pound, Monroe risks an unpopular stance by arguing publically and persuasively that foreign poets such as "[Rabindranath Tagore] show us how provincial we are; England and America are little recently annexed corners of the ancient earth, and their poets should peer out over sea-walls and race-walls and pride-walls, and learn their own littleness and the bigness of the world" (25).

As Henderson's and Monroe's editorials illustrate, Pound was hardly alone in his efforts to internationalize American poetry, but rather one driving force in a broader cultural movement. In its first two years, *Poetry* introduced American poets and readers to an exceptionally diverse and influential group of foreign writers, including the work of the English modernists Ford Maddox Hueffer (Ford), Richard Aldington, and D.H. Lawrence; the Irish poet Padraic Colum; the Nobel Prize-winning Indian poet

Rabindranath Tagore; the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi; the modern French schools and poets, including Charles Vildrac, P.J. Jouve, Jules Romains, Remy de Gourmont, Laurent Tailhade, Henri de Régnier, Francis Jammes, and Guillaume Apollinaire; and modern Czech poet Petr Bezruc, among others. The magazine also printed the influential work of the American expatriates, H.D, Pound, T.S. Eliot, and Skipwith Cannell. Finally, through notes and editorial comments, *Poetry* recuperated the importance of such influential poets as Tristan Corbière, Heinrich Heine, and Annette Von Droste.

In his *Poetry* review, Pound had stressed the superior construction of Tagore's original Bengali "meters," which he described as "the most finished and most subtle of any know to us. If you refine the art of the troubadours, combine it with that of the Pleiade, and add to that the sound-unit principle of the most advanced artists in *vers libre*, you would get something like the system of Bengali verse" (*Tagore's Poems* 92). Here, in effect, was a transcultural—and Americanist—constellation of literary influence, in which Pound directly and indirectly connects a series of heteroclitic translations. Importantly, it was also the first recipe for the idiomatic free verse line. From Bettina Brentano-von Arnim's "new English" to Longfellow's *Beowulf* and Faust; from Gautier's Chinese *vers libre* variations to Merrill's early Symbolism, the English-plus practice of American literature had paved the way for a modernist revolution.

Epilogue: The Translation Era—From Modernism to Postmodernism

After 1915, the multilingual and multicultural diversity of the U.S. population continued to increase, as did the institutional dominance of English. Foreignizing translation had broken new ground, helping to liberate the modernists from the narrow tradition of Genteel verse. In the wake of Pound's *Cathay*, poets increasingly took up the task of translating non-English poetries. In a number of cases, these volumes proved instrumental to modernist poetry in English. H.D. and Richard Aldington founded the Poets' Translation Series, which featured translations from the Greek and Latin classics as further validation of the new plain-speaking free verse. Reviewing the series' first number in 1915, *Poetry* magazine congratulated the editors on their commitment to printing "new translations...by poets, whose interest in their authors will be neither conventional nor frigid...." (qtd. in Monroe, "Our Contemporaries" 100). More than mere coincidence, the same issue of *Poetry* debuted Wallace Stevens' *Sunday Morning* with its explosive range of idioms and irregular blank verse (81-83).

In August 1916, William Carlos Williams edited a special number of *Others* magazine featuring an unprecedented number of translations from contemporary Latin American poets. His editorial note declared: "Of the poets who are presented, Martinez represents Gutemala; Chocano, Chili; Zelaya, Honduras; Lopez, Columbia; Lastra, Cuba; Diaz, Argentina, and Silva, Columbia" ("Manifesto" 34). Williams had collaborated on the translations with his father, W.G. Williams, who was fluent in Spanish and well-read.

Williams himself was proficient in Spanish, having learned to speak the language at home with his English West Indian father and Puerto-Rican mother.

In the 1920's, Amy Lowell and Witter Bynner published new translations from the Chinese, many of which appeared in *Poetry* and *The Dial*, where the commitment to foreign poetics held strong. Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson continued to include translation excerpts in their reviews and essays on foreign poetics and began printing more translations from Eastern Europe and Asia. Henderson went on to champion the under-represented literary traditions of New Mexico and the Southwestern Native Americans, whose civil rights she actively defended. In 1928, Henderson published the groundbreaking volume, *The Turquoise Trail: An Anthology of New Mexico*.

In 1938, Langston Hughes published his translation of Federico Garcia Lorca's play *Bodas de Sangre* (Blood Wedding). In addition to authoring a few translations from the French of Louis Aragon and Leon Damas, Hughes also contributed translations of the Haitian political poet Jacques Roumain and the formidable Mexican writer Nellie Campobello for Dudley Fitts's *Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry* (1942). A landmark work of U.S. literature in itself, Fitts' anthology introduced into English the visceral poetics of Latin-American *postmodernismo*, "a movement in direct reaction to the refinement and excess rhetoric of the *modernista*" (Grunfeld 3). In 1948, *Cuba Libre* appeared, featuring translations of the Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen by Hughes and his collaborator Ben Frederic Carruthers. As a body of work, Hughes' translations

deeply influenced Black Internationalism, the Harlem Renaissance, and through these movements, the diverse rhythms and forms of U.S. poetry at large (Patterson 408).

By the 1950's, however, modernist poetry had exhausted its revolutionary reach: "[a] reified, refined, conservative modernism reigned" (Gentzler 127). As Eliot had predicted, a new generation of poets began translating for themselves in an effort to correct what they saw as a "wrong-turning in American poetry" and modernist poetry (Bly, "A Wrong- Turning in American Poetry" 33).

Translation Revolution: The Fifties & Sixties Magazine and Postmodernist Poetry in the Transcultural U.S.

Ushering in their own form of post-modern poetry, William Duffy and Robert Bly published the first issue of the polemical magazine, *The Fifties* (1958), at a time when the firm grip of New Criticism, with its allegiance to systematic analysis, formal method and "poetic decorum," had begun to slip (Beach 154). Rich textual histories, these magazines chronicle the first decade of an under-theorized translation movement in the U.S. From 1958-1968, the magazine published forty-eight foreign language poets including Georg Trakl, Paul Celan, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Federico García Lorca, Antonio Machado, Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Paul Éluard, Henri Michaux, René Char, Czeslaw Milosz, Boris Pasternak, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Representing twelve countries and ten languages, the magazine ran over 140 translations in an exclusively bi-lingual, facing-page format.

With each issue of *The Fifties* and *The Sixties*, Bly and his contributors worked to redress what they saw as a “determined isolationism” in the many institutions of the U.S., including literary publishing and academia (*The Sixties*, “From Baudelaire to Surrealism” 90). “The modern movement in poetry,” Bly insisted “which has brought a truly new poetry to many countries came to the United States chiefly through Eliot and Pound. . . .the one thing they removed from it as it passed through their hands was the unconscious” (“Some Notes” 67). This deep fear of the unconscious, Bly argued, resulted in an ethically dangerous “hardness, a desire to be *tough*, a dislike of the lower classes, of Americans, of animals, of sexual life” (67). *The Fifties* and *Sixties* magazine had begun to theorize translation as “a politics of knowledge” with far-reaching consequences for the U.S. (Escoffier 118).

As Michael Collier has argued, “Bly provided the most passionate critical voice for a school that became known as Deep Imagism” (112). While publishing many of the nation’s finest contemporary translations from Latin America and Europe, Robert Bly, James Wright, and Galway Kinnell began to carry the surreal and unconscious into their original poetry. An ethically-charged poetics, “deep image” practice carried with it the radical renunciation of domination and control so prevalent in the social and aesthetic milieu of the 50’s.

The magazine’s scope and editorial ethos remains unparalleled in the history of U.S. print culture. *En face* translations intermingle with original poems, literary essays, histories, illustrations, parodies, satires, book reviews, and scathing letters to the editor. “There is an imagination” Bly insisted,

which realizes the sudden new change in the life of humanity, of which the Nazi camps, the terror of modern wars, the sanctification of the viciousness of advertising, the turning of everyone into workers, the profundity of associations, is all a part, and the relationships unexplained; in short the whole revolution of which we know much more than anyone knew in the 1910's and which has still not been described. ("Five Decades" 38-39)

The *Fifties/Sixties* translations ran back-to-back with essays protesting hydrogen bomb testing and civil rights abuses. To these texts, the editors appended an enormous editorial apparatus, including epigraphs, contributor biographies, and other editorial notes detailing translation provenance, the philosophy and contents of future issues, and translation compensation policies. With less than modest ambitions, *The Fifties/Sixties* magazines attempted to politicize English-language poetry, translation, and criticism—and ultimately, print publication itself.

Through a distinctly foreignizing method of editing, criticism, and translation, these ten issues expanded the possibilities of poetry in English. They represent a history of a transcultural and translingual American poetics broadly conceived as the work of circles rather than individuals. Generally speaking, there is still a great deal of work to be done in theorizing the role of literary translators throughout the twentieth-century. In particular, *The Fifties/Sixties* testify to the vital role of women and minorities in the development of modern U.S. poetry.

Translation Liberation: Postmodern Translation and the Technologies of the Text

As the modern gave way to the postmodern, experiments in foreignizing translation and publication became more invested in representing source texts and the relationship between source and translation. The paratextual apparatus and translator's mediation are now more visible, and as a result an ethics of textual difference has begun to emerge. In anthologies, editions, and translation studies, the English translation is less likely to erase evidence of the source-poem, and in some instances seeks to extend the reach of the original poem.

Important mediations in translation publication include, among others, Stanley Burnshaw's *The Poem Itself* (1960), a translation-resistant anthology with an extensive *en face* critical apparatus (ix); Lowell's Borjesian translation/essay, *Imitations* (1961); Octavio Paz and Eliot Weinberger's multi-version translation volume, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* (1987); and Jerome Rothenberg's "total translation" anthology, *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas* (1986), which "takes into account any or all elements of the original beyond the words" (Rothenberg xxi).

In positioning themselves between language-practices and cultures, these volumes continue a tradition of transcultural and multilingual American literature. They also represent a new way of thinking about translation and poetic composition. For centuries, translation theory has occupied itself with the question: what kind of English (French, Japanese, etc)? Perhaps the most radical—and promising—question is: what kind of book? In "choosing not choosing,"⁵⁶ these editions frequently re-present the "foreign"

language poem in its entirety. But they also reclaim for translation the proximity—and potential—of other genres and fields, including avant-garde poetry, biography, autobiography, memoir, and interview; translation studies, cultural studies, textual studies, anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics.

Not unlike Longfellow's radical approach to editing and presenting translations, or *Poetry's* "ethics of difference," these postmodern technologies of the text build on Schlegel's expansive notion of the poetic genre,

[whose] vocation is not merely to unify again all separated genres of poetry, and to put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It wants to and also should now mix, now melt together, poetry and prose, genius and criticism, art-poetry and nature-poetry; make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetic....The romantic poetic genre is still in a state of becoming; indeed that is its proper essence, that it should only become, and never be fulfilled. It can become exhausted by no theory. (Pillai 692)

Schlegel's notion of a provisional and multi-disciplinary approach to "poetry" resonates with Theo Hermans' call for "thick translation," a more self-reflexive and multidisciplinary approach to translation and Translation Studies. "Thick translation" also adopts the ethnographic method of "thick description" as a means of carefully contextualizing perception and the negotiation of meaning across cultures (149). Like foreignizing translation, a "thick translation" approach "contains within it both the acknowledgement of the impossibility of total translation and an unwillingness to appropriate the other through translation even as translation is taking place" (150).

In unprecedented ways, foreignizing publication adapts the print-book itself to the task of a “thick” translation. These editions manipulate the paratextual apparatus in order to dramatize difference, thereby redefining both translation and poetry as “along-side-of” practices (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 81). As Hermans argues, “the detailed probing that thick translation promotes, turns the investigation back on its own instruments and its own positioning” (156). Take for example, Stanley Burnshaw’s unprecedented anthology, *The Poem Itself*, in which he translates classic poems like Verlaine’s “Dans L’Interminable” (“*In the Interminable*”) through “criticism of a special kind” (ix) (see Fig. 15).

PAIII. VERLAINE
[DANS L'INTERMINABLE]

<p>Dans l'interminable Ennui de la plaine, La neige incertaine Luit comme du sable. 4</p> <p>Le ciel est de cuivre Sans lueur aucune, On croirait voir vivre Et mourir la lune. 8</p> <p>Comme des nuées Flottent gris les chênes Des forêts prochaines Parmi les buées. 12</p>	<p>Le ciel est de cuivre Sans lueur aucune. On croirait voir vivre Et mourir la lune. 16</p> <p>Corneille pousse Et vous, les loups maigres, Par ces bises aigres Quoi donc vous arrive? 20</p> <p>Dans l'interminable Ennui de la plaine, La neige incertaine Luit comme du sable. 24</p>
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(Romances sans paroles. 1874)

This, the eighth of the *Romances sans paroles* (the title was borrowed from Mendelssohn), is a striking example of Verlaine's attempt to reduce the intellectual content of poetry to almost nothing and to offer the reader *de la musique avant toute chose* ("Music before everything else"). In this sense, it ranks among the few perfect examples of pure poetry in the French language.

(1) *In the endless* (2) *Tedium of the plain,*
(3) *The shifting snow* (4) *Glistens like sand.*
(5) *The sky is copper* (6) *Without any gleam,*
(7-8) *One seems to see the moon live and die.*
(9) *Like clouds* (10) *The oaks* (11) *Of the nearby forests* (12) *wave grayly* (13) *Among the mists.* (14) *The sky is copper* (15) *Without any gleam.* (16) *One seems to see the moon live and die.* (17) *Wheezing crow* (18) *And you, lean wolves,* (19) *In these keen north winds* (20) *What happens to you?* (21) *In the endless* (22) *Tedium of the plain,* (23) *The shifting snow* (24) *Glistens like sand.*

The lines have the odd number of syllables (*vers impairs*) that Verlaine used with unequalled mastery. These five-syllable lines do not allow any padding; the adjectives must be few—and here they are suggestive of the scenery conjured up and of the poet's mood, discreetly hinted at by the word *ennui* and by the lurid copper sky, weighing upon the observer as if it were the death of the moon. The rimes are feminine, suggestive of the passivity and the dreary yet haunting monotony of the plains of northern France, which Verlaine and Rimbaud loved. Only a few oak trees seem to float, "grayish"—the adjective in line 10 is curiously used as an adverb—in that marriage of the leaden sky with the earth. With lines 17-20, the very graphic landscape assumes a visionary appearance, as if a child had asked the naive question in line 20 (*quoi* itself is a familiar use of the interrogative). Judged as a whole, this "song without words" is a memorable achievement in literary impressionism. [H.P.]

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Fig. 15. Verlaine's "Dans L'Interminable" as it appears in Stanley Burnshaw's innovative translation anthology, *The Poem Itself* (1960).

Burnshaw's method asks the reader

to read the original along with the our English approximations (usually set in italics, with alternate meanings in parentheses and explanations in brackets). Our comments on allusion, symbol, meaning, sound, and the like will enable him to see *what* the poem is saying and *how*, though the poem itself is an unparaphrasable totality. As to how much the reader will hear of the sound of the poem, this depends on what knowledge he already has and on what effort he is willing to invest in learning to hear. The book then offers poems and the means to experience them. (xiv)

Unlike most literal translations, the “English approximations” are not rendered in prose paragraphs, but set down in prose lines, in an effort to suggest something of the line’s composition.

Burnshaw’s “thick” or “English-plus” approach literally binds the English translation to its source text, as well as an explicit (if not skeptical) critique of the translation itself. The technologies of title, epigraph, preface, coda, introduction, endnote, footnote, gloss, and typography—as well as appendices such as glossaries, contributor/translator notes, and notes on pronunciation—are adapted in a self-reflexive effort to express and understand the irreducible speech of the source text. In “discussing the poem into English,” *The Poem Itself* resists effacing the foreign language poem and culture.

Though the anthology’s publisher urged Burnshaw to add verse translations, he refused (*A Stanley Burnshaw Reader* 95). With *The Poem Itself*, Burnshaw meant to

balance the prevailing tendency towards verse translation in English, not replace it. He hoped to revivify the multilingual (“American”) reader and reduce dependence on the English-only experience of World Poetry. “Translation is of public concern,” Burnshaw argued in his preface, and “poems are not made of ideas...they are made of words: [t]he instant the [translator] departs from the words of the original, he departs from *its* poetry...Regardless of its brilliance, an English translation is always a different thing: it is always an English poem” (*The Poem Itself* xiii).

Like poetry, translation is a form of knowledge—and one we are just beginning to theorize for the Global era. As celebrated literary translator Edith Grossman has argued,

[t]ranslation not only plays its important traditional role as the means that allows us access to literature originally written in one of the countless languages we cannot read, but it also represents a concrete literary presence with the crucial capacity to ease and make more meaningful our relationships to those with whom we may not have had a connection before. Translation always helps us to know, to see from a different angle, to attribute new value to what once may have been unfamiliar. As nations and as individuals, we have a critical need for that kind of understanding and insight. The alternative is unthinkable (x-xi)

Though Translation Studies is now enjoying a meteoric rise as visible discourse and discipline, there is still much work to be done on the literature of translation, its ethical implications, and influence in and beyond the transcultural U.S.

Notes

¹ “So too, in the interpersonal relationship, it is not a matter of thinking the ego and the other together, but to be facing. The true union or true togetherness is not a togetherness of synthesis, but a togetherness of face-to-face.” See Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity* 77.

² Qtd. in *Translating Literature: the German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* 42.

³ See Kenner’s epic tome, in which he elevates Pound to the symbol of an era.

⁴ The panelists responses were collected by the Poetry Society of America and published on their website under the title “Q & A: American Poetry.”

⁵ See Weinberger xix.

⁶ For the purposes of my study, the “avant-garde” refers to a diverse transnational movement in politics, art, and literature beginning in the early nineteenth-century. The term was first used in 1825 by the French socialist Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). Saint-Simon proposed a utopian society of scientists, industrialist-artisans, and artists (Wood 24). Avant-garde writings express a basic tension between “art as a socially transformative tool and art as aesthetic exploration” (Aronson 6).

⁷ See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 87.

⁸ In his influential study, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, F.O. Matthiessen persuasively defined the American Renaissance in literature as the period between 1850-1855, though the study actually attends to the years 1840-1860. Since 1941, numerous scholars have revisited the critical assumptions of Matthiessen’s signal work. As Michael Bérubé has argued, “the body of writing consolidated under the heading American Renaissance in the years 1940-1960”

effectively “excised most of the literature actually produced in the country” and reduced the terms of the field and its successive theories to a study of the same eight authors, give or take a few: Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, Twain, James, and Eliot (213). Though variously defined by scholars, the American Renaissance in literature has increasingly come to stand for the period between 1830 and the conclusion of the civil war in 1865.

⁹ In his 1890 translation anthology, *Pastels in Prose*, Stuart Merrill published second-hand translations from the Chinese based on Judith Gautier’s variations in French.

¹⁰ See Boggs 4-5.

¹¹ See the signal study, *Bettina Brentano-von Arnim: Gender and politics* (Frederiksen and Goodman 1995). It is currently the only collection of critical essays in English on Brentano-von Arnim.

¹² See Smither 151. Schleiermacher was also an active member of the Mendelssohn salon.

¹³ See Willison 334-35.

¹⁴ See Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility* 15. French translator and translation theorist Antoine Berman read Schleiermacher’s preference for a foreignizing method “as an ethics of translation, concerned with making the translated text a place where a cultural other is manifested—although of course an otherness that can never be manifested in its own terms, only in those of the translating language, and hence always already encoded.”

¹⁵ The English translations in this section were authored by Karin Wuertz-Schaefer, University of Maryland, College Park. They are meant to supplement Brentano-von

Arnim's own foreignizing translations into English, which often depart from and even supplement the original German.

¹⁶ See Hartl 148. In a letter of 1839, Brentano-von Arnim writes "What is philosophy?—the free choice of all intellectual searching and desires. Even more: everything that emanates from the basic principles of particularity."

¹⁷ See Jones 29. This definition of poetic parallelism appears in Jones' apt discussion of "poetry as genre."

¹⁸ See Crystal 291. My analysis of speech characteristics is largely based on the table published in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language* (2006). As Crystal notes, "it has long been known that there is no absolute difference between spoken and written language; even the notion of a continuum is an oversimplification of the way variables intertwine... But it proves illuminating nonetheless, to set typical features in contrast."

¹⁹ See Cushing 395. Cornu was also the sister of the architect Eugene Lacroix, the goddaughter of Queen Hortense, and wife of the distinguished painter Sébastien Melchior Cornu.

²⁰ See Goozé 286. This was an English phrase Brentano-von Arnim used to describe the *Tagebuch* translation in a letter to her friend, Philipp Nathusius."

²¹ "Schon lange ist Mitternacht vorüber, da lag ich im Fenster bis jetzt, und da ich mich umsehe, ist das Licht tief herabgebrannt. Wo war ich so tief in Gedanken, — ich hab' gedacht, Du schläfst, und hab' über den Fluß gesehen, wo die Leute Feuer angezündet haben bei ihrem Linnen, das auf der Bleiche liegt, und hab' ihren Liedern zugehört, die

sie singen um wach zu bleiben; — ich auch wache und denke an Dich, es ist ein groß
Geheimnis der Liebe, dies immerwährende Umfassen Deiner Seele mit meinem Geist,
und es mag wohl manches daraus entstehen, was keiner ahndet.” (*Goethes Briefwechsel
Mit Einem Kinde: Tagebuch 5-6*)

²² Brentano-von Arnim based her song-settings on Georg Friedrich Daumer’s
translations, *Hafis: eine Sammlung persischer Gedichte* (Hamburg, 1846). See “Hafez,”
F. Lewis. *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

²³ See Smith. Introduction. “Letter Poem, a Dickinson Genre.” *Dickinson Electronic
Archives*.

²⁴ See Smith, “Susan and Emily Dickinson” 59-60.

²⁵ See *Emerson’s Complete Works: Lectures and Biographical Sketches* 146.

²⁶ For a discussion of Emerson as the missing link between Emily Dickinson and Walt
Whitman, see Tufariello 162-191.

²⁷ See Sollors 4.

²⁸ See Bassnett 73.

²⁹ Longfellow’s 1838 article on Anglo-Saxon literature doubled as the introduction to
Bosworth’s dictionary.

³⁰ See Gummere 68. According to the *OED*, the term “free verse” first appeared in
Modern Language Notes 5.58, 1890: “The author examines the origin and development
of free verse in Modern French Poetry.” According to my research, however, the term
first appears in an 1886 article by Francis B. Grummere published in *The American
Journal of Philology* on adapting a foreign-bent method of translating Anglo-Saxon

poetry—a very literal testament to the fact that free verse arises in the context of foreignizing translation, a practice with special resonance (and prominence) in the transcultural U.S.

³¹ Venuti is quoting from Philip Lewis' signal essay on translation “ “ in which he introduces the concept of “abusive fidelity” in translation.

³² For another perspective on Gautier's manner of translating from the Chinese, see Yu 218-229. For discussions of *Le Livre de Jade's* influence beyond Europe and the U.S., see Garcia de Aldridge 145-154 and Painter 85-86. For a book-length discussion of Gautier's work as an Orientalist see Brahim; and for a general overview and (incomplete) bibliography of her writings see Mihram 170-177. Gautier's biographers Richardson and Knapp each provide very useful and lengthy bibliographies of works by and about Judith Gautier.

³³ See Detrie “Le Livre de Jade de Judith Gautier, un livre pionnier” 301-324; Detrie “Translation and Reception of Chinese Poetry in the West” 43-57; and Hokenson 92-109; 110-119; 142-178.

³⁴ In *Orientalism and Modernism* (1995), scholar Zhaoming Qian mistakenly gives the date of publication as 1872. *Poesies de l'époque des Thang* was first published in 1862.

³⁵ In all editions of *Le Livre de Jade*, Judith Gautier transliterates Ding's name as “Tin-Tung-Ling.”

³⁶ I am grateful to Erica Cefalo for her assistance in making this translation. A doctoral candidate in the Graduate French Program at the University of Maryland, Cefalo also

provided important insight into nineteenth-century French language and literary norms—and Stuart Merrill’s translation method in particular.

³⁷ The phrase used by a reviewer for *Publishers Weekly*. See “Notes in Season: *Pastels in Prose*.” 12 April 1890: 503. *Google Books*. Web. 15 May 2011.

³⁸ See Campbell “Ezra Pound’s London: Home from Home.” *The Guardian* 17 May 2008.

³⁹ See Sollors 4.

⁴⁰ For an extensive bibliography of translations from the Chinese, see Davidson. For a discussion of Gautier as the West’s first literary translator, see Detrie 301-24 and 43-57.

⁴¹ See Chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion of Gautier’s reception in nineteenth-century France.

⁴² For Kern’s larger argument regarding Gautier and Merrill and the context in which he uses the term “precognition,” see Kern 175-176.

⁴³ Even the great Pound scholar, Hugh Kenner, perpetuated a version of this myth, though he grudgingly concedes Gautier’s preeminence as the West’s first literary translator of Chinese poetry:

It remained possible that there might be in Chinese modes of poetry never so much as intuited by the West. It appears to have been Judith Gautier who first suspected this. Unhappily she had little Chinese, and the collaborator with whom she worked had little French, though his mission in Paris had been to make a Chinese-French dictionary (739).

Unfortunately, Kenner does not cite his source(s) regarding Gautier's language proficiency—nor does Rexroth.

⁴⁴ Rexroth does not reveal Gautier as the source of his many second-hand translations from the Chinese and Japanese. See also James Laughlin's letter and notes regarding his discovery of Gautier as Rexroth's source: Rexroth, Bartlett, and Laughlin 121.

⁴⁵ In *Le Livre de Jade* Judith Gautier transliterates Ding's name as "Tin-Tung-Ling."

⁴⁶ From de Gourmont's review of Gautier's memoir *Le Collier des Jours* (1902), first published in *Le Mercure de France* février 1903; 481.

⁴⁷ Binyon would subsequently introduce Pound to Wyndham Lewis (1909) and a host of other artists and intellectuals including Mary Fenollosa (1913), the widow of Ernest Fenollosa—a connection which culminated in the publication of *Cathay* in 1914.

⁴⁸ This is the first line of Pound's "Occidit," published in the first edition of *Personae* (1909), but dropped from all subsequent editions: 36.

⁴⁹ See Weinberger xviii.

⁵⁰ A very useful phrase coined by Colleen Boggs in summarizing John Carlos Rowe's post-national approach to American Studies. I have reinflected and expanded its meaning in characterizing early modernist experiments in idiomatic free verse. See *Transnationalism...*

⁵¹ Translation theorists such as George Steiner, Laurence Venuti, Roxana Preda, and Jeremy Munday have made their own interventions in this area, bringing new attention to the importance of Pound's earliest translation work. Of particular interest to these critics

have been the Cavalcanti translations (1912), in which Pound elects to foreignize the English rather than efface the difference and distance of the foreign text.

⁵² See the nineteenth-century German study of Roman life, *Das Privatleben der Römer*, by Joachim Marquardt which detailed the sex rites and customs of ancient Rome.

⁵³ William Morehead is thought to have made a private translation of Bruno's "Spaccio de la bestia trienfante" ("Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast") sometime prior to 1713, when it was published posthumously by the deist and freethinker John Toland in a limited edition of only 50 copies. See S. Lee 1.

⁵⁴ I borrow Raymond Williams phrase "long revolution," which he used in describing changes in English society from 1780-1950 (1). In *Spirit of Romance*, Pound develops a history of the long revolution in poetry, which he dates to the troubadours of the Twelfth century.

⁵⁵ For an in-depth discussion of Daniel and the art of the Troubadours, see *An Introduction to Old Provençal Versification* by Frank Chambers.

⁵⁶ See Cameron, esp. 3-29. In her book by the same title, Cameron uses the phrase "choosing not choosing" to describe the principles guiding Emily Dickinson's fascicles. Re-reading Dickinson in the medium of manuscript, Cameron argues, radically reorients our understanding of the poet, whose method of representation licensed personal, political, and poetic unorthodoxy.

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