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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Naomi Adam, Amy Bouwer, Paula Ghintuială and Katrina Rolfe

The title of our journal, the Journal of Languages, Texts, and Society, is purposefully plural. We pride ourselves on providing a platform for postgraduate and early career researchers working in (and often between) a vast range of disciplines, from architecture to anthropology, pedagogy to politics, studying various media forms and employing many different methodologies. This current issue, our seventh, is no exception. Encapsulating this ethos of expansiveness, we selected for its theme 'Wonders of the World'.

Far from a mere trite idiom, we intended this theme as interpretatively flexible: as relevant to research employing novel methodologies, and thus stimulating new ways of thinking, or *wonder*ing, as it is to work with an international reach in our increasingly globalised world. Fittingly for our theme, the ten contributors to our latest issue are based at institutions spanning five continents – Africa, America, Asia, Australasia and Europe – and we are thrilled to place these geographically disparate scholars in dialogue across LTS, Volume 7. The present issue offers a focused but rich selection of articles that interrogate how texts – whether novels, plays, or films – resound with cultural meaning across languages and societies.

Isabel Parkinson (University of Oxford) opens the volume with her paper titled 'Mind Your Language! Profanity and Promiscuity in Two English Translations of Irmgard Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932)'. Parkinson's comparative analysis contrasts Basil Creighton's 1933 English rendering with Katharina von Ankum's 2002 translation, showing how Creighton's idiom tames Keun's profanity and female desire, while von Ankum restores (and sometimes amplifies) these subversive features. The essay reads translation as a historically-situated practice

and argues that translational choices crucially shape anglophone readers' access to women's literary dissent. Next, Opeyemi E. Olawe (University of Ibadan), Adekunle Adegite, Olaide M. Babalola, and Dunsin O. Adeosun (Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology) follow with 'Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid or Unknown: Confronting Traditional Practices of Prophecy in African Cultural Beliefs through Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*'. Taking a deconstructive approach, the authors situate Rotimi's adaptation of *Oedipus Rex* within Yoruba cultural frameworks to interrogate the social and ethical consequences of prophetic knowledge. Their reading shows how prophecy in the play operates both as cultural practice and narrative device, asking whether certain foretold truths are in fact dangerous to pursue. Thirdly, in 'Profaning Secularism: Translating Language, Medium, and Ideology in Victor Hugo's 1862 *Les Misérables* and its 2012 Film Adaptation', Suvarna Variyar (University of Western Australia) traces how Hugo's novel functions as a quasi-religious civic text by sacralising the post-revolutionary French state, and then shows how the Anglophone musical/film lineage (via Kretzmer, Boublil/Schönberg, and Hooper) reconfigures that religiosity. She suggests that the 2012 film's formal and linguistic choices shift emphasis toward individual redemption and more overt Christian imagery, altering the novel's original political-theological thesis, and illustrating how translation across medium and language reshapes ideological force.

Following our trio of articles, we have an eclectic range of book reviews delving into glossopoesis, Donald Trump's linguistics, and pedagogical approaches to corpus linguistics. Glacilda Cordeiro (Federal Institute of Piauí) provides an insightful overview of *Fictional Languages in Science Fiction Literature: Stylistic Explorations*, assessing Israel A. C. Noletto's inventive model for reading language invention in fiction. A timely response to our current political environment is provided in Mahmood Ibrahim's (Imam Ja'afar Al-Sadiq University) review of *Linguistic Inquiries into Donald Trump*, which draws together ten analyses of Trump's language through television interviews, tweets, debates, rallies, and speeches. Finally, Souhaila Messaoudi (Leeds University) evaluates Pascual Pérez-Paredes' *Corpus Linguistics for Education: A Guide for Research*, arguing for its importance in a field where Corpus Linguistics resources are relatively scarce. Though disparate in content, these three reviews are an exciting glimpse into cutting-edge research into the world-building function of language – both in fiction and in reality.

Our translation for this volume is entitled 'When Caribbean Rap is Conjugated in the Feminine', and was originally written by Patricia Victorin (Université

Bretagne Sud) and Mathilde Lucken (Institut d'Études Politiques de Rennes). Translated into English by Naomi Adam (University of Nottingham and University of Liverpool), the work addresses how female rappers are using Creole music and language to establish themselves within the French rap genre. This is accompanied by Adam's commentary on the translation process, encompassing reflections on maintaining the spoken tone of the source text, and a discussion of the difficulties inherent in converting cultural concepts cross-linguistically.

Finally, the issue concludes with reflections on the PhD process from four of our editors, each themselves recent doctoral graduates. These reflections pose the question: just what is a PhD? A journey? A kaleidoscope? A game? An amorphous woodblock to be chiselled away at, revealing a finely-hewn original contribution to knowledge beneath? Our editors conceptualise a doctorate in each of these distinct ways, consciously or subconsciously employing metaphor to help understand and explain the abstract concept of a PhD degree. In keeping with our journal's profile as PGR/ECR-focused and -led, we hope that these reflections can offer both some sage advice and some solace to those currently undertaking their own doctoral degrees.

Collectively, our latest issue exemplifies LTS's commitment to interdisciplinary work: it treats translation and adaptation not as neutral transfers but as interventions that reflect and reshape gendered norms, cultural belief systems, and national imaginaries. We are grateful to our contributors, reviewers, and the editorial team for their thoughtful labour in bringing this issue to life. We hope these essays provoke new conversations and invite you, the reader, to interrogate how texts travel, transform, and trouble the contexts that receive them.

Mind Your Language! Profanity and Promiscuity in Two English Translations of Irmgard Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932)

Isabel Parkinson
University of Oxford

Introduction

This article, in common with my own wider research, has a twofold concern. Insofar as it examines the ways in which the historical and cultural situatedness of a translated text can impact the finished product, and seeks to contribute to ongoing conversations about style in translation, it operates within translation studies. However, it seeks also to generate questions about the particularities of translating subversive features in women-authored prose: to this extent, it is also a feminist project.

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The questions which emerge in this space of intersection between the two disciplines will doubtless hold relevance and interest for those within and without translation studies, German studies, and gender studies: I consider what may be lost by reading a translation alone; what may be gained by comparing it to its woman-authored source text; and what may be at stake in the translation of a woman writer. What this article begins to bring to light about how disciplines overlap, interact, and mutually illuminate may resonate with those even further afield.

The author Irmgard Keun was born in 1905, spending most of her early life in Berlin before she and her family moved to Cologne in 1913. She turned to writing after a short and only moderately successful stint as a stenotypist and a trainee actress. In 1931, she published her first novel *Gilgi – eine von uns* (translated as *Gilgi*, *One of Us* in 2013). It was a tremendous success, selling 30,000 copies in its first year and with a film adaptation following shortly afterwards (Kosta 272). Keun's second novel, *Das kunstseidene Mädchen,* followed in 1932 and was more commercially successful still than *Gilgi* (Haunhorst 55). The novel is the fictional diary of eighteen-year-old Doris, who flees her small town for Berlin, leaving behind an office job and failed theatrical career.[1] She charts the relationships she has with men in Berlin and her gradual slide into poverty.

Das kunstseidene Mädchen was translated into English as *The Artificial Silk Girl* in 1933, one year after its publication in Germany. The work was carried out by London-based translator Basil Creighton, who had translated 34 German novels by the time of his death in 1989 ('Basil Creighton, Novelist, 103: [Obituary]' 29). In 2002, Katharina von Ankum carried out a second English translation, explaining in her preface that she felt a 'fresh' and 'accessible' version was required (xi), and would be a

[1] It is worth pointing out that Doris herself prefers not to think of her written account as a diary, finding it laughable for a sophisticated girl of her age. Given, however, that it is a private notebook in which Doris regularly writes about her adventures, it will be sufficient throughout this article to refer to it as a diary.

welcome addition to a readership enjoying the works of Helen Fielding (*Bridget Jones' Diary*, 1996), Candace Bushnell (*Sex and the City,* 1997), and Sophie Kinsella (*The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*, 2000).

Despite her early success, in 1933 Keun disappeared from public view. The Nazis banned her books for supposed anti-German tendencies, and she was eventually forced into exile in Belgium (and later the Netherlands) in 1936. *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* was lambasted in contemporary reviews as 'gemeine Vorwürfe gegen die deutsche Frau' ['vulgar aspersions against the German woman'] (Berns 52). Certainly, Doris conducts a number of love affairs; privately rails against the hypocrisy of sexual morality and the different sexual freedoms afforded to men and women; and on one occasion is mistaken for a prostitute. The profane, non-standard language throughout had one male reviewer advising that 'wenn Irmgard Keun uns etwas zu sagen hat, dann möge sie deutsch schreiben, deutsch reden und deutsch denken' ['if Irmgard Keun has something to say to us, she might like to write in a German way, speak in a German way, and think in a German way'] (Marchlewitz 14). The language in her earlier novel, *Gilgi,* had similarly been dismissed as 'schauerlich' ['gruesome, ghastly'] on account of its low and colloquial register (Maier-Katkin 254). It was criticised as part of a trend among women writers who wrote 'wie ihnen der Schnabel gewachsen ist' ['anything that comes into their heads', or 'chit-chatting' as Maier-Katkin 254 has it].

It is along these lines that the below translation analysis proceeds. I will consider each translation in turn, with both sections comprising comparative analysis of manually-selected extracts exemplifying Doris' sexuality, or her profane, non-standard language. I then consider the wider implications of each translation, with recourse to feminist scholarship as well as research into *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* and its context. What emerges is a consideration of how translation may emphasise or hinder an author's artistry, as well as the importance of understanding the politics of the original text, especially where said politics take aim at the very same norms which may impact translation practice.

A Note on Editions

Creighton's 1933 text will, in line with standard scholarly practice, be abbreviated as 'TT1' in in-text citations, as an abbreviation for 'Target Text 1'. In-text references to the 2002 edition of von Ankum's text will take the form of 'TT2' (see further Appendix 1). For accessibility, literal English translations will also be supplied for each German excerpt; these are my own unless stated. Owing to the large number of German-language quotations throughout this article, the literal English translations will follow in square brackets, rather than footnotes, for ease of comparison with each published translation.

Das kunstseidene Mädchen has undergone a series of revisions since its first publication in 1932, meaning that Creighton and von Ankum were working with texts which, in places, were very different from one another – indeed, in the preface to the 2002 edition of her translation, von Ankum suggested that Creighton was deliberately 'adding passages in the translation that were designed specifically to help readers position Keun's novel in the context of then-recent German political developments' (TT2 ix-x). A comparison of Creighton's translation with an early edition of *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* reveals no such added passages in his text. There is little doubt that von Ankum was referring to the inclusion of the N-word slur (TT1 202) and several derogatory observations about Jews (TT1 130, 195) – these appear in Creighton's text where they also appeared in the 4th edition of *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* from 1932 (Keun 157, 103, 152). That even von Ankum, who has written extensively on Keun, has fallen foul of this oversight, is emblematic of how little scholarly attention translations of Keun's work have received. Despite the number of English-speaking scholars who have written about Keun's first two novels, commenting on Keun's intriguing manipulation of language and narrative style, Lawrence Rainey appears one of only a few contributors who have analysed the English translations, and even he only gives a little over a paragraph to this.

The rest of *Das kunstseidene Mädchen,* however, is unchanged; on the points I select for analysis, there is no difference between the earliest

available edition, and the 2020 Ullstein edition to which I will refer throughout. This 2020 edition of the source text will be abbreviated in the in-text citations as 'ST', in line with standard practice in translation studies (see further Appendix 1).

Let's (Not) Talk About Sex, Baby: *The Artificial Silk Girl,* 1933

Creighton's translation often gently hints at vulgarity, as did the original text, but stops short of committing to a profane phrase. When Doris is seething about how much women stand to lose from relationships with men, she writes in her diary 'ihr könnt mich mal alle –' ['you can all – me', normally a short form of 'ihr könnt mich mal alle am Arsch lecken', literally 'you can all lick me on the arse'] (ST 183). Creighton's translation is 'you can all –' (TT1 236). This is in keeping with the syntax of the original, but does not point to an established insult in the same way. Indeed, his chosen rendering could equally hint at an utterance as mild as 'you can all leave me alone', 'you can all forget it', or 'you can all stuff yourselves'. A similar effect is found when Doris visits the fishmonger and asks about his business. He replies 'Na, die Zeiten sind ja man besch–' [Well, yes, times are sh–'], with Doris interrupting the word 'beschissen' ['shitty'] (ST 174). Creighton does not risk even writing the start of a vulgar word; Doris interrupts the fishmonger after 'times are a bit…' (TT1 224).

The extreme opposite is true in von Ankum's text, as discussed below, while the censorious treatment of even mild vulgarity in Creighton's text becomes even more stringent in his rendering of sexual references. For example, Doris describes how she feels about Hubert, one of her lovers: she loves him with 'Kopf und Mund und weiter abwärts' ['head and mouth and further downwards'] (ST 19). This becomes 'heart and soul and from there downwards' in Creighton's text (TT1 19), thus entirely changing the sensual, embodied, and sexual tone of the original. The result of Creighton's lexical choices is a blend of a reference to something metaphorical and disembodied, and a physical directional term. The meaning of the latter, and its clearly sexual tone, is therefore obscured;

it is not immediately clear where 'downwards' from one's soul is meant to be indicating.

On another occasion, Doris describes herself as making Marlene Dietrich-esque eyes, attempting to invite a man 'husch ins Bett' ['quickly into bed'] (ST 23) – Doris deliberately picking out a different facial expression or emulating a certain star is quite common throughout, and in keeping with her fascination with the popular visual culture of the time. In this instance, she is attempting to distract her boss from the numerous errors in her typing: here, as elsewhere, Doris knows how to act the part, playing variously at being coy, sexualised, sophisticated, and naïve, most often for her own advantage. Creighton's translation, however, has almost none of the original's explicit sexual connotations: his Doris instead describes herself as looking like Dietrich 'at the crisis of a love scene' (TT1 24). Similarly, with reference to sleeping with her employer, Doris repeats in her diary 'ich wollte' ['I wanted'] (ST 86). Creighton's solution is 'I was willing' (TT1 107), suggesting far less active sexual desire on Doris' part. As a result, the reader of Creighton's translation does not have access to any of the desire, sassiness, and raciness of the original Doris.

Creighton's treatment of the words 'Erotik' or 'erotisch' throughout ['eroticism', 'erotic'] is also telling. When Doris boasts (untruthfully) to other would-be actresses about her relationship with a theatre director, she mentions acts that he has done for her 'aus Erotik' ['out of eroticism'] (ST 50). Creighton, in contrast, has the theatre director doing such things 'out of love' (TT1 60), thus lending a far less lustful tone to his text. While one of Doris' friends believes that 'Flucht' ['flight, escape'] is an 'erotisches Wort' ['erotic word'] (ST 64), for Creighton it is instead a 'word full of romantic suggestion' (TT1 78). Thus, Creighton shies away not only from references to eroticism, but from the word itself.

The reasons for Creighton's translational choices are beyond my reconstruction, and I do not attempt to establish them here. What is clear, however, is that his treatment of sexual or profane themes is not to be attributed to the respective mechanics and grammars of English and

German. As I have occasionally indicated, and as the analysis of von Ankum's text will show, different options were in theory open to Creighton. His strategy of taming and tempering Doris appears indicative of contemporary discourse around female sexuality; a woman's place was to acquiesce to sex, rather than to want it, and uncontrolled female sexual desire was feared (Clark 54–92).

I turn briefly to offer other salient examples which point to the historical specificity of Creighton's text, and which illustrate how the stylistic options to a translator may change over time. Keun scholar Kennedy, for example, discerns a 'massive Verwendung' ['massive use'] of the pronoun 'man' throughout *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (Kennedy 84). 'Man' is a third-person impersonal pronoun similar to the English 'one', but lower in register and thus far more common in spoken German. Certainly, Doris frequently shares her wisdom about men in her diary, in the manner of dispensing gnomic, universal truths: 'Man kennt das ja, was Männer erzählen' ['one knows what men will say'] (ST 71); 'Und bei dem Glauben läßt man ja dann auch einen Mann' ['and one lets a man believe that'] (ST 17). Formulations with 'man' are also common when Doris is writing about the city around her: describing not only what she specifically can see, but what 'man' can see. The viewpoint becomes broader, shareable, with 'man' functioning as a tool of rhetorical persuasion and inviting the reader in.

'Man' often proves translationally tricky in German-English projects. Geoff Wilkes, the translator of Keun's earlier novel *Gilgi,* found that using 'one' as a translation of 'man' would be 'inappropriate' (Wilkes 227), presumably because it is of a sufficiently high register to be jarring, and out of place in a novel which makes so much of a conversational, colloquial style. He often uses 'you', 'we', or 'I' as a translation of 'man', which he finds more plausibly in keeping with Gilgi's own idiom. Von Ankum, as will be seen, does similar, and for similar stylistic reasons. Creighton, however, need not be troubled by 'man' in the same way – translating in the 1930s, the idiom and thus the suitable stylistic choices available to him differ. He almost always uses 'one' as a translation of 'man': 'One might get the sack any day' (TT1 4); 'one knows [men] better than they

know themselves' (TT1 12); 'one knows that sort' (TT1 30); 'one must allow her that' (TT1 45). He very occasionally uses 'you' for 'man', but never 'we'. 'One' is in keeping with 1930s idiom – or, perhaps, Creighton's own idiom – in a way which common twenty-first century English usage precludes. Here, the impact of Creighton's own historical moment on his translation is felt once again; the norms in his own time allow certain stylistic solutions as they simultaneously disallow sexual or profane language.

Consequently, a modern reader of Creighton's translation is likely to reach conclusions about Doris' formality, level of education, and even class which are at odds with the rest of the text. She cannot use commas correctly, and often does not know what words mean ('Rasse' and 'Gesellschaft', 'race' and 'society', are particular puzzles for Doris). The near century that has passed since the time of Creighton's translation is keenly felt. His treatment of sexual themes, and the availability of the pronoun 'one' in translating features of German grammar, betray the text's situatedness in 1933. For this reason, also, Creighton's translations of Doris' colloquialisms are unfamiliar to the modern reader: 'gone smash' (TT1 153), 'a goose' (TT1 103), 'swarmy' (TT1 56) are offered as translations of 'kaputt' ['broken'] (ST 119), 'doof' ['stupid'] (ST 83) and 'schwul' ['gay'] (ST 47).

These comparative examples reveal Creighton's text as a product of its time, reflecting English idiom, style, and norms which have shifted in the intervening ninety years. Creighton's translation has been overlooked in Keun scholarship, even seemingly by von Ankum. With her desire to create a text which resonated with other popular works of the 1990s, it is understandable why she felt a 'fresh' version was needed, and would be well-received. However, Creighton's text is still eminently worthy of study. It demonstrates the freedoms apparently afforded to translators in going against even that which made the original text noteworthy in its source culture. As will emerge fully later in this article, Creighton's text also bears out a well-observed benefit of comparative research: that the close analysis of a translated text draws renewed attention to features of

its source text, especially 'those places where translation turned out to be especially difficult' (Parks 14).

Bridget Jones, Carrie Bradshaw, Doris: *The Artificial Silk Girl,* 2002

Von Ankum, responding to the idiom of the early 2000s book market in which she sought to position her work, can comfortably retain the sexuality of the original as well as drastically emphasise the vulgarity. 'Kopf und Mund und weiter abwärts' is translated literally as 'my head, my mouth, and further down' (TT2 12), as is 'erotisch', translated as 'erotic' (TT2 54). 'Aus Erotik' retains its sexual overtones as it becomes 'as a turn-on' (TT2 42) and 'ich wollte', which Creighton translated passively, becomes even more active in von Ankum's edition: 'I really wanted to' (TT2 73). The result, in short, is that von Ankum's Doris is as sexually desirous as she was in Keun's original text. Von Ankum also often makes her translation much more vulgar than Keun's original text, favouring profane language where it did not previously appear. 'Dreck' ['dirt, crap'] becomes the more vulgar 'shit' or 'bullshit' (TT2 39; 120; 149). In contrast, 'Dreck' had been, variously, 'a misery', 'all up', and 'rubbish' in Creighton's text (TT1 57, 176, 220). For von Ankum, two instances of 'Biest' ['beast'] (ST 180) become 'bitch' and 'bastard' (TT2 157, 158). 'Ihr könnt mich mal alle –' (ST 183) is expanded considerably to become 'you can fuck yourselves' (TT2 160). Although Keun's original text was felt by contemporary reviewers to break sharply with norms of propriety, it was ultimately milder and more implicit than the marked profanity which von Ankum introduces.

The result is that there is, in von Ankum's text, a sharper juxtaposition between Doris' adherence to public codes of behaviour, and her private language. Consider once more the exchange with the fishmonger, when Doris interrupts him before he can say 'beschissen', a word she is embarrassed or ashamed to hear: 'falle ich ihm in ein Wort, was mir widerstrebt anzuhören' ['interrupting him in a word which I am reluctant to hear'] (ST 174). In this instance, with the profanity strongly emphasised in the private language of von Ankum's Doris, her adherence to moral codes in public becomes even more marked in this exchange.

What von Ankum draws out here is the pressure of the external performance, and the cynicism in Keun's prose about 'the parameters of emancipation actually allowed for the New Woman' (von Ankum, 'Gendered Urban Spaces' 180). Doris herself feels keenly the imposition by society of public codes of behaviour. One of her sexual partners, Hubert, leaves her to marry a virgin, explaining that 'wenn ein Mann heieratet, will er eine unberührte Frau' ['when a man marries, he wants an untouched woman']. He further advises Doris that she maintain a virginial, 'anständiges' ['decent'] appearance if she too wishes to attract a husband (ST 21).

These ostensible sexual freedoms curtailed by gendered expectations play out in other aspects of the societal picture for 1930s women in Germany. While women were able to enjoy new-found financial independence and freedom of movement, they were still dependent upon men at every turn. The New Woman as a visual object remained 'mediated by a fundamentally male gaze' (McBride 220); a woman 'could not move within the urban space without entrusting herself to male protection' (von Ankum, 'Gendered Urban Spaces' 168); and despite new frontiers in professional freedom, the options open to women were fundamentally limited by men. A woman could choose the traditional wife-and-mother role, be self-sufficient as a prostitute, or gainfully employed by a man. By drawing out, in her conversation with the fishmonger, Doris' awareness of codes of public behaviour, von Ankum emphasises the points that Keun was making about the expectations placed upon a woman by her own time and society, and how these may contradict sharply with her internal life. This, of course, is made possible by the translation's historical moment of production, coming on the heels of second-wave feminism and a renewed interest in women's writing. It is for this reason that feminist literary inquiry sheds a light on von Ankum's text and, retrospectively, Keun's work; I turn to this subject in the next section.

The rest of von Ankum's text betrays its 1990s influences in a similar way. 'You' as a frequent translation of 'man' imbues von Ankum's translation with a dialogic character, in a way which Creighton's 'one' did

not. Examples include 'and of course you let a man believe that' (TT2 11); 'you know what men will tell you […] if you want to strike it lucky with men, you have to let them think you're stupid' (TT2 60). Elsewhere, von Ankum takes care to insert other features of spoken language where they did not appear in the source text, including phrases such as 'to tell you the truth' (TT2 27) or 'I'm telling you' (TT2 86). Sometimes these are expansions of the original (where Keun had used 'eigentlich', 'actually', for example); occasionally they are entirely new additions. Additionally, von Ankum frequently translates 'man' as 'we', which lends *The Artificial Silk Girl* a tone discernible in other works which von Ankum considered as crucially similar. In Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary*, for example, Bridget often writes in terms of 'we': 'We wouldn't rush up to *them*' (10); 'suddenly we are all supposed to snap into self-discipline' (17); 'maybe they really do want to patronize us' (40). Bridget, in these instances, is identifying with other thirty-something single women with shared experiences and frustrations. It is therefore unsurprising that von Ankum chooses to emphasise this notion of solidarity, given the importance she places on texts such as *Bridget Jones' Diary*. It seems that von Ankum's Doris, when she speaks in terms of 'we', is identifying with other (heterosexual) women who have had similar experiences with men, thus drawing out a collective identity which was not as obvious in the source text. Forging a bond between Doris and the reader may help to add relevance and readability to a translated text from a markedly different era.

On a grammatical and syntactical level, then, von Ankum is making changes which speak to her self-professed desire to update the language, and make the figural voice resonant to a contemporary reader just as *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* had been to Keun's 1930s readers. Reviews of her translation praised her manner of 'updating the slang' of the original, noting that it results in a 'remarkably readable translation' (Rainey 336). Creighton's translation, it is worth noting, was marketed by its publisher Chatto & Windus as a 'poignant story of a girl living in a distracted Germany' ('Display Ad 78 – No Title' 9). In 1933, a review of the English translation described *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* as 'the story of a young lady of easy virtue in the distracted Germany of a year or two ago' ('New

Novels' 874). His translation does not need to recreate and reimagine Keun's text for a vastly different readership; it is an artefact of the very same time. Von Ankum, with a gap of seventy years to bridge, has clearly approached the text differently.

Implications

We arrive by now at a picture of two markedly different translated texts which speak to the historical moment of their own production. I turn here to consider how these features stand to impact the way in which the English-speaking reader may interpret Doris, and by extension Keun. After all, as Hewson points out, as far as a reader is concerned the translation 'is commonly perceived as being the same as the text it replaces' (1) – to the English reader, then, a translation of Keun *is* Keun.

In a 1980 public appearance, an interviewer praised Keun for her accurate recreation of 'die Sprache der Mädchen' ['the speech of girls'] (Kennedy 512). Certainly, Keun's prose reveals an attempt to create a portrait of (a certain class of) women at the time, a character in whom they could recognise themselves, even if the portrait was not a flattering one. Indeed, Keun dwelled upon how she was received by readers similar to her protagonists: 'Ich werde ja gerade von denen, die ich beschreibe, am wenigsten gelesen. […] Keiner möchte sich ja selbst porträtiert sehen' ['I am read the least by those whom I describe […] nobody wants to see themselves portrayed'] (Kennedy 512). In Creighton's translation, the portrait differs. To what extent his stylistic choices actually resonated with contemporary English women readers of a similar class is not known, but the censoring of the profanity and promiscuity would have disallowed a sense of identification between Doris, and a reader with a similarly unmentionable, taboo private life. In a different vein, by responding to other works of the 1990s which sought also to portray a certain class of young women, von Ankum attempts to have even a sixty-year-old German text exhibit the same feature. She is drawing on the 'Sprache der Mädchen' in 1990s/2000s English-speaking spaces to craft her translation of Keun into something equally resonant. This serves as a reminder – to reviewers, readers, and creators of translated texts – that

an original author's efforts and artistry may not survive the transition into a different language. The reader of a translated text may not have the voices and interpretative pathways open to them that were open to the source text reader, and it is through a comparative reading that the extent of this loss may emerge.

In this consideration of how far Keun's efforts at characterisation and representation have been emphasised or occluded by different stylistic choices in English, there is a gendered angle that cannot be overlooked. With recourse to feminist research, below I discuss how fitting each translation is in light of what we may discern about Keun's original aims and artistry, taking into account her status as a woman writer.

By a contemporary reviewer, Keun's novels were taken to '[stand] out in delightful contrast to the books written by men' (Reuter 16). The literary tradition in German-speaking spaces had not historically welcomed women writers – the socio-political conditions meant that 'the creativity of German women writers was more cramped, constricted, and confined than that of their counterparts in France and England' (Stimpson xvi). By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, interest in women's writing was dawning: 'Women themselves […] were encouraged by Naturalism and feminism to produce arrestingly truthful accounts of female experience' (Robertson 338). Keun did precisely this and offered her own insights about the truth beneath the veneer of the modern German woman. It may not have made her popular with her critics, but it was responding to a 'new social reality for women' (von Ankum, 'Motherhood' 172). In the early twentieth century, women were being afforded space and visibility in public in a new way. Berlin in particular had become a 'city of women', with the percentage of female office employees in the city almost doubling from 6.5% in 1907 to 12.6% in 1923, while the percentage of women employed in domestic roles fell from 16.1% to 11.4% (von Ankum, 'Gendered Urban Spaces' 163–65). With rising rates of prostitution and improving access to contraception and abortion, the city had become a place of 'unbridled female sexuality' (von Ankum, 'Gendered Urban Spaces' 164–65).

The importance of *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* as a text charged with sexuality and profanity lies not only in the society that it reflected, but also in Keun's innovation. She used the novel to offer her own insights into the private lives of women in a literary tradition that had historically been – and, given her censorship and exile, continued to be – hostile to this subject matter. Her brave, and ultimately professionally dangerous, subversion is not carried across in Creighton's text. Even with her voice tempered, Creighton's Doris was still judged in reviews as 'impudent, though the impudence has a very human side' ('New Novels' 874). The comparative analysis shows Creighton imposing on Doris – and Keun – the very same sense of sexual morality and gendered norms of propriety against which she railed. Although *The Artificial Silk Girl* was released in England shortly after Keun's German censorship and exile, her artistry and innovation was still silenced in the translated text.

The picture shifts as we move to von Ankum's text in 2002. The twenty-first century reader, presented with the promiscuity of Keun's original and quite extreme profanity, is allowed access to a sense of how far Keun was defying expectations, even with the language transposed to a different time. Indeed, feminist stylistic research suggests that even as patterns of usage and codes of behaviour shifted, milder expletives continued to be considered as typical or more acceptable for women, while strong swear words were felt to be more 'male', even into the 1990s (Mills 16). In this way, von Ankum retains the subversive politics of the source text. To my knowledge, von Ankum has never referred to her work as an example of feminist translation, and it would be an overclaim to label it decisively as such. However, in deploying this kind of 'over-translation', she makes use of a key feminist translation technique (Flotow, 'Feminist Translation' 69–70). Using a technique from this field, which is designed to shock and to subvert expectations, is a gesture, whether deliberate or not, towards the subversive politics at play in the source text.

Embodiment in a text has also been taken as central in feminist literary inquiry by other scholars in the field. Karin Kukkonen argued recently for a renewed focus on embodiment in literary studies, particularly in texts which explore the gendered subject. She argues that

given the importance of 'embodied practices that are traditionally confined to the cultural sphere', we cannot make sense of our embodied experience of the world without recourse to gender (978). This is not to assume an outdated identity of biological sex and gender identity; rather, Kukkonen's view states that gender is at least partly constructed by and performed within the external, physical world with which a subject's body interacts. Thus, considerations of what it means to be a gendered subject cannot afford to do without embodiment. The 'embodied experience […] is shaped by our muscle memory of movement and the feedback of our physical, social and mediated environment on our performance of this movement' (979–80). A text, then, which seeks to represent the inner life of a gendered subject, may make particular use of embodiment. Creighton's preference for cerebral, emotional, non-physical references such as heart, soul, and love, rather than mouth, lust, and eroticism thus obscures an important part of Doris' gender identity, and her way of interacting with the world as a physical subject. Von Ankum, in contrast, ensures that embodiment and physicality is still a crucial part of Doris' character.

By retaining other language which breaks with standard usage – Doris' profanity, as well as her unusual metaphor and creative imagery – von Ankum is also able, as Keun was, to 'signify the "other" who lingers along gender lines outside the dominating patriarchal culture' (Maier-Katkin 255). Doris' language use 'deconstruct[s] grammatical, psychological and philosophical principles and categories of major discourse' (Horsley 308), and has been taken as anticipatory of calls in the 1980s to 'break the code, to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract' (254). While Creighton similarly repressed the 'unnameable' in his edition of *Das kunstseidene Mädchen,* von Ankum flagrantly names it, allowing Keun's efforts to shine through, even in a different language, even seventy years later.

Throughout, I have spoken of Creighton or von Ankum's 'choices' or 'renderings'; I wish briefly to acknowledge that it is not always clear from where a translational choice may originate, and whether it is a conscious

choice or not. Perfectly illustrative of this is a letter of January 1935, written by Creighton to his publisher Chatto & Windus about the translation of a B. Traven novel. Creighton says, of a particular vocabulary query, 'May I leave it to you to direct the printer as you see fit?' (Correspondence File CW 564/8).[2] Establishing the logistical and cognitive processes of translation lies far beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth bearing in mind before we, as others have, judge Creighton too damningly for his 'blunders' (Murray 204) and 'patchy' command of German (Hoffman 10).

Conclusion

Mona Baker's proclamation that, in translation studies, 'identifying linguistic habits and stylistic patterns is not an end in itself' has cast a long shadow (Baker 258). She elaborated, in the same work, that comparative analysis is 'only worthwhile if it tells us something about the cultural and ideological positioning of the translator, or of translators in general, or about the cognitive processes and mechanisms that contribute to shaping our translational behaviour' (258).

Baker's is undoubtedly a rich vein of research, although there is much still to be gained from simple comparative analysis of the kind in this article. I have not attempted to establish without doubt a translator's ideology or their cognitive processes, finding, as others have done, that such explanatory missions are 'well nigh impossible' (House 3). Nonetheless, my translation analysis of Keun's work draws attention to the subversive, feminist politics at the heart of her prose. It has shown how translation practice, far from theoretical notions of how it *should* proceed, may pan out in reality. It has begun to show how the same character may be rendered very differently by English stylistic choices. Furthermore, research of this type has the potential to encourage ongoing research at the productive intersection of translation studies, literary

[2] Quoted here with kind permission of Basil Creighton's estate.

studies, and gender studies.[3] By operating at the intersection of these fields, research can ask how – and how well – insights into the reality of being a gendered subject, particularly where such insights break with convention, are translated into another language.

Eliana Maestri argues that 'many researchers in Translation Studies and/or readers of translations claim that sometimes they understand an original text in a better way when they read a translation of it' (63). Parks is one such scholar, finding that 'by looking at original and translation side by side […] we can arrive at a better appreciation of the original's qualities and, simultaneously of the two phenomena we call translation and literature' (14). The mutually illuminative potential of comparative translation analysis has been borne out in this article. Creighton's censorship of Keun demonstrates how far her work pushed the boundaries of acceptable public behaviour in the 1930s. Von Ankum's highlighting of the profanity shows how central this has been taken to be in characterising Doris.

The proportion of the Anglophone book market occupied by translated texts is very small, around 3%, and less than a third of these were originally written by women. Recent initiatives such as the Year of Publishing Women have sought to address this imbalance, but a lasting impact has yet to be seen (Castro and Vassallo 556). In a book market which is generally resistant to texts originating in different cultures, and apparently even more so to texts written by women, the extra visibility which can arise from this kind of research may be considered of particular importance.

Comparative translation analysis has the potential to lend precisely that visibility to Keun. How differently *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* has been treated by two different translators illuminates the points that she

[3] For a full and recent investigation of this fruitful area of study, see Luise von Flotow and Joan W. Scott. See also Warhol and Lanser for a consideration of how gender may be a rich resource in narratological research.

sought to make in her work. Elfriede Jelinek praised Keun's novels particularly for how they highlight that 'men and women neither live in the same world nor speak the same language' (in Maier-Katkin 255). This is not to lapse into biologically essentialist notions; indeed, as Sally Johnson observes, 'There are very few generalizations which can be made about formal, structural aspects of language of one sex as opposed to the other' (in Page 181). What cannot be overlooked, however, is that Keun's artistry, her censorship, her exile, and her rediscovery in the 1970s stemmed from the fact that she was a woman in 1930s Germany. Doris, too, struggles to make herself understood in the accepted communicative structures open to her, is dismissed and ignored by men, and is keenly aware of the different sexual freedoms afforded to men and women: she interacts with 1930s society in a distinctly gendered way. Creighton's text speaks to the same historical moment in which Keun was writing, but from the other end of the gendered experience – in his text, he imposes on Doris the sexual morality and behavioural norms which she finds so hypocritical and stifling. Von Ankum, in contrast, is clearly thinking about how to create a woman character in her own 1990s/2000s literary climate, in a form which was popular at the time (the fictional diary). She – as Keun did – is drawing on the techniques available in her own historical moment in order to make the text newly resonant. In a text which makes much of women being silenced, dismissed, or misunderstood by men, and of standard language as being stifling, a new importance arises from any strategies which constrain – or, conversely, give new voice to – the character and her author.

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APPENDIX 1: List of Abbreviations

ST – Source Text (Keun, Irmgard, *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*. 17th edition, Ullstein, 2020)

TT1 – Target Text 1 (Creighton, Basil, translator. *The Artificial Silk Girl*. By Irmgard Keun, Chatto & Windus, 1933)

TT2 – Target Text 2 (Ankum, Katharina von, translator. *The Artificial Silk Girl*. By Irmgard Keun, Other Press, 2002)

Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid or Unknown: Confronting Traditional Practices of Prophecy in African Cultural Beliefs through Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*

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Introduction

African cultural traditions place significant importance on prophecy and the supernatural, with many individuals and communities relying on

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divination and prophecy for guidance and decision making (Awojobi, 'Prophets'). Prophecy, according to Hornby, is the capacity to anticipate or glimpse future occurrences. This foreknowledge is typically considered to come from a divine source or through supernatural means. It is the process by which a god or other spiritual being speaks to people, frequently via a prophet or priest acting as an intermediary, offering guidance, instructions, or warnings (Awojobi, 'The Place of Music'; Barton). This is a widespread custom in many African cultures, where it is thought that some people have a unique relationship with the supernatural that enables them to receive and understand messages from the divine.

Traditionally, prophecy was the domain of diviners, priests, and spiritual leaders, who were believed to possess the ability to communicate with ancestral spirits and deities (Balogun; Obielosi). These prophetic figures played crucial roles in guiding communities, foretelling events, and providing counsel during times of crisis. In African traditions, prophecy is seen as a means of comprehending the present and interpreting the will of the gods or ancestors, in addition to making future predictions. This practice is linked to the conviction that supernatural forces have an impact on human events and that destiny is predetermined. Prophecies frequently touch on important community issues including disputes, leadership choices, and natural occurrences, thereby influencing the collective fate of the community.

In contemporary African societies, the practice of prophecy has evolved but remains significant. The advent of Christianity and Islam, alongside traditional beliefs, has influenced the practice and understanding of prophecy (Awojobi, 'The Place of Music'). Today, prophets and diviners coexist with religious leaders, often integrating traditional practices with modern religious beliefs. Prophetic words are frequently spoken in churches and mosques, addressing issues that are both private and public (Amanze; Iwe; Obielosi and Idonor). These contemporary prophets assert that they have received revelations from God, providing counsel on matters ranging from political stability to well-being and financial success (Obielosi and Idonor).

Anayochukwu has observed a growing trend in Nigeria whereby prophetic claims have become more prevalent in Nigerian popular religion. This phenomenon affects Nigerians from all socioeconomic backgrounds, including the rich and the poor, the powerful and the helpless, the learned and the uneducated, and people of all religious persuasions. People flock to alleged visionaries, so-called 'men of God', and prophets who assert insights and prophecies from the divine in search of divine revelations for various reasons. For example, Christian parents frequently seek advice on their children's futures from local diviners before arranging weddings, some seek guidance when about to embark on a journey or when confused about life's issues. Similar to this, before elections in Nigeria, politicians often consult spiritual advisors to get insight into their destiny and favourable timing for political action. In certain cases, these revelations are used to inform their political strategy. This widespread conviction in the prophetic abilities of religious leaders – be they Christian or Muslim – shapes both spiritual and everyday decisions, marking their influential role in Nigerian society. Many Nigerian Christians, irrespective of their church affiliations, rely on self-proclaimed prophets and spiritual advisors before embarking on significant endeavours, while young Nigerians facing life decisions often turn to prayer ministries for guidance during pivotal moments.

In many real-life situations, prophecy has played a crucial role in averting tragedies and saving lives. Balogun observes that prophecy has prevented many people from being involved in accidents and other life tragedies. These instances highlight the possible advantages of prophetic practices in safeguarding communities. Prophecies, however, have the potential to be self-fulfilling, to induce worry, or to negatively influence conduct. Thus, examining the possible negative effects of prophetic knowledge as well as the need of embracing life's inherent uncertainties are vital. This raises an important question: What are the dangers of seeking to know the future, and what is the significance of embracing uncertainty? Despite the respect afforded to prophetic practices, one must consider whether the attempt to know the future is truly beneficial. Could the revelation of prophecies lead to unforeseen and often tragic consequences?

The practice of prophecy is not only a spiritual and social phenomenon but also a rich subject for literary exploration (Dick). In particular, African literature offers a significant medium for examining and communicating to larger audiences the complexity and implications of prophecy (Anjorin and Nwosu; Irele). Through narrative, drama, and poetry, African writers explore the complex interrelationships between fate, destiny, and human action, providing readers with a sophisticated comprehension of these cultural practices. A potent instrument for capturing the essence of cultural rituals and beliefs, such as prophecy, is literature. It enables an introspective and analytical analysis of the ways in which these customs influence and are influenced by the people who follow them (Mbachaga; Ukande). Numerous literary works in the African environment have tackled the subjects of prophecy, fate, and destiny, providing a platform for discussing the societal impacts and philosophical questions that arise from these beliefs.

Ola Rotimi is one of the well-known authors of African literature who has adeptly incorporated the idea of prophecy into his writings (Ogunbiyi). As a renowned Nigerian director and playwright, Rotimi is well known for his ability to fuse modern themes with traditional African stories to create works that have a profound emotional impact on viewers inside and outside of Africa. An iconic example of how African literature addresses the issue of prophecy is Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. According to Kpodoh and Olatunji, Rotimi uses his text to portray the indigenous African society as having diverse healing properties within itself. This shows that he has a strong feeling of loyalty to the African community. The drama, which is an adaption of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, is set in a Yoruba cultural context and explores the profound and often tragic implications of attempting to escape one's fate as foretold by prophecy. Through the story of Odewale, the protagonist, Rotimi's adaption uses the cultural context to capture the paradoxes of fate and free will, highlighting the tension between human effort and predestined outcomes.

Rotimi's depiction of African customs and his adaptation of classical themes to an African setting have been the subject of in-depth analysis.

Rotimi skilfully combines Greek tragedy with Yoruba cultural components, as noted by Oyin Ogunba, to create a story that is both universal and uniquely African. The drama explores important issues regarding the function and consequences of prophetic knowledge in human existence by showing the catastrophic results of a prophecy coming to pass. This study investigates the idea that some knowledge, particularly prophecies, are possibly best left unknown, as implied by the play's unfolding events. The story of Odewale, a man destined to kill his father and marry his mother, serves as a compelling case study to explore these issues. This investigation not only provides insights into the narrative structure and thematic concerns of Rotimi's work but also contributes to a broader understanding of the cultural significance of prophecy in African societies.

Synopsis of *The Gods Are Not to Blame*

Set within the Yoruba culture of Nigeria, Rotimi's drama *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is an adaption of Sophocles' famous tragedy *Oedipus Rex*. In spite of his best efforts to avert his terrible fate, Odewale, the protagonist of the play, is destined from birth to kill his father and marry his mother. The play opens with King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola of the town of Kutuje welcoming Odewale into the world. Odewale will grow up to kill his father and wed his mother, according to an oracle prophecy. In an attempt to stop this, the king and queen give a servant orders to kill the baby in the forest, but the child is saved and brought up by a different couple in a distant land.

Odewale discovers as an adult that he is supposed to kill his father and wed his mother according to a prophecy. He flees home in order to escape carrying out the prophecy because he thinks his adoptive parents are his biological parents. During his travels, Odewale runs into an older man and kills him in a fight without realizing that the man is Adetusa, his biological father. When Odewale finally makes it to Kutuje, he is greeted as a hero for having participated actively in defeating the marauding Ikolu invaders who place Kutuje under siege. He unintentionally fulfils the prophecy when he marries his biological

mother, Queen Ojuola, after being crowned king as a reward. When Kutuje experiences a plague years later, the oracle indicates that the tragedy is caused by the unsolved murder of the previous king. Odewale vows to find the culprit, only to discover through a series of revelations that he himself is the murderer and has married his mother. In horror and despair, Queen Ojuola commits suicide, and Odewale blinds himself as punishment, accepting his tragic fate.

Problem Statement

Numerous studies have explored Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* from both linguistic and literary perspectives. Linguistically, these studies have examined the use of proverbs, conversational strategies, incantations, and other aspects of language use in the play (Anigbogu and Ahizih; Jegede and Adesina; Kwasau and Adamu; Nutsukpo; Nwabudike, 'A Sociolinguistic Analysis'; Nwabudike, *A Sociolinguistic Investigation*; Odebode; Odebunmi; Olaosun; Yakubu and Jeremiah). For example, Odebunmi analysed the pragmatic functions of crisis-motivated proverbs, while Nutsukpo focused on the representation of women in the play. Other studies, such as those by Nwabudike ('A Sociolinguistic Investigation') and Jegede and Adesina, provided sociolinguistic and conversational analyses, respectively.

From a literary perspective, scholars have investigated themes of fate, tragedy, and the allocation of blame within the play (Adeniyi; Adiele, 'The Delphic Oracle'; Adiele, 'Tragedy'; Apuke; Chabi and Dadja-Tiou; Kpodoh and Olatunji; Mokani; Ogunfeyimi; Olu-Osayomi and Adebua; Onkoba, Rutere and Kamau; Sesan). Chabi and Dadja-Tiou discussed Yoruba beliefs and monarchy, while Adiele examined tragedy as a component of liberation and freedom. Other studies, like those by Ogunfeyimi, explored the role of indigenous knowledge systems in addressing health and wellness beyond conventional Western medicine while Adeniyi; Olu-Osayomi and Adebua looked into the practice of Ifá divination.

Despite this breadth of scholarship, there has been little scholarly attention paid to the interplay between fate, prophecy, and free will in

the play. While some touch upon elements of destiny and moral agency, none have comprehensively explored the specific implications of the consequences of seeking to know the future through prophecy in relation to African cultural beliefs. This study therefore attempts a deconstructive reading of Rotimi's play to explore the role of prophecy in understanding what lies ahead and the potential risks and consequences of gaining such knowledge. The central research question guiding this study is as follows: Is certain knowledge, particularly prophetic knowledge, better left undiscovered in African cultural contexts, as suggested by Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*? By analysing the themes of fate, prophecy, and human agency in the play, this article aims to shed light on the ethical and cultural implications of prophetic practices.

Method and Analytical Approach

The research design employed in this study was library-based, which was thought to be suitable for gathering information about prophetic practices in Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. We used primary and secondary sources from libraries as well as pertinent websites. The literary work *The Gods Are Not to Blame,* which provided the foundation for the investigation, was the main source. Critical reference materials on the play that could be found online and in libraries served as secondary sources and helped with cross-referencing and analysing earlier interpretations. The text was read closely, with an emphasis on selected passages that highlight important themes and conflicts. This involved analysing the implicit and explicit meanings in dialogues, monologues, and narrative descriptions. The analysis examined characters' actions and motivations, the outcomes of key events, and the interplay between destiny and personal choice.

This study employs a deconstructionist approach to analyse *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Deconstruction, a critical theory pioneered by Jacques Derrida, seeks to uncover inherent contradictions and multiple meanings within a text (Nureni and Oluwabukola). Although there are many variants of deconstruction, the provisions of the French thinker Derrida suit the intentions of this study. From Derrida's ideological projection,

deconstruction's immediate concern is to collapse the boundaries of meaning in a text, leaving it open to multiple interpretations (Adiele, 'Tragedy'). In *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, such contradictions are prevalent, particularly in the interplay between fate and free will. The paradoxical character of Odewale's behaviour is shown as he tries to elude a prophecy and accidentally fulfils it. By concentrating on these inconsistencies, it becomes clear how the text defies a single, conclusive interpretation and provides several possible interpretations. For example, the conflict between human agency and predestination is highlighted by Odewale's attempts to exercise his free will and the certainty of his fate. Examining binary oppositions – pairs of opposing notions where one is usually given preference over the other – is another aspect of deconstruction. We explore important binary concepts like fate/free will, knowledge/ignorance, and guilt/innocence in Rotimi's drama. Our examination concentrates on the ways in which these dichotomies are created, contested, and finally dismantled in the story. For instance, the conflict between fate and free choice is raised when Odewale paradoxically ends up fulfilling his destiny as a result of his attempts to prevent it. The intricacy and interconnectedness of these ideas are highlighted by this subversion of conventional dichotomies, implying that they cannot be comprehended in isolation.

Findings and Discussion

One important component that influences the play's plot and the lives of the characters is prophecy. The Ifa priest's forecast, which is ascribed to fate, causes suffering for the main character, Odewale. The tragic events seen in the play are the result of two major instances of prophecy and the knowledge of things that ought to have remained undetected. These are covered in the following section.

Baba Fakunle's Prophecy and Attempts to Avert Fate

The play opens with the birth of a child who later comes to be known as Odewale. The child is born to the family of King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola. Since the birth of a firstborn is a moment of great delight and

celebration, the parents are understandably overjoyed. They dance and make merry. However, their joy is short-lived due to the customary act of attempting to know the future of the boy. The family's problems begin when the most revered Ifa priest, Baba Fakunle, prophesies that Odewale will kill his father and marry his mother. This sets off a chain of events that causes troubles for the family; Baba Fakunle states: 'This boy, he will kill his own father and then marry his own mother!' (Rotimi 3)

Yoruba culture has a strong tradition of divination, with the belief that the gods reveal sacred things through prophecy (Adeoye). There is sorrow in the air when Baba Fakunle delivers this unbelievable declaration. This statement is regarded with respect and awe since Baba Fakunle, despite being blind, is the most revered seer. It is not questioned by the parents and the people of the town (Uwatt). According to the prophecy, Odewale's fate has already been decided and he is unable to change it. There is a great deal of anxiety and dread created by this prophecy. Tragically, Queen Ojuola, the baby's mother, is stricken with sadness. Anguish and sorrow inevitably engulf the royal family; the king and queen, as well as the entirety of Kutuje, are all overcome with a significant amount of sadness (Adiele, 'Tragedy'). This is evident in the narrator's disclosure: 'Mother sinks to the ground / In sorrow for the seed / That life must crush so soon! / Father consoles her, in his own grief' (Rotimi 3).

Had the prophecy not been revealed, perhaps this day of celebration would not have become a day of grief. According to Chabi and Dadja-Tiou, the birth of a new child is a blessing and a wonderful time for the family. It is the opposite for King Adetusa and his spouse, Ojuola. In African societies and in many parts of the world, there is no place for a boy who will commit double abomination by killing his own father and marrying his own mother.

In this moment, the parents commit a major error: the attempted murder of an innocent child. It is unknown at this time whether Odewale will actually kill his father and marry his mother, but their conviction in the prophecy – rather than being a mere superstition – encaged their free will and drove them to try to kill their child in order to prevent the infant

Odewale from carrying out his dreadful future on earth. There is nothing more terrible for King Adetusa and his wife Ojuola than losing their first child under such horrible circumstances. Due to the sadness that the entirety of Kutuje feels with the loss of the first royal child, the tragedy in the royal family also symbolizes a collective catastrophe for the people (Adiele, 'Tragedy'). It is immediately announced that the boy be taken to the evil forest and killed. The Ogun priest 'ties the boy's feet with a string of cowries, meaning sacrifice to the gods who have sent him down to this earth' (Rotimi 3).

The Ogun priest hands over the child to Gbonka, the king's special messenger, to kill in the 'evil grove' so the blood will not be on their hands, but the stain cannot be removed. Baba Fakunle's prophecy, which leads to the act of carrying out the plan of killing the boy, sets the stage for such destiny to be fulfilled. Gbonka spares his life and hands him over to a hunter, Ogundele, and his boy, Alaka, in the Ipetu bush. Alaka, who later becomes a very close friend of Odewale, recounts the experience of how they picked him up in the bush:

> Alaka: A man brought you there, wrapped up in white cloth like a sacrifice to the gods. Your arms and feet were tied with strings of cowries... with this knife, I cut off the strings of cowries and relieved you of the pain. (Rotimi 63)

Uwatt notes that Odewale would have grown up as Adetusa's son if not for the oracle. The prophecy leads to the attempt to revert fate, resulting in the separation of the baby from his actual parents. If this situation hadn't been uncovered early on, the child wouldn't have been separated from his true parents and grown up knowing strangers as his parents; Odewale later asks: 'Hunter Ogundele is not my father, his wife Mobike is not my mother. You said so. Well, who gave me life?' (Rotimi 62).

Odewale grows up believing his real parents are Ogundele and Mobike. He thinks he is an Ijekun man and recognizes another man's language as his language. He even fights and accidentally kills a man to

defend the integrity of that tribe: 'The old man should not have mocked my tribe. He called my tribe bush. That I cannot bear.' (Rotimi 50).

The attempt to kill baby Odewale to avert the foretold fate becomes a haunting regret for his parents, particularly Queen Ojuola. This sentiment is vividly expressed in the aftermath of King Adetusa's death, when the oracle declares that he was killed by his own blood. This is not believed by the people because they are unaware of Odewale's existence. Queen Ojuola holds Baba Fakunle responsible for the death of her son, seeing him as a murderer rather than a soothsayer:

> Ojuola: He made me [...] kill my son. My very first son – by my first husband. On the ninth day after the boy was born, my former husband summoned this Baba Fakunle to tell the boy's future. Baba Fakunle said the boy had brought bad luck to the earth and that we must kill the boy so that the bad luck would die with him. And when my husband died too, this same Baba Fakunle said he was killed by his own blood. So why did you not tell that same soothsayer that he lied when he said again that it was the king who murdered the former king? (Rotimi 52–53)

In this extract, Ojuola's anguish and confusion are palpable. She grapples with the immense guilt of having lost her firstborn son based on Baba Fakunle's dire prophecy. The queen's faith in the soothsayer, once absolute, is now shattered, and she questions the veracity of his prophecies, suspecting deceit or malevolence. Her regret is compounded by the fact that she now perceives Baba Fakunle, whom the town revered and trusted, as a liar and a killer. In actual reality, Baba Fakunle said what he saw, but if they had not approached him to want to know tomorrow, none of the incidents would have happened. This intense regret underlines a significant theme in the play: the potentially destructive consequences of attempting to know the future based on prophetic insights.

Ojuola's inability to detect the full truth – that the son she believed to have been killed is the very one who has returned to murder her first husband and eventually marry her – adds a tragic irony to her situation.

This irony is evident in another lamentation from Ojuola: 'I even told him about my own trouble when I had my first baby – a boy. This same soothsayer said that the boy had bad luck' (Rotimi 57).

The queen lives with the profound burden and guilt of having taken her son's life, all due to a prophecy that dictated her actions. Had the parents not been so eager to know and alter the future, the series of tragic events that unfolded might have been avoided. Ojuola's reflection suggests that she would likely reject such prophetic interventions if given a second chance, illustrating the serious responsibility and potentially devastating consequences that come with the desire to foresee and manipulate the future.

In Odewale's character, it is clear he rejects this destiny. While the play does not explicitly explain why the gods have imposed this fate on him or his family, Odewale's view of his fate as a curse is powerfully conveyed in the following passage:

> Odewale: Laugh at me while I killed my own father and married my own mother. Is that your wish? If you think that is a laughing matter, may the gods curse you to kill your own father and share a bed with your own mother. (Rotimi 61)

In this moment, Odewale's anguish and frustration are evident. He acknowledges it is a curse from the gods for one to be destined to kill his father and marry his mother. If he had known his true parents from the beginning, he would likely not have fulfilled such a destiny. He would have known King Adetusa as his father and Queen Ojuola as his mother. If not for the prophecy, Odewale would have grown up recognising his true biological parents and would have had no reason to see them as strangers. Etherton states that the gods are indeed the cause of Odewale's downfall, for his particular crimes would not have been committed if there had been no prophecy. He would have grown up in his family, hot-tempered perhaps, but there is nothing in his character to suggest that he could ever commit patricide and incest. However, the fault is not that of the oracle. The oracle speaks when consulted. The fault lies in the practice that tries to see a future as yet unknown. The

prophecies and the subsequent actions taken based on them illustrate the complex interaction of fate, free will, and the consequences of seeking to know the future. These actions ultimately lead to the fulfilment of the very destiny Odewale's parents sought to avoid, underlining the tragic irony and the heavy burden of prophetic knowledge.

The Elder's Parable and the Revelation of Truth

The elder man's parable is another significant moment in the play that reinforces the tension between prophecy and fate. The hunter whom Gbonka gave the boy to in the Ipetu bush takes the baby home to Ijekun-Yemoja and hands him over to his wife Mobike for upbringing. When growing up, the young Odewale, without any knowledge of his foster background, one day kneels to greet an elder who replies curtly, 'the butterfly thinks himself a bird' (Rotimi 59).

> Odewale: Alaka here and I were one day working on my father's farm when an old man whom I had long known as my father's brother walked up on us. I lay flat in greeting as custom says. But what did this man do? He looked down at me, looked at me... looked, then spat: 'the butterfly thinks himself a bird'. That was what he said: 'the butterfly thinks himself a bird'. Then he hissed and walked away. Spat again. (Rotimi 59)

In traditional African society, elders are revered for their wisdom and understanding of life. Their words often carry weight and significance, making it difficult for Odewale here to discard the elder's words as those of a drunk, despite Alaka's initial suggestion. As an African adage goes, 'a bush does not sway this way or that way unless there is wind' (Rotimi 60). The elder's remark disturbs Odewale, suggesting to him that there is a deeper meaning behind the comparison of a butterfly thinking itself a bird. This moment is crucial as it sets the stage for the prophecy, which Odewale's parents had tried to avert, to resurface and haunt him.

Odewale consults the Ifa oracle and is told that he is cursed to kill his father and marry his mother. This is a fate he might never have learned about if the elder had not made his cryptic comment. Had he not

discovered this prophecy, he might not have taken the actions that eventually led to fulfilling that destiny. The Ifa priest warns him to do nothing and not run from the fate:

> To run away would be foolish. The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay where you are. Stay where you are… stay where you are […]. (Rotimi 60)

However, the elder's words awaken something in Odewale that would otherwise have remained dormant. He cannot bear to stay idle and do nothing, so he decides to run away from the prophecy, but in doing so, he inadvertently moves toward fulfilling his destiny. If the elder had not said anything, Odewale would not have learned of his curse to kill his father and marry his mother – a fate he was desperate to avoid. This is taboo not only in African culture but also across the world. Understanding this, Odewale vows to never return home unless his father and mother are dead. According to Alaka: 'I'm going to Ede,' he said, 'and don't you come to look for me until my father and mother are both dead!' (Rotimi 43).

This statement is unbelievable to Alaka and the queen when she hears it. Both wonder why he would say that. For Odewale, the reason is clear: if he stays far away from home and avoids seeing his parents, then there is no chance he will kill his father and commit incest. He runs away from his foster parents, believing them to be his real parents, and is unaware of the true story behind his birth. Indeed, it is in this way he is like a butterfly thinking itself a bird.

Odewale has no peace staying with his assumed parents after learning he could kill his father and marry his mother. If he had actually grown up with his real parents as he should have, it is possible that none of this would have happened. From the beginning, the prophecy distorts his life and, later in life, it is still prophecy that acts as the compass to ensure he goes towards the path of tragic fate.

Odewale runs to settle in Ede, where he buys a farm. Coincidentally, the same farm had already been sold to King Adetusa, his biological father, and on a certain day, they both meet at the farm. Due to the

prophecy and the attempt to avert it, the father does not recognise his son and the son sees his father as 'this man [...] short [...] an old man [...] a thief' (Rotimi 46). Following an altercation, Odewale kills the old man, King Adetusa, his biological father. The first prophecy eventually comes to pass.

> Odewale: The woods heard me cry. The ground heard my running. There was nothing to stay for on my farm. I had wanted its soil to hold yams and my sweat. Nothing more. Yams. And my sweat. Now, there was no yam in its soil. And in place of my sweat, there was blood – another man's blood. In my search for somewhere to hide, I crossed five rivers. It was that search that brought me to this strange land [...]. (Rotimi 50)

Odewale, who has now killed his biological father inadvertently, runs away from Ede and, wandering from place to place, finds his way to Kutuje. There, the people of the Kingdom of Kutuje decide to make him their king because he had actively participated in the tribal war against Ikolu and led them to victory. His crowning thus comes as a reward for the victory, of which he is the main actor. After becoming the king of the tribe, he has the obligation to respect the tradition of that tribe by marrying the Queen mother of the former king. As custom dictates in Yorubaland, when a king dies, his successor has to marry the deceased king's wife or wives as part and parcel of the royal legacy (Chabi et al.). As a result, he accidentally marries his own mother. Thus, the second prophecy comes to pass.

Adiele ('Tragedy') comments that the incestuous relationship between King Odewale and Queen Ojuola violates the spiritual and cosmic ordinances of the people. The ensuing consequences of this act are fatal, for there has only been eleven years of joy in the kingdom after King Adetusa's death. The extract below attests this fact:

> We have all lived in joy
> these eleven years
> and Kutuje
> has prospered.

> But joy
> has a slender body
> that breaks too soon. [...]
> There is trouble
> now in the land.
> Joy has broken
> and scattered.
> Peace, too, is no more. (Rotimi 32)

The trouble that is now in the land, as referred to in the foregoing quotation, is that people die of a strange sickness all over the Kingdom of Kutuje. When Baba Fakunle, the most respected seer, is invited once again to consult the gods and divine a solution, he says the calamity is as a result of the unresolved death of the former king. He later refers to Odewale as a murderer and a bedsharer.

> Baba Fakunle: I smelled it. I smelled the truth as I came to this land. The truth smelled stronger and still stronger as I came into this place. Now, it is choking me... choking me I say.... You called me pig! You are a murderer [...]. You force words from me again you [...] Bedsharer! [...] your hot temper, like a disease from birth is the curse that has brought you trouble. (Rotimi 27–29)

Odewale foams with anger, feeling unjustly accused and misunderstood. He detests being referred to as a murderer and bedsharer (Nutsukpo). He feels it is because he was made king in another man's land.

> Odewale: I am an Ijekun man. That's the trouble. I, an Ijekun man, came to your tribe, you made me king and I was happy [...]. 'Bedsharer'. You heard it. Didn't you? That blind bat who calls himself Seer says I am a 'bedsharer'. What does that mean? Sharing bed with whom? Ojuola, Aderopo's mother. In other words, I don't belong in that bed. In other words, I have no right to be king. What do you think of that? (Rotimi 31)

Odewale's response highlights his ignorance of his true identity and the prophecy's fulfilment. Odewale's anger stems from his belief that

Baba Fakunle's accusations are rooted in his status as an outsider, not realizing that they are the bitter truth of his origins and actions. This ignorance exacerbates his frustration and sense of injustice. If the prophecy had been known from the start, it might have helped prevent the tragedy. Even the mother, Ojuola, does not recognize her child. Instead of a son, she unwittingly sees a husband: 'It is you I married, your highness, not my son. The position of a husband is different from a son' (Rotimi 38).

The separation right from the beginning as a result of the eagerness to know the future of a child ultimately causes the tragedy. In this case, the attempt to see the future leads to the act to change it. However, the future cannot be changed. Sometimes, trying to change the future can lead to mistakes that bring that future about sooner than anticipated. As the saying goes, destiny may be delayed, but it cannot be changed. When it cannot be prevented, why the desire to see the future?

Amid the accusation of Odewale as a murderer and bedsharer, he is very unhappy and eager to find out the truth. Odewale's relentless pursuit of the truth, driven by his desire to clear his name and understand his fate, takes a psychological impact on him. He cannot sleep well or eat well. This is revealed in the extracts below:

> Ojuola: Listen, all of you. Come, come, come closer. Listen: Father is not happy today, and I want you to behave yourselves, do you understand? [...] Won't my lord eat even a little before he goes?
>
> Odewale: No, no food yet. I must carry on my search for the murderer of King Adetusa. If we fail to catch the murderer in the town, we shall move on to the villages around us. If we find no murderer there either, we will go to the farms [...].
>
> Ojuola: The king refuses to eat, my lord. (Rotimi 46, 50, 56)

Each of the above extracts reveal the psychological impact of the whole scenario on Odewale. His inability to eat and sleep reflects his disturbed mental state and the depth of his despair. Indeed, it is King Odewale's eagerness to clarify the situation that leads to the discovery of the truth.

Odewale believes that the turmoil stems from jealousy and a conspiracy by his younger brother, Aderopo, who was born after their parents sacrificed Odewale two years earlier. According to the people, Aderopo is the rightful heir to the throne: he is the first son of King Adetusa as the people know. Odewale suspects that Aderopo's actions are an attempt to overthrow his reign. He feels bitter that Baba Fakunle would use the word 'bedsharer' for him. Nutsukpo asserts that Odewale was shocked and angry, and accuses Aderopo of jealousy and conspiracy with the seer to facilitate his downfall to his advantage. Odewale comments about Aderopo: 'If that's the case, he should come and sleep with his mother and let him bear children by her' (Rotimi 61).

The psychological toll on Odewale is immense, as his quest for justice and clarity brings him face-to-face with the reality he sought to avoid. The climactic revelation by Gbonka and the Ogun Priest that Ojuola, his wife and mother of his children, is also his biological mother, seals his tragic fate.

> Gbonka: Pray, have mercy, I meant you no wrong. I only tried to spare your life, my lord, I meant no harm. They ordered me to kill you in the bush. But I took pity and gave [...].
>
> Odewale: I said who gave me b–i–r–t–h?
>
> Ogun Priest: She. The woman who just went into the bedroom. Bearer of your four children, she too is your mother! (Rotimi 68)

Unfortunately, Odewale becomes complicit in his fate when he learns that 'the woman who just went into the bedroom [Ojuola]', the '[b]earer of his four children is also [his] mother!' The terrible knowledge that the prophecy has come true causes Queen Ojuola's untimely demise. Her previous attempt to change fate by sacrificing her newborn son, as advised by the soothsayer, comes back to haunt her in the most unimaginable way. Queen Ojuola commits suicide due to the fact that she cannot comprehend such an abomination, testifying to the tragic consequences of prophecy. This act is not merely a result of her immediate shock but a product of years of repressed guilt and her eventual recognition of her part in fulfilling the prophecy. Her death serves as a

poignant commentary on how difficult it is for people to accept and deal with destined events, particularly when trying to escape them leads to even more tragic results.

Odewale has an equally tragic journey towards self-awareness. At first, he is indignant and defensive, unwilling to understand or acknowledge the charges levelled against him. But as the reality becomes clear, his response changes from being furious to being deeply ashamed of himself and hopeless:

> Odewale: No, no! Do not blame the gods. Let no one blame the powers. My people, learn from my fall. The powers would have failed if I did not let them use me. They knew my weakness: the weakness of a man easily moved to the defence of his tribe against another. I once slew a man on my farm in Ede. I could have spared him but he spat on my tribe. He spat in the tribe I thought was my own tribe. (Rotimi 71)

This statement captures Odewale's intense inner turmoil and horror at discovering that the same things he was trying to stop have actually happened. The psychological weight of realizing he killed his father and married his mother and fulfilled the grim prophecy is too much for him to handle. Additionally, his comments here convey his acceptance of the harsh irony of his circumstances and the unavoidability of fate. The curse he lays on others – may the gods curse you to kill your own father and sleep in the same bed as your mother (61) – reflects his own doomed life and acknowledges the unbreakable connection between his deeds and destiny. Odewale is greatly affected psychologically. He is overcome with self-loathing and guilt, recognizing that his life's actions have led to unimaginable horror. This psychological turmoil is further emphasised when he accepts full responsibility for the tragedy, despite the gods' role in determining his fate (Chabi and Dadja-Tiou).

Conclusion

In many literature classes, various characters in *The Gods Are Not to Blame* are apportioned blame for the misfortune that befalls Odewale and

his family (Chabi and Dadja-Tiou; Mokani; Adiele**)**. Some blame Gbonka for not fulfilling the task assigned to him. If he had ended the boy's life from the beginning, Odewale would not have lived to experience such horror. Also, some blame the gods that use men as a pawn on a chess board to achieve their objectives. Others blame Odewale's temper, the tragic flaw which drove him to kill his father accidentally. However, this study reveals that the root of the problem lies in the act of divining the future. If the future had remained unknown, the consequences witnessed might not have occurred. Attempting to change the future was the error that led to the tragic events. The resultant effects were not limited to Odewale alone. King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola suffered the depression of losing a child they were happy to have, with the former later dying at his hand. Odewale not only married his mother but also bore children with her. His foster parents never saw the child they raised with love again because Odewale mistook them for the parents he was prophesied to kill. Odewale's realisation of the truth led to his immense disappointment in himself, causing him to gouge out his eyes and live in exile. This narrative does not negate the existence of fate or the role of prophecy in our destiny. Rather, it suggests that sometimes we must embrace the uncertainty of the future. The knowledge of the future can be more destructive than the future itself. Scripture advises, 'Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own' (*NIV Bible*, Matt. 6.34). This suggests that we must let the future decide for itself what tomorrow will bring. Embracing uncertainty can sometimes be the wisest course of action, avoiding the pitfalls of attempting to change a destiny that may be inevitable.

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Profaning Secularism: Translating Language, Medium, and Ideology in Victor Hugo's 1862 *Les Misérables* and its 2012 Film Adaptation

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Introduction

The 1862 novel *Les Misérables* by noted French author Victor Hugo is one of the most significant works of post-revolutionary French nationalism. In this paper, I investigate how this text becomes a quasi-religious document – one that holds at its sacred centre the potential of the reformed and post-revolutionary French nation – through a comparison with the 2012 film adaptation (dir. Tom Hooper) of the musical *Les Misérables*. Through a comparison of the 2012 film and Hugo's original novel, this paper demonstrates the intersections of language and medium in shaping portrayals of nationalism and secularism, particularly as they are moulded to fit Anglophone ideals of 'civil religion' within a late capitalist milieu. I argue that translation and adaptation decisions made in Tom Hooper's film highlight the way in which the sacralisation of the French state as depicted in Hugo's 1862 novel is bound closely within the Francophone French context. In this way, I show how the most recent

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development of this story continues to highlight significant differences between the French and Anglophone worlds.

Benedict Anderson, in discussing the notion of nationalism as a community-building force, evokes the concept of the imagined community, stating that:

> It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (Anderson 6)

The image of communion, in the formation of nationalism, is disseminated and enforced by narratives. These narratives may take the form of history (whether real or mythic), that either provides a shared origin story for the nation or concretises through fiction an ideal of the state as a unifying force. Anderson points to the 'old-fashioned novel' as an easy and effective disseminating method of such narratives. The mass distribution quality of print and the digestibility of the novel has meant that individuals 'can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected' (Anderson 25).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis posits that 'language and our thought-grooves are inextricably interwoven […] in a sense, one and the same' (Sapir 217–8). In applying this hypothesis to Anderson's conception of the imagined community, therefore, it may be theorised that the language in which a communal narrative is conceived and communicated that shapes its nature and ideological message.

In this paper, I shall apply this principle to Victor Hugo's 1862 French-language *Les Misérables* and its latest feature film adaptation, the 2012 English-language musical film *Les Misérables* directed by Tom Hooper, to examine the effect of translation on conveying particular ideologies and philosophies that are intrinsically bound in the history and culture of the adapted language. *Les Misérables* was published in a series of five volumes between 30 March and 15 May 1862, totalling over 650,000 words. The text's core is the narrative of Jean Valjean, a former convict seeking moral redemption while pursued by the relentless Inspector Javert. Hugo uses Valjean's journey to explore the political chaos and evolving social landscape of post-revolutionary France. Woven into this central narrative are various subplots and lengthy digressions on topics ranging from the morality of prostitution to the construction of Paris's sewerage system.

I shall approach *Les Misérables* as a text rooted in language on two vital fronts. The first is as a mythopoetic epic, artfully crafted by 'a master of syntax in the French tradition' (Brombert 4). The second is as a socio-political tract that is undoubtedly one of the most prominent post-revolutionary French texts. Such a novel, I shall argue, takes on quasi-religious dimensions which reflect the framework of civil religion based around the deification of the modern state, as originated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and framed by Robert E. Bellah as 'the set of beliefs, rites and symbols which relates a man's role as citizen and his society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning' (Willaime, 'De La Sacralisation' 127).

Les Misérables denounces traditional religious structures of pre-Revolutionary France in favour of extolling the new French state as a force of communal divinity, with revolution being its evangelical tool. In the process of catering to a non-Francophone (that is, more specifically Anglophone) audience, in Hooper's 2012 film the original epic written by Hugo is reduced to its skeletal narrative and recreated in a manner which discards a number of key features that are integral to the original work. Most importantly, the adaptation neglects the fundamental truth that *Les Misérables* is equal parts narration and philosophy, narrative and national ideology (Imhoff 64).

In comparing the two texts, I take into account the various limitations placed on the film by virtue of medium and length. Hooper's *Les Misérables* has a running time of 158 minutes, which is long for a cinematic format but can hardly be expected to provide a comprehensive adaptation of Hugo's lengthy text (which totals 655,478 words in its original French edition). Nevertheless, what is removed and what remains is noteworthy in terms of its cultural translatability. I will also consider the visual and musical aesthetics used by Hooper in my comparison of the two works to illustrate the ways in which the process of translation and the shift in linguistic framework may result in dramatically altered representations of political and cultural ideology – which highlights the differing political assumptions between Francophone and Anglophone world assumptions across time.

Narrative, Nationalism, and the Birth of Civil Religion

The lay definition of religion, which remains heavily Judeo-Christian in nature, does not tend to include nationalism within its umbrella. Even the disciplines of sociology and political science make a clear distinction between nationalism and religion as

existing within the spheres of politics and culture respectively. The development of the independent discipline of critical religious studies and increasing study of non-Abrahamic traditions, however, has led to the establishment of several frameworks to identify the religious nature of an ideology. In *Les forms élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (*Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, published 1912), Emile Durkheim identifies a dichotomous classification of the world into two categories: the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 37). The existence of a sacred entity (whether physical or conceptual), protected by regulations and interdictions, is the common uniting framework of all religions (Durkheim 41). In such a paradigm, sacred things are sacred as signifiers of group identity and drivers of group cohesion, rather than being sacred in and of themselves.

This paradigm provides a prevailing method of examining the beginnings of radical French nationalism, which from 1793 developed as a 'religious' institution honouring the new republic through the *culte de raison* and through the public worship of the deist-like *Être suprême*. This post-revolutionary state cult could trace its origins to the ideas generated during the period of French Enlightenment, particularly through the philosophies espoused by such luminaries as Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Denis Diderot, Toussaint Louverture, and others (Linton 38). The framework of the 'religious' within which French nationalism came to be thus institutionalised was articulated by Rousseau as being 'the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, and the exclusion of religious intolerance' (Bellah 4).

Similarly, although focusing on the USA, Robert N. Bellah argues in 'Civil Religion in America' (1967) that civil religion is a separate entity to deity-focused religion, and that it is based on transforming the historical experience of a nation into a mythic transcendent narrative (Bellah 4). The development of French civil religion as both theoretical concept and potent force was situated within a wider spread of nationalism as a cultural entity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alongside growing disquiet over the power of divine Christian providence as ultimate arbiter of justice and social cohesion (Anderson).

In the process of French nationalism developing as a force distinct from the shared identity of Christendom rooted in adherence to the Catholic church, the imagined community of France began to take shape. The exclusion of religion intolerance, as imagined by Rousseau, however, conflicted heavily with resentment directed to the old institutions in France, based as they were in the Church and the divine right of

kings. This resentment gave birth to the ideology of *anticléricalisme*, a deeply antireligious heritage that came to be a significant legacy of the great figures of eighteenth-century French Enlightenment atheism (Lalouette 129).[1] Rousseau cannot be characterised as a proponent of *anticléricalisme*; despite his disgust with the state of Christianity at his time, and his controversial views on religious tolerance and original sin, he was a staunch Christian deist. He nevertheless held that sovereignty is rooted in the consent of citizens, rather than being derived from a transcendent being (Lincoln 57).

The underpinning origins and reasons for the rise of a potent *anticléricalisme* come from the oppressive history of the *Ancien Régime* (the strict feudalistic hierarchy which was removed by the French Revolution in 1789) and the philosophical period of the Enlightenment. The political system of the *Ancien Régime* followed the ideology of absolute monarchy; that is, while the parliament and the Church had some authority, the king was theoretically the final arbiter of rights (Linton 27). The ideals of the French Revolution were drawn from anger at the particular injustices experienced by ordinary citizens and stood in direct opposition to the social conditions under this absolute monarchy, as well as the monopolisation of power by the nobility and clergy. The key elements of post-revolutionary France stemming from the conditions of the *Ancien Régime* were: a strong aversion to the clergy (*anticléricalisme*) broaching upon the anti-religious; equality from birth; and cohesive fraternity. The 1789 *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* [*The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*] encapsulates the shift from divine sovereignty to popular sovereignty grounded in communalism. The term *homme* ('man') is employed collectively and used almost interchangeably with *société*, as is clear in Articles Four, Five and Six of the declaration. Articles Three and Six establish the state as the vessel of communal will and the ultimate arbiter of sovereignty (Lincoln 57). This transition underpins the framework of civil religion explored by Hugo in *Les Misérables*.

Alexis de Tocqueville frames the rise of this popular sovereignty in distinctly religious terms, stating that '*Elle est devenue elle-même une sorte de religion nouvelle* […] *sans Dieu* […] *mais qui, néanmoins* […] *a inondé toute la terre de ses soldats de ses apôtres et de ses martyrs*' ['It has become in itself a kind of new religion […] without God […] but which, nevertheless […] has inundated the whole of Earth with its

[1] "[T]he great materialist atheists of the eighteenth century, Diderot, La Mettrie, d'Holbach, had left behind a heritage of antireligious anticlericalism" (Lalouette 129).

soldiers and its apostles and its martyrs'] (Tocqueville 108). He argues that the only truly apt analogy for the French revolution can be to religious revolutions, due to its ideological drive. This was reflected most strongly through the heavy emphasis on the rights and duties of the 'citizen' as an abstract, rather than simply the rights of French citizens. Espousing the concept of natural rights, according to Tocqueville, allowed the ideals of the French revolution to incorporate facets of proselytising to a scale and depth that had never before existed in political revolutions (Tocqueville 108).

Tocqueville argues that the post-Revolution state hollowed out the ideals of liberty and nationalism, repurposing their empty shells as dogmatic scaffolding for society (Tocqueville 9). This gave rise to the notion of the French state as an evolving civic ideal – one that became, at times, the object of civil worship (Willaime, 'La Religion Civile' 578). While this ideal was short-lived in reality (with the First French Republic being overthrown in 1799 by its First Consul, Napoleon), a number of the elements of anti-religiosity featured in the Napoleonic Code, and respect for the rights of defendants were also clearly established through the mandating of lawyers for defendants (*Code d'instruction criminelle*, article 294). This framework would eventually pave the way for the emergence in the Third Republic (1870–1940) of, according to British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, 'the development of a secular equivalent of the church – primary education, imbued with revolutionary and republic principles […] the invention of public ceremonies [… and] the mass production of public monuments' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 271–2).

It is within this volatile and emerging secular milieu that Victor Hugo and his writing are situated. Initially a Royalist who sought out courtly patronage, Hugo came to believe that he was born into a unique, formative age. This was fuelled by Hugo's participation in the *cénacle* of Charles Nodier: a literary salon patronised by young nascent Romanticist writers including Alexandre Dumas, Alfred de Musset, and Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (Glinoer 550). From the 1830s Hugo engaged heavily in discourse painting the post-revolutionary era as a liminal period of myth and reality, as the formation of modern France sought to break away from the Bourbon and Orleanist regimes (Robb 15). Victor Brombert states that 'by the time Hugo wrote *William Shakespeare* [(1864)], he considered the French Revolution as the single most life-changing and life-giving event in modern history' (Brombert 205). This is reflected in all of Hugo's politically-inspired works. *La Dernier Jour D'un Condamné*, a novella written and published by Hugo in 1829 (some decades before

the publication of *Les Misérables* in 1862), is essentially a discursive work rejecting the death penalty as antiquated and barbaric. Hugo's last novel, *Quatrevingt-treize* (1874), was devoted to the French revolution.

Hugo was an enthusiastic proponent of the epic novel as a medium using storytelling as an accessible vehicle to explore the struggles of humanity (Brombert 99). This is certainly the case with *Les Misérables*. Though the text has a cohesive and sustained narrative, that narrative is simultaneously a device that spans a length and breadth of themes and interweaving of history (through a vivid description of the Battle of Waterloo), physical geography (from the landscapes of rural France to a near-reverent description of Paris's sewers). Through this, *Les Misérables* takes on a discursive dimension, centring liberty, equality, and fraternity as the core ethos of the reborn French revolutionary nation shedding the shackles of feudalism.

Beyond the text itself, however, lies the narrative of its creation. Written from exile on the British isle of Guernsey after the 1851 self-coronation of Napoleon III and Hugo's flight from France, the very existence of *Les Misérables* became a fundamentally political act. Although the text begins in 1815 and culminates in 1832, its narrative and themes are rooted in the socio-political struggles of the entirety of the post-revolutionary context, and its process of creation and publication is inherently radical. The text is not only a response to the French revolution, it is also a text *for* the revolution, with a creator who 'returned to Paris at the end of the Empire in 1870 as a gigantic oxymoron who seemed single-handedly to represent the history of France since the revolution' (Robb xiii). This alludes to Hugo's background and the trajectory of his ideologies throughout his life; at once strongly religious and emphatically secular, and moving from loyal royalism to republican socialism.

The Adaptive Process

The adaptive theorist Julie Sanders frames the adaptive process as multidimensional and multifaceted (Sanders 18). At the heart of this process is an act of commentary on the source text. This commentary may add new perspectives, reshape narrative style to aid dissemination to new audiences, simplify content, or expand its boundaries. This framework is particularly useful when considering the genealogy of the 2012 musical film adaptation of *Les Misérables*.

The 2012 film originated first as a French-language rock opera and concept album, scored by Claude-Michel Schonberg with a libretto by Alain Boublil. The

concept album abandoned the chapters preceding Valjean's appearance in the text. As a result of the concept album's success, a stage adaptation was developed and opened at the *Palais de Sports* in Paris in 1980. The production met with moderate success, leading to its adaptation by theatrical producer Cameron Mackintosh for an Anglophone audience (Tims). The English journalist and lyricist Herbert Kretzmer was commissioned to write the translation. The first performance on the West End in London was on 8 October 1985 (Griffiths and Watts 115). The translated and adapted production was significantly altered, resulting in a long runtime and a considerable shift away from the rock opera musical genre. Its ending was also vastly changed; where the book and rock opera conclude with Valjean's quiet death and burial, the Anglophone adaptation concludes with a triumphant reunion of the primary characters in the afterlife. More alterations were made for the 1987 staging of the musical on Broadway in New York, with its stylistic rock opera roots being almost entirely abandoned. It was this version of *Les Misérables* that was ultimately translated to film in 2012; making it a thrice-removed adaptation of Victor Hugo's original text.

As with the musical, Hooper's film begins with Valjean's narrative and ends with a triumphant reappearance of the film's dead atop a towering barricade in the streets of Paris. The film opens with the dramatic image of a tattered French flag submerged in water, overlayed by the following text: '1815. Twenty six years after the French revolution a king is once again on the throne of France' (Hooper 0:0:40). Similar additions throughout the film frame it as a historical epic grounded in a well-known context.

The film also incorporates additional material from the novel, including the introduction of Marius's grandfather and Valjean's refuge in a Parisian convent. These nods toward textual fidelity, however, are more gestural than transformative. The musical form, tending towards focus on emotional mediacy and narrative momentum, does not provide space for the addition of the complex relationships and histories between characters, rooted often in sociopolitical nuances and contributing to Hugo's commentary on French society at his time. For instance, the relationship between Marius (Eddie Redmayne) and his grandfather reflects Hugo's own internal conflict between Bonapartist nostalgia, royalist sentiments, and a gradual turn toward radical republicanism.

Depictions of Misery

Misery is a key theme in *Les Misérables* (as the title would suggest). Indeed, Hugo devotes the characters of Fantine and Eponine entirely to the effect of misery on the soul (and most of his other lead characters – particularly Valjean, Marius, and Cosette – do not escape unmarred by it). Hugo's approach to the concept of misery is best summed up in the following quote, associated with Marius: '*Il en est de la misère comme de tout. Elle arrive à devenir possible* […] *c'est-à-dire on se développe d'une certaine façon chétive, mais suffisante à la vie*' ['It is with misery as it is with everything. It becomes possible […] that is to say, one evolves in a manner that is pitiful, but sufficient to live'] (Hugo 302). Misery as the result of social injustice is a core theme of *Les Misérables*, represented in both the narrative arcs of characters, and in Hugo's frequent tangents. Similarly, the 2012 film represents two forms of social injustice and misery: that of the individual, and that of greater society. The ways these are represented, however, indicate differences in conception of character and theme in the novel and film.

The film contains several group scenes: that is, scenes involving a significant chorus role. Each deal with the general theme of collective misery, but sometimes in particular contexts: a convict shipyard; a worker's factory; a dockyard of prostitutes; and the streets of Paris. Each of these is strongly orchestrated, heavily harmonized, and alternately defiant and stirring. These particular scenes involve choral refrains, interspersed by solo lines. In the dockyard scene, Fantine is confronted by a group of prostitutes who advertise their services and convince Fantine to join them if she needs money. In contrast, Hugo does not situate his reflections on social injustice in the linear narrative of *Les Misérables*. Rather, he provides interludes, sometimes mid-way through the narrative, which reflect on particular social issues. The moment in the book which most closely parallels the scene described above that which follows Fantine's decision to turn to prostitution.

In the film, Fantine is a tragic figure from the beginning; she is physically pushed out of the factory she works in after a fellow worker reveals the existence of Cosette, enraging the foreman who has been pressuring Fantine to have sex with him. This dramatic scene, where Fantine is accused of prostituting herself ('you play a virgin in the light/but need no urging in the night') is starkly different to Fantine's dismissal in the book. In the novel, a swell of rumours gradually result in Fantine's dismissal, where she is given fifty francs as a severance payment: '*M. le maire lui donnait cinquante francs, parce qu'il était bon, et la chassait, parce qu'il était juste*' ['the mayor

gave her fifty francs, because he was good, and removed her, because he was just'] (Hugo 264). Her fall is graceless, humiliating, and quiet.

Moreover, Fantine is not alone, as Hugo continuously reiterates, in her fall: '*il* [*la prostitution*] *pèse sur la femme, c'est-à-dire sur la grâce, sur la faiblesse, sur la beauté, sur la maternité. Ceci n'est pas une des moindres hontes de l'homme*' ['it [prostitution] weighs on women, that is to say on their grace, on their vulnerability, on their beauty, on their maternity. This is not one of the lesser shames of man'] (Hugo 275). For Hugo, the socially oppressed suffer not only from their day-to-day misery and pain, but also from a loss of personhood, where diversity and distinctness are smothered beneath a cover of injustice and inequality.

In contrast, the entirety of 'I Dreamed a Dream' is performed as an almost uncomfortably profile shot of Fantine, immediately after we have just viewed her unwilling encounter with her first client as a prostitute. Moreover, when she is rescued by Valjean, the image evoked when he lifts her in his arms is one of the classical damsel in distress. Her pain is carefully represented to be pitiful but not unattractive; whereas Hugo takes great pains to represent the loss of all her beauty, mirroring the darkness that has entered her soul. In Hugo's novel, even Fantine's death is degrading and ignoble. She dies of shock as Javert triumphantly informs her that Valjean, the first man to show her kindness in years, is a criminal (Hugo 415). By contrast, her film counterpart dies while being cradled in Valjean's arms, after having extracted a promise that her daughter will be cared for.

Both texts do return to the subject of Fantine later, albeit briefly. At the end of the film, she returns as a spirit to Valjean's side and adjures him to 'take my hand/I'll lead you to salvation' (Hooper 2:27:15–22). Here, we are offered the ultimate promise of the film: that those who suffer in life may at least be assured of peace in the afterlife. This is a promise that Hugo has no intention of offering his readers, because to him alleviation of suffering and misery in society is in and of itself holy (Grossman 50). Therefore, the following is Fantine's final fate in the 1862 novel:

> *Fantine fut donc enterrée dans le coin gratis du cimetière qui est à tous et à personne, et où l'on perd les pauvres* [...]. *On coucha Fantine dans les ténèbres parmi les premiers os venus ; elle subit la promiscuité des cendres. Elle fut jetée à la fosse publique. Sa tombe ressembla à son lit*.
>
> [Fantine was thus interred in the free corner of the cemetery which is for everyone and no one, and where the poor are lost [...]. They laid Fantine to rest

> in the shadows amongst the first bones that came to hand; she was subjected to the promiscuity of the ashes. She was thrown into the public grave. Her tomb was like her bed.] (Hugo 424)

For Hugo, there is no nobility or respite offered to Fantine after her death. She is a victim not simply of the microcosmic circumstances of her life, but also of the overarching malaise of society that Hugo denounces; one which haunts every aspect of the existence of a *misérable*. In Hugo's writing, the anonymity of Fantine's life and death in particular highlights the loss of identity and individuality that comes as part of being one of his *misérables*.

Characterisations of Religion

Tocqueville stipulates that one of the major driving forces for the 1789 revolution was the rejection of the Christian religious institution, and that '*même que l'enthousiasme de la liberté s'était évanoui, après* […] *on restait révolté contre l'autorité religieuse*' ['even when enthusiasm for liberty dissipated, after […] they stayed resolutely against religious authority'] (Tocqueville 8). While not outright denouncing Christian institutionalism as a whole, Hugo is scathing of its authoritarianism. His writing, however, is hardly antireligious, and he does not shy away from the use of Christian religious imagery in *Les Misérables*. Neither does Hooper; however, the method in which this imagery appears is extremely different. Hugo's religious imagery revolves around the contrast he draws as emblematic of misery in opposition to (literally) enlightenment. While the novel is hardly anti-God, it is strongly opposed to the Church; as he states, he is '*pour la religion contre les religions*' ['for religion against religions'] (Hugo 1998). Hugo was deeply religious, and this is reflected by an omnipresent benevolent force evoked regularly throughout *Les Misérables*, particularly in the reflective moments of narrative stillness. Though this force is evidently the God of Hugo's Christianity, Hugo's clear aim is to transcend ideas and boundaries of normative nineteenth century spiritualism and religion, framed heavily by Judeo-Christian structures. His thesis is that a shift towards a humanism-centric *laïcité* is, perhaps ironically, the purest form of godliness.

Hooper's film, in contrast, does not share the book's reservations about traditional Christianity or its opposition to established religion. At the end of the Prologue after Valjean has experienced his life-changing encounter with Bishop Myriel, there follows a scene which encapsulates the film's conception of what *Les Misérables* deems 'good' Christianity. Against the backdrop of a Christian cross and a majestic

church, Valjean tears up his convict passport and throws it into the air, the wind carrying it (and the camera's lens) towards the dawning sky. The rest of the film continues this theme of the replacement of an abstract Infinite with a strongly traditional depiction of the Christian God. Contrary to the book, the film's depiction of the Infinite is not grounded in small moments and grand ideals. Instead, it is rife with Christian imagery, sweeping images of churches, and a greater emphasis on the (invented) religious strictness of Javert (Kroenert 36).

While talking about the process of translating Valjean's character from French to English, Herbert Kretzmer characterised his approach to Valjean's character in the process of translation as follows: 'you ignore the sexual jealousy, you ignore the torment, you cut straight to Valjean the Christian altruist' (Griffiths and Watts 128). This quote indicates an interpretation by Kretzmer of *Les Misérables* that is deeply inconsistent with Hugo's. Valjean's altruism, though triggered by his encounter with the priest, is not based in Christianity; rather, it is based in his efforts to escape darkness, and to achieve enlightenment in the sense that Hugo intended above.

The dominance of Christian imagery and language is further emphasized in the final scene of the film; where barricades stand in the centre of Paris crowded with citizens, as the film's entire cast of the dead (including Fantine, Valjean and Eponine) stand atop it, French flags in hand. Biblical imagery of Heaven resounds in the lyrics: '*They will live again in freedom in the garden of the Lord/they will walk behind the ploughshare, they will put away the sword*' (Hooper 2:43:50).

This Biblical analogy contrasts with Hugo's equivalent statement: that '*la lumière assainit. La lumière allume*' ['the light cleanses. The light illuminates'] (Hugo 810). Hugo does not see the need for death in order to achieve enlightenment and reunification with the divine (Nash). Rather, he considers it a state of mind, achieved through a profound connection with the *ideal*: for Hugo, this is manifested through the civic state. The film's emphasis on personal redemption and transcendent love (culminating in the film's final choral crescendo) resonates with Anglophone traditions of moral individualism more than with the secular civic spirituality underpinning nineteenth century French republicanism and *laïcité*.

Nationalism and Nationalistic Ideology

As earlier indicated, the film provides from the outset a clear setting and time period of its events. This opening already establishes the way the film goes on to represent

the French revolution: as one moment in history, framed perfectly. While this text establishes a historical setting, it also decontextualizes the film from very specific socio-economic and cultural frameworks (not least of which is the fact that by the time of the book's setting, there had already been several significant governance changes in the country since the French Revolution proper.) This is a necessity to achieve popular international appeal, because of the detailed contextual understanding that is required to fully appreciate *Les Misérables* in its original form. However, it means the transformation and necessary dilution of particular themes: emphasized by the augmentation, for example, of romantic narratives at the expense of the assertion of misery and its solution in brotherhood centred on the transcendent state. This is not to say that Hooper's film does not attempt to address the idea of the state and the ideal of the revolution. However, where Hugo's novel is a series of interconnected plots woven into a treatise on humanity, the film comprises a series of interconnected plots woven into a dualistic battle of moral good and ethical (legal/lawful) good, where the force of the law operates against what might be considered morally just. This leads into the most dramatic change, that of thematic.

Colour is used throughout the film to create a dualism of authoritarianism versus revolution. Blue and red are constantly juxtaposed against each other, each tied strongly to a particular ideology; Javert (Russell Crowe) is dressed in blue in the first scene, and many of his scenes are superimposed with a blue-rinse filter. Scenes of starving peasants and workers in the streets see them dressed mainly in dull blues and greys, often under the rain. Blue, thus, is tied to authoritarian violence and oppressive class control. This is epitomised in the film's opening shot, of text (as quoted above) superimposed upon a blue watery image of a ragged French flag. The implication is clear: that France's revolutionary spirit is under threat.

This then serves well when contrasted with the vibrant reds used to represent the major protagonists. Valjean is first introduced in a red prisoner tunic. Red features heavily not only in Valjean's narratives, but also during most of the barricade scenes – where student revolutionaries wave red flags. The final lingering shot of Enjolras, the leader of the student revolutionaries, has his dead body dangling half out of a window, the bright red of the revolutionary flag standing against the backdrop of bleeding bodies on the streets, and the soundtrack of mournful, yet still determinedly triumphant horn peals. In the final scene, the blue of the French flags waved as the cast stands on top the barricades is drowned out both by the far more vibrant red, and also by the pinkish-red tinge of the clouds above.

However, this returns us once again to the problem of the afterlife as an actual solution to misery, or a legitimate offer of enlightenment within the construct of French nationalism. Perhaps most indicative of the disparity between representations of the state in the novel and film is the thematic material. For a film which deals with the subject of revolution, *Les Misérables* is extremely normative in theme, narrative and music. Its primary protagonist (Valjean) is established in the opening scene, as is its primary antagonist (Javert). Its timeline is rigidly linear, in sharp contrast to Hugo's frequent shifts between past and present. Narrative dominates over theme, and the individual character experience is never foregrounded by their social context. Though situated within a grand framework, the filmography is as resolutely personal and intimate as possible; 'I Dreamed a Dream', Fantine's (Anne Hathaway's) despairing ballad, is dominated by a close shot of the character's face.

This turn towards traditionalism thus loses the radical element which made the book so significant, and therefore does not encapsulate the core of Hugo's thesis: that progress, particularly through radical thought and action, is the purview and purpose of the French state (Hugo 817). Moreover, *Les Misérables* is idealistic but also pragmatic. Hugo is interested in offering actual solution. The musical (despite its depiction of poverty, misery, and death) culminates in a scene of generalised hope and euphoria.

The ideological reshaping of the 2012 film, though obvious, cannot be considered wholly a product of the adaptive process or ideological reorientation. Adaptations, as acknowledged by Linda Hutcheon, are shaped not only by creative intent but also by prevailing cultural paradigms and medium-specific constraints (Hutcheon 6). Hooper's film reflects a preference for individualism, a simplified treatment of both civil and traditional religion, and a tendency toward moral dualism. At the same time, it responds to the structural limitations of cinema, the conventions of the musical theatre genre, and the sensibilities of its intended audience. The pressures of commercial viability and formal demands – though arguably reflective of broader ideological distinctions between Francophone and Anglophone cultures – cannot be seen as purely creative or ideological in origin.

These adaptations in narrative and meaning cannot, of course, be attributed purely to ideological decision-making. They are also shaped by commercial and structural storytelling conventions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Hugo's lengthy digressions and heavily political narratives were eagerly engaged

with on a popular level in nineteenth century France. The musical theatre genre, on the other hand, generally requires cohesive narrative arcs with key moments or scenes that lend themselves to song and choreography. They are also significantly time-limited; *Les Misérables*, despite being the longest musical in the standard repertoire of popular musical theatre, has only 3 hours and 20 minutes to capture the totality of Hugo's novel.

Conclusion

Herbert Kretzmer, the English librettist and translator of the 1985 West End production of *Les Misérables*, said of his work on the English-language musical that he considered himself as much a writer of the show as Boubil and Schonberg (Petrilli 481). This is an important point to consider; because in many ways, the English-language musical stage show and its film adaptation operate as a separate text to that of Hugo's 1862 novel. Though all three share the same narrative and the same characters, their focus is extremely different.

From the opening shot of the film, which sweeps up with a tremendous swell of music onto the scene of an immense ship being towed by rows of convicts, to the final scene of the entire cast of characters (most of whom are dead by the close of the film) standing triumphantly atop a barricade in Paris, every aspect of the movie aims to provide a sense of grandeur. Such largesse is not, of course, inherently a deviation from the themes present in Hugo's novel. In length, breadth and aspiration, *Les Misérables* has every aspiration towards grandeur. However, Hugo's grandeur is thematic; it is intended to encompass the entirety of human experience, to advocate for the radicalisation of man and the elevation of the state (Llosa 98).

Les Misérables is, at its core, a thesis novel. Its formidable length serves a dual purpose: to accommodate multiple interwoven narratives and to articulate an overarching argument for humanism (Hyslop 26). By contrast, it is difficult to apply the same label to the 2012 film adaptation. The film must navigate not only the formal demands of cinema but also the stylised conventions of musical theatre. Its purpose is threefold: to translate live theatrical performance to screen, to employ cinematic techniques for emotional effect, and to convey the themes of Hugo's original text. In succeeding at the first two, it compromises the third. Framed within a twenty-first-century Anglophone Hollywood context – complete with heightened theatricality and emotion-driven storytelling – the film ultimately filters Hugo's philosophical thesis through a more individualist and emotive lens.

At its core, the novel is an instructional text in radical thinking, made all the more effective by Hugo's insistence on accessibility to his texts. This heavily Romantic approach was well-characterised by Charles Nodier, who observed during a review of *Han d'Islande* (one of Hugo's early novels) that 'Classical writers are approved of, but Romantics are read' (Robb 121). Alphonse de Lamartine perfectly encapsulated this in a criticism of the text, claiming that *Les Misérables* was 'dangerous, because the supreme threat to harmonious society is excess […] it gives unintelligent men a passion for the impossible' (Llosa 170).

Following in this vein, the 2012 film makes an effort to focus on the individual experience to adhere more strongly to the book and to its themes, and to further enhance the 'readability' of the narrative. Ironically, however, this creates an even further divergence from Hugo's methods, where characters are intended to function as simultaneously real and allegorical, shaped by metaphor as well as their lived experiences (Roche). The film's focus on the individual experience (such as in the case of Fantine), while understandable considering its audience and medium, disconnects the viewer from the allegorical dimensions of *Les Misérables*'s narrative. While there is undeniably a certain idealisation of the French state, even this is frequently extended from its French nationalist context to express a much vaguer revolutionary goal. For instance, in the final stand of the revolutionaries, an army officer tells the students that:

> The people of Paris sleep in their beds
>
> You have no chance
>
> No chance at all
>
> Why throw your lives away? (Hooper 1:19:52–2:00:05)

In his final response, the group's leader Enjolras declares that:

> Let others rise
>
> To take our place
>
> Until the earth is free! (Hooper 2:00:21–32)

This final shift from a fervent, evangelical focus on the French state – Enjolras's most defining feature in Hugo's novel – is yet another reflection of the film's avoidance of one of the core themes of the original work.

The question of quality in the wake of such a transformation is entirely subjective. As an adaptation, however, Hooper's film is more than an abridged edition of *Les Misérables* in a different medium. While reducing or omitting Hugo's discussions of politics and religion, the musical is simultaneously an exercise in creative excess (Griffiths and Watts 115). Ultimately, the key difference between the 1862 novel *Les Misérables* and its musical adaptations is the binary they draw between protagonist and antagonist. Charles Baudelaire, while not openly opposed to the novel (though privately expressing a vehement dislike for it), criticised the fact that *'dans Les Misérables la morale entre directement à titre de but'* ['in *Les Misérables*, morality is from the start directly the goal'] (Hyslop 26).

In Hugo's original text, there is no real human antagonist across the entirety of the novel; the overarching antagonist is *la misère*, acting through characters who are ultimately its victims. Hugo envisions the ideal of the French state and its grounding in principles of equality, liberty, and brotherhood as a combatting force. In the film, however, the French state itself becomes the primary antagonistic force (represented through Javert and the French military), while Biblical references and strong Christian themes firmly establish the notion of godliness and the promise of an afterlife as the only true vanquisher of evil. Moreover, the film reframes the novel's narrative and themes through familiar Hollywood conventions, reshaping individual characters into established archetypes of hero (Valjean), anti-hero/villain (Javert), and love interest (Cosette). These characters are foregrounded, and the battle between misery and the ideal of the French state that so characterises Hugo's book is relegated to the film's periphery.

The dichotomy Hugo presents to the reader is one in which discordance and ignorance are the darkness, opposed to progress as the manifestation of light. The advancement of the state is, to Hugo, a religious action in its own right. The film's departure from this ideal marks a shift away from the foundational ideological vision of Hugo's novel. In translating *Les Misérables* for an Anglophone audience, both linguistically and generically, the adaptation reconfigures the novel's ideological force – diminishing its resonance within a distinctly French republican context.

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Book Review

Fictional Languages in Science Fiction Literature: Stylistic Explorations by Israel A. C. Noletto. Routledge, 2024. ISBN 9781032688886, 256 pp.

The literary phenomenon of *glossopoesis*, or language invention in fiction, has often been relegated to fandom discussions, being as a result underrepresented in academia despite its disproportionately higher occurrence in speculative fiction (e.g. science fiction, fantasy, and dystopia). With *Fictional Languages in Science Fiction Literature: Stylistic Explorations*, Israel A. C. Noletto offers a critical intervention, proposing that fictional languages be regarded as key stylistic devices within science fiction narratives. Rooted in literary stylistics and informed by narrative theory, semiotics, sociolinguistics, and even historical linguistics, Noletto's survey is both rigorous and ambitious, providing an analytical framework for understanding the role fictional languages have in narrative while proposing stylistic approaches for critiquing narratives that feature glossopoesis.

By itself, the introductory historical overview of fictional languages across different genres and media types is enough to warrant reading the book. However, the bulk of Noletto's argument is set around his model for reading fictional languages in science fiction literature, laying the ground for meticulous analyses accompanied by numerous examples applying stylistic concepts that help the reader appreciate glossopoesis as a relevant literary phenomenon worthy of systematic analysis.

The model Noletto proposes builds upon previous studies, such as Stockwell (2006) and Cheyne (2008), and comprises five key functions:

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speculative, rhetorical, descriptive, diegetic, and paratextual. This model serves as the foundation for this particular textual approach to analysing fictional languages, enabling Noletto to shed light on the ways in which glossopoesis can shape a text's thematic dimension, storytelling, world-building, and reader engagement. From iconic works like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) to more contemporary examples such as China Miéville's *Embassytown* (2011) and Ted Chiang's 'Story of Your Life' (1998), Noletto presents eighteen case studies with a wide temporal and thematic range, making the book both comprehensive and compelling.

A particularly striking aspect of the study is Noletto's examination of glossopoesis' speculative and rhetorical functions. Notably, Chapter 2 situates glossopoesis within the science fiction tradition of thought experiments, drawing on linguistic theories such as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Chomsky's generative grammar. Through close readings of *The Embedding and Snow Crash*, Noletto demonstrates how invented languages can operate as *nova*, 'the main source of the difference between the actual world and the world of a tale' (4).

In Chapter 3, he turns to the rhetorical effects of fictional dialects, or dialectal extrapolations in his terminology, exploring their capacity to immerse, disorient, or repulse readers. His analysis of Nadsat in *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) is especially insightful, illustrating how Anthony Burgess's hybrid argot alienates readers while reinforcing the novel's themes of youth rebellion and systemic control using political power and brainwashing techniques.

The book's engagement with world-building and storytelling is equally thorough. Chapters 4 and 5 delve into the descriptive and diegetic functions, with case studies such as Mary Doria Russell's *The Sparrow* (1996) and Samuel R. Delany's *Babel-17* (1966). Noletto argues that the languages featured in those stories do more than embellish their fictional worlds, contributing also to characterisation and narrative progression. His discussion of Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), for instance, highlights how the conlangs (*con*structed *lang*uages) of the Fremen not only create a cultural identity but also underscore the ecological and political tensions central to the narrative.

One of the book's most original contributions lies in its exploration of *paratexts*, Genette's (1997) term for textual elements that surround a particular narrative and tend to predispose how the reader regards a text, be it favourably or otherwise. In line with this concept, Chapter 6 considers how fictional languages extend beyond prose into maps, glossaries, and scripts, examining works like Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985), Suzette H. Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984), and Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006). Noletto's analysis highlights the transmedial potential of glossopoesis by means of exploratory materials found on webpages and elsewhere, briefly commenting on contemporary science fiction cinema and television, through which languages like Na'vi and Heptapod B have become cultural phenomena.

While the book's scope and depth are commendable, some limitations are nonetheless still worth mentioning. The emphasis on English-language texts, for example, leaves something to be desired in non-Anglophone science fiction texts, which might expand the book's perspective on glossopoesis. Noletto presents eighteen case studies with a wide temporal and thematic range, making the book both compelling and comprehensive within the British and American literature.

Although Noletto does mention his model can extend to the analysis of texts in any language, this remains to be tested. The emphasis on literature has also limited the exploration of languages found in filmic productions; this Noletto has left for future research, as he mentions in the conclusion. Additionally, the theoretical density of certain sections may deter readers less familiar with stylistics or linguistics. Despite the many definitions, examples, and explanations, the book is still complex and can be demanding. However, these are minor criticisms in what is otherwise a richly detailed and diligently argued study.

Fictional Languages in Science Fiction Literature is hence an indispensable resource for scholars of stylistics, science fiction studies and narrative theory. While the book may prove challenging for undergraduates in the fields of linguistics, literary studies, communication studies, and English studies, they too should find it highly informative and engaging. Despite being a work of literary criticism and not a manual, the study may equally appeal to conlangers

(language inventors), both professionals and hobbyists, in addition to fiction writers interested in learning from examples of how to integrate glossopoesis and narrative. Furthermore, the book fits neatly within the collection that hosts it, *Routledge Studies in Speculative Fiction*, enriching its already diverse line-up of important titles. *Fictional Languages in Science Fiction Literature* is a landmark achievement that is likely to impact future discussions of language and literature involving glossopoesis for years to come.

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Book Review

Linguistic Inquiries into Donald Trump's Language: From 'Fake News' to 'Tremendous Success'. Edited by Ulrike Schneider and Matthias Eitelmann.
Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020. ISBN: 9781350115538, 272 pp.

Since Donald Trump was elected as President of the United States in January 2016, his language has become a subject of significant interest to scholars. Although there are extensive studies of his idiolect, the contributors in this volume bring together eleven very different studies into a well-integrated and coherent linguistic analysis. *Linguistic Inquiries into Donald Trump's Language* is a collection of ten analytical chapters, edited by Ulrike Schneider and Matthias Eitelmann, which explore how Trump uses language in television interviews, tweets, debates, rallies and speeches from 1980 until 2018. In the introduction, the editors make clear that the volume illuminates how Trump's language is distinct. Even though the volume does not study the media and its ideology, its focus on linguistic analysis employing quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods allows each of the contributors to (dis)prove twelve comments that the media have made about Trump's language.

The volume groups the chapters into three themes ('Rhetoric and Repetition', 'Evaluation and Emotion' and 'Discourse and Metaphor'). The first and second themes are divided into three chapters, and the third theme into four. Every chapter aims to uncover one of Trump's idiolects. In the

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volume, the chapters are divided into two categories: quantitatively oriented chapters, which come first, followed by qualitatively oriented chapters. The former relies on numbers, although the volume does not discuss whether the results of the quantitative analysis are the only evidence to show how Trump speaks and expresses his rhetoric. The latter chapters rely on textual analysis. Together, the editors have ensured a good balance between quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The volume has four aims. Firstly, it seeks to delineate the features of Trump's language. Secondly, it aims to draw the distinction between Trump's and other politicians' use of language. Thirdly, it reveals which linguistic strategies Trump uses to convey emotions, and to examine his discursive strategies. Lastly, it discovers whether these strategies reflect Trump's agenda. The volume also explains the notion of 'Trumpish' which 'is more than simply a salient idiolect, but also a reflection of changing social and political norms' (8). Eitelmann and Schneider indicate that it is difficult to establish linguistic idiosyncrasies because speechwriters coordinate political discourse. Thus, it is worth exploring 'Trumpish' social and political influences.

In contrast to previous studies, this work adopts a linguistic analysis based on Moffitt's and Hawkins' discourse-based definition of populism as a political style. Moffitt's definition is dependent on three features, in particular the separation of 'the people' from 'the elite', 'bad manners' and putting the feeling of crisis into people's minds (5). He also adds two performative elements, particularly 'the leader–performer and the media–stage' (5). Building on this, this volume derives 'twelve hypotheses about the constitutive elements of populist rhetoric. Nearly all of these were corroborated by the findings about Trump's language amassed in this volume' (248). Importantly, the first hypothesis that 'Trump's rhetoric shows a dualistic worldview consisting of the positively connoted people and the negatively connoted elite' (241), is the most central and was partially confirmed by the contributors of this volume. The discussion in this volume

uncovers a very noticeable split between a negatively connoted opposition and positively connoted 'Team Trump', with the aim of the split being more personal than ideological.

On the theme of 'Rhetoric and Repetition', Chapter 2 ('*It's Just Words, Folks. It's Just Words*: Donald Trump's Distinctive Linguistic Style') by Egbert and Biber uses corpus linguistic analysis to compare Trump's lexical and structural features with those of every other presidential candidate since the 1960s, in their respective presidential debates and campaign rally speeches. Their comparison shows that Trump uses a more colloquial, vague, and interactive language with a greater amount of repetition. These features make Trump what Rackaway calls a 'disruptive innovator' (38) in terms of politics and linguistics. In Chapter 3 ('*I Know Words, I have the Best Words*: Repetitions, Parallelisms, and Matters of (In)Coherence'), Björkenstam and Grigonytė compare Trump's scripted teleprompters with their delivery within presidential debates and campaign rally speeches. This comparison adds contextual nuance to Trump's repetition and confirms that his unscripted speech is frequently changing. They reveal that Trump prefers to repeat himself, especially when deviating from his scripted speech.

In Chapter 4 ('*A Man who was Just an Incredible Man, an Incredible Man*: Age Factors and Coherence in Donald Trump's Spontaneous Speech'), Ronan and Schneider analyse Trump's various repetitions. They report an abundance of hesitant repetitions which they read as a sign of ageing in the Republican primary debates and phone-ins to television shows and interviews. They shed light on whether Trump's speech has changed over almost thirty years through comparison with interviews held at previous stages of his career. For example, there was a small increase in the richness of Trump's vocabulary over these years indicating that his vocabulary has become more varied over time, with verb usage increasing from 1980 to 2010. Trump's language use is also compared to other speakers, such as former president Barack Obama. For instance, compared to Barack Obama, Trump uses more personal pronouns, verbs and informal language, yet fewer nouns.

The chapter also notes that all candidates, such as Trump and Obama, make more repetitions. This means that the analysed data produced by Trump has more repetitions which cause logical incoherences than his data from the 1980s, or in comparison to the data from Barack Obama's speeches.

In Chapter 5, ('*Very Emotional, Totally Conservative, and Somewhat All over the Place*: An Analysis of Intensifiers in Donald Trump's Speech'), Stange compares Trump's use of intensifiers, whose function is to strengthen the meaning of other expressions, in his public language such as tweets and remarks. She compares it with that of other politicians and with a baseline of ordinary spoken language. Hence, the recognition circulating online of Trump's heavy use of intensifiers is evidenced. Chapter 6 ('*Crooked Hillary, Lyin' Ted, and Failing New York Times*: Nicknames in Donald Trump's Tweets') examines the construction of Trump's opponents. Tyrkkö and Frisk state that his opponents are negatively described using nicknames, which has the effect of manipulating the audience's emotions. The data analysed included Donald Trump's public language, tweets and Zoom meetings on gender differences and the trajectories of change. Chapter 7 ('*I'm Doing Great with the Hispanics. Nobody Knows It*: The Distancing Effects of Donald Trump's *the*-Plurals') by Schneider and McClure investigates Trump's use of the definite article for ethnic minorities in his public language, tweets and interviews. Trump's use of the definite article has been criticised as a negative evaluation of ethnic minorities, and is shown to be an othering technique.

In Chapter 8, ('*Either We WIN this Election, or we are Going to LOSE this Country!*: Trump's WARLIKE COMPETITION Metaphor'), Koth shows that Trump conceptualises politics as a competition in which there is a winner and a loser. However, this conceptualisation implies problematic issues, relating to Trump's description of immigration politics in tweets and in the Republican primary debates. The focus on winning at all costs serves to influence people to suppress the ethical and moral values of one's deeds, but to think in terms of Trump's WARLIKE COMPETITION metaphor, wherein a loss

by one person always comes about due to an illegitimate win by another. At the same time, only the winner deserves admiration while the loser deserves contempt. In the next chapter, ('Silence and Denial: Trump's Discourse on the Environment'), Degani and Onysko analyse Republican primary debates for Trump's use of discursive strategies on the environment, the most frequent of which are denying and silencing confirmed facts about climate change. It reveals that Trump's language use exhibits a striking use of metaphor to justify the adoption of what the volume's editors term an anti-environmental stance against all odds' (9). The following chapter ('Donald Trump's "Fake News" Agenda: A Pragmatic Account of Rhetorical Delegitimization') by Schubert examines Trump's complex use of lying. The analysis in this chapter shows that Trump uses terms such as 'fake news', hence delegitimising the media.

Finally, Chapter 11, ('*Sorry Not Sorry*: Political Apology in the Age of Trump'), by Hauck and Mitsuhara closely examine how Trump apologises for his misogynistic remarks in the Access Hollywood tape. The (non-) apologies of Trump are compared to those of Bill Clinton for his affair with Monica Lewinsky. The comparison reveals that Trump uses canonical forms of apology, the Christian testimonial, 'to present himself as a coherent, authentic political persona and at the same time promote his anti-establishment agenda' (9). In contrast to Bill Clinton's apology for his affair with Monika Lewinsky, Trump uses more conventional forms of apology to show that he is a coherent, authentic political persona while simultaneously promoting his anti-establishment agenda in video statements.

The concluding chapter ('Great Movement vs. Crooked Opponents: Is Donald Trump's Language Populist?') reveals to what extent Trump's style is exemplary of populist rhetoric. It also explores his techniques of othering and antagonisation when referring to his opponents. Furthermore, it examines how these matches the definition of populism. Firstly, it is against the current ruling class, the system in place, or the group in power, as in Trump's infamous tweets calling for 'draining the swamp' in Washington.

Secondly, it is against the mainstream media matches this definition. This is exemplified by Trump's calling out of newspapers like the *New York Times* for allegedly publishing fake news. Thirdly, it conflicts the minority, most notoriously in Trump's promise to build a wall on the Mexican border to prevent illegal immigration.

In conclusion, this volume is a timely and relevant contribution, using various fine-grained linguistic analyses for a better understanding of the striking features of Trump's language, building on earlier extensive commentary by the wider public. Thus, the book is relevant to those who are interested in linguistics, media and cultural studies, politics and (critical) discourse analysis, although some of the contributions require background knowledge. Most contributors in this volume focus on the years 2015–2018, meaning that specific issues which loomed later in public discussions regarding Trump presidency – including the recent impeachment and his handling of the Covid-19 outbreak – are not considered; these events are left for later studies of Donald Trump's language.

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Book Review

Corpus Linguistics for Education: A Guide for Research by Pascual Pérez-Paredes.
ISBN 9780367198435, Routledge, 2020, 194 pp., £130 (Hardback)

Pascual Pérez-Paredes' *Corpus Linguistics for Education: A Guide for Research* navigates the terrain of Corpus Linguistics as both a research methodology and a set of methods. Inspired by McEnery and Wilson (1), Pérez-Paredes defines corpus linguistics as 'the study of language based on examples of real-life language use' (9) and champions its application in educational research. This comprehensive yet concise guide addresses the scarcity of resources on Corpus Linguistics in education. The book unfolds as a practical workbook for novice researchers, introducing eighteen core skills for using Corpus Linguistics methods in educational research. Pérez-Paredes demonstrates the application of these skills using accessible language and illustrative examples, making the book an ideal resource for those unfamiliar with Corpus Linguistics.

In the opening chapter, Pérez-Paredes introduces the foundational concept of frequency, emphasising its importance in identifying linguistic patterns. Subsequent chapters delve into textual analysis, corpus approaches, and language understanding. The book's strength lies in its hands-on approach, providing step-by-step guidance on corpus design,

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transcription, annotation, and ending with lexis analysis and the exploration of spoken data. The concluding chapter skilfully addresses the challenges of bridging gaps between Corpus Linguistics methods and educational research and advocates for the complementary nature of Corpus Linguistics as both a quantitative and qualitative research method.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to Corpus Linguistics, emphasising its potential in educational research. Pérez-Paredes highlights the capability of Corpus Linguistics to identify linguistic patterns and trends crucial for expanding perspectives in educational research. The chapter concludes by introducing the core concept of frequency, laying the groundwork for subsequent discussions.

Diving into various types of textual analysis, the second chapter explores content, theme, conversational and discourse analysis, alongside Corpus Linguistics' analysis of registers. Pérez-Paredes illustrates the versatility of Corpus Linguistics through examples, showcasing its application in analysing experiences, such as those of 33 UK school children in a forest school (a program encouraging learning in natural environments). Thematic analysis reveals how specific facets of play shape meaning in children's learning journeys (42).

The third chapter uses case studies to show how corpus methods can be used for both qualitative data collection and analysis to yield more sound and valid results. This chapter is tremendously helpful in assisting researchers to assess their need for using a previously compiled corpus. Pérez-Paredes explores the chances of answering research questions with an existing corpus, considering the target population's representativeness and ethical considerations, among other factors. The chapter also introduces concordance lines, which list the occurrences of a word or phrase within its surrounding context. This serves as an open-door entry to set a detailed model for reading and examining these lines, and further explores specific concepts such as collocation, as suggested by

Evert and Sinclair. This term refers to words co-occurring habitually, highlighting its statistical implication using some related statistical concepts. The chapter then explains how to handle frequency before progressing to teaching retrieving collocation. The chapter goes from general to specific, introducing four fundamental skills to show the potential implementations of corpus techniques in educational research for beginners.

Extending the discussion, the fourth chapter covers corpus design specifically tailored for educational purposes. Pérez-Paredes provides practical procedures for designing a corpus, offering insights into relevant calculations and ratios that can help infer characteristics about a corpus, as well as when and why these measures are relevant. The chapter continues with guidance on comparing two corpora using statistical tests, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of corpus design. The chapter concludes with a series of prompts to stimulate reflection.

Focusing on practical steps and guidelines for transcribing and annotating data collected through interviews, the fifth chapter emphasizes the importance of data annotations. Pérez-Paredes offers guided steps for annotating a corpus, setting the stage for effective data analysis in subsequent chapters. This chapter delves into lexis analysis, providing a detailed guide to conducting keyword and multiword analyses. Pérez-Paredes illustrates the examination of individual words and multiword expressions using the Sketch Engine interface, offering specific examples of various types of text. The implications of these observations are discussed in the context of the research questions raised in various projects.

By analysing spoken data from interviews, the seventh chapter reviews skills presented in the previous chapters (5 and 6), focusing on data transcription as a nuanced task. Pérez-Paredes emphasises understanding keywords, searching for nouns and phrases, and using

complex searches. The chapter highlights how spoken data differs from written data in the sense that it contains more discourse markers and formulaic language. This makes spoken data particularly relevant to culture-bound research projects.

The concluding chapter skilfully addresses challenges in bridging gaps between Corpus Linguistics methods and educational research. Pérez-Paredes highlights the lack of corpora related to research methods in education as the first challenge and advocates using Corpus Linguistics as a complementary research method for qualitative analysis as a solution to the second challenge. The conclusion reaffirms the guide's value as a comprehensive resource for novice researchers.

Like the preceding chapters, this section offers practical insights into examining the role of lexis in shaping discourse through tangible examples. In the conclusion, the author asks direct questions, like how Chapter 5 has changed readers' minds about the process of data transcription, as well as hypotheticals, such as how to go about investigating particular themes in a corpus of transcribed interviews. These questions not only serve as reflections on recently acquired knowledge but also encourage readers to contemplate the practical application of these skills in their unique educational research projects.

The book adeptly introduces eighteen skills throughout its chapters, accompanied by a glossary, fostering statistical literacy. Addressing the scarcity of Corpus Linguistics in educational research, the author ensures accessibility, explicitly stating that no prior knowledge of corpus methods is assumed. This feature makes *Corpus Linguistics for Education* an excellent resource for novice researchers intrigued by corpus methods as it is tailored to those with little to no experience. The author, therefore, not only fills a gap in the literature regarding the scarcity of using Corpus Linguistics methods in educational research but also subtly alleviated concerns about the complexity of quantitative approaches in Corpus Linguistics. This was achieved by clearly indicating

that 'no previous knowledge of corpus methods is assumed in readers' when writing this book (Pérez-Paredes i).

The book proves invaluable for educational research, particularly in supporting qualitative data collection and analysis. It has the potential to pave the way for high-quality research in the field of education in a new era of interdisciplinary methodologies.

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When Caribbean Rap is Conjugated in the Feminine

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[1] This is a translation of the original work, written in French: Patricia Victorin. "Quand le Rap Antillais se Conjugue au Féminin." *The Conversation*, 3 November 2024, https://theconversation.com/quand-le-rap-antillais-se-conjugue-au-feminin-239753. It was co-authored with Mathilde Lucken, author of the book *Mémoires de femmes*, published in 2023.

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Despite numerous obstacles, female Caribbean rappers, currently largely overlooked and little-known, are working to establish themselves in the French-language rap scene, exploring and appropriating the richness of Creole music and language.

The Francophone Caribbean still exists in a state of diglossia: the French and Creole languages each hold a distinct function and status. And if the Creole language has established its place within literature and music, Caribbean rap, especially that produced by women, continues to occupy an extremely marginal position.

Due to its history and geography, the Caribbean is a veritable melting pot of people, language, music and literature, a hotspot of 'creolisation', defined by Édouard Glissant as an 'unpredictable métissage' (n.p.).[2]

As women conquer the international rap scene (Segas), female Caribbean artists have begun to experiment with different linguistic combinations in their lyrics: some opt for French or Creole, but others interweave the two or choose Spanish or American English.

For these artists, this is a means of democratising language, while at the same time preserving their Caribbean identity. Symbolically, this resounds with the distinctive nature of rap music, which oscillates between the potentially cryptic and the publicly accessible, the language of protest and of praise.

Far from the literary 'doudouism' (Simasotchi-Bronès) that was denounced by Suzanne Césaire as she decreed the 'death of doudou literature. And to hell with hibiscus, frangipani, and bougainvillea' (50), Caribbean rappers are following a path of emancipation, with striking lyrical flow and the occasional reintroduction of the saccharine and so-called 'siwo', or *syrup*.

[2] This French-language loanword denotes a form of interracial amalgamation, and is a more neutral variant of the English-language *miscegenation*.

Reversing Masculinity and the Dominant Discourse

Rap is, by its very definition, a sexist genre: to appropriate it as a woman is to reverse the codes of masculinity and the discourses of domination. In the case of Caribbean rap, women can also reclaim certain norms of zouk-love: a form of love song typified by its slow rhythm.

Following feminist thinking, music from female Caribbean rappers offers a counter-discourse. In this regard, mainland France is perceived polysemically as both a place to be conquered by these women who no longer wish to be invisible, and as a power-possessing Babylon; *Babylon* is also the term used by Caribbean youth to refer to the police and the state more generally. All female Caribbean rappers express the desire for recognition, the wish to emerge from the shadows; this is typified by the Martinique-born Méryl, nominated in the category of 'Female Breakthrough Artist' at the 2024 'Victoires de la Musique'[3] awards, who worked as a ghostwriter before writing and singing under her own name.

She addresses several social issues in her songs, among them food poverty and slavery, alongside taboo topics including incest and paedophilia, as in the single 'ma Petite'[4] with Rachelle Allison. In the face of deafening silence, they invite children to speak out ('palé ich mwen').[5] The singers' inclusion of children in the music video at times suggests protective sisterhood, at others a maternal instinct.

In her single 'Yo fâché',[6] rapper La Tchad establishes herself through punchlines and lyrical flow; she evokes a 'fanm matado' (female matador)[7] with her distinctive pink hair and hyperfeminine appearance, the young girl astride her shoulders a metaphor for a female-oriented future.

In 'Diss men', La Tchad melds English and Antillean Creole as she settles a score with male domination, gesturing to Guadeloupean

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[3] Literally *Victory of Music*; an annual awards ceremony supported by the French Ministry of Culture.

[4] Meaning *my little one* in both French and Antillean Creole.

[5] Literally *speak my child* in Antillean Creole.

[6] Meaning *They are angry* in Antillean Creole.

[7] More generically, this term can also be translated as *fighting woman*. See Thomas.

women's refusal to be treated like sex objects. From the hyperfeminine to the erasure of the female/male binary, the above artists embody female-fronted rap in all its diversity.

From the Bimbo to the 'fanm doubout'[8]

Most of the time, in rap music videos, female bodies are filmed as though they are objects. This is one of the characteristics of the 'male gaze', a concept theorised by the filmmaker Laura Mulvey in 1975. In rap music videos, women tend to be confined to a passive role. To oppose the *male gaze*, feminists have developed the notion of a *female gaze*, a 'perspective that adopts the viewpoint of a female in order to impress their experience', according to the film critic Iris Brey (as quoted in roadtocinema.paris n.p.).

The music videos of female rappers are somewhat paradoxical in this regard. Some adopt the symbolism associated with the 'male gaze': the female rapper proverbially takes the place of the male, mimicking male dominance. Others, as Célia Sauvage, who holds a doctorate in film studies, acknowledges, are 'deflections of the hypersexualised image of women, this time not in the service of misogyny but in the service of female empowerment, which redefines the politics of the gaze at (primarily Black) bodies and dominant beauty standards, opposing this to the objectification of the 'male gaze" (as quoted in Simon n.p.).

In Sista Sonny's music video 'Rien',[9] women dance and twerk, but are not subjected to the male gaze: they occupy the centre of the screen. Buttocks play a central role as an object of desire, but also act as emblems of female protest against domination. Ultimately, certain corporeal metonymies ('pussy' and 'buttocks') become the heralds of female desire and pleasure (Schwentzel).

In the music video for Maureen's song 'Tic', which accompanied the Mugler Spring/Summer 2021 runway show, women achieve emancipation through dance. Far from objectifying the women, the artist

[8] An Antillean Creole term denoting a woman of questionable morals.

[9] Meaning *Nothing* in both French and Antillean Creole.

argues that it is a means of 'liberation, of being yourself, of feeling good' (Maureen, as quoted in Gassion n.p.). Women control and reclaim their image, commanders of their sexuality, at the centre of attention. They become self-aware and self-reliant; we may speak of emancipation and female empowerment in this reinvention of the 'fanm matado' and 'fanm doubout' tropes (Thomas).

The Intersection of Linguistic Influence and Confluence

The very use of Creole, side-by-side with French and other languages, emphasises the emancipatory aspect of a musical genre which seeks its place in the French and Francophone, but also American, rap scene, through a form of reinvention of aesthetic and linguistic norms.

Caribbean rap from female artists succeeds in 'establishing a space in which the disparate may come together, where culture shocks, disharmony, disorder and interference become sites of creation', to repurpose Glissant's formulations (as quoted in Joignot n.p.) in the context of creolisation in music.

In this confluence of influences which melds zouk with reggaeton, R'n'B, hip-hop, and Jamaican denbow, we may also detect an alliance of the Caribbean's north and south. The influence of the prototypically Caribbean bouyon soca, a fusion of Dominican bouyan music and soca music from Trinidad and Tobago, should also not be forgotten. Then there is shatta, a genre originating in Martinique's Volga-Plage district in Fort-de-France. The rapper Cindy Stawz, who hails from Guadeloupe, blends rap with gospel and soul in a seamless whole that transgresses generic and linguistic boundaries.

Édouard Glissant's 'Transforming continuously without getting lost' (Joignoit n.p.)

For the aforementioned rappers, there is also the issue of reclaiming the well-known zouk-love style – its rhythmic slowness, its commonplaces, its saccharine romantic lyrics – and simultaneously putting an end to doudouism and the illusion of the submissive female.

In this regard, due to its very popularity, the sub-genre serves as an ideal means through which to reflect upon the renewed inclusion of

romantic language in rap songs. In the single 'Fwisoné',[10] by T-Stone ft. La Rose, the duo blends the aesthetics of zouk-love and of rap, incorporating romanticised lyrics and expressions of desire. The duet is reminiscent of Jocelyn Beroard and Philippe Lavil's 'Kolé séré',[11] which intertwines the French and Creole languages.

The singer Méryl pays tribute to Jocelyn Beroard, a female figurehead from the band Kassav', in a remix influenced by 1980s American rap, titled 'Siwo'.[12] At issue is restoring the prestige of zouk – 'the king without a crown' (Désirée n.p.) – and updating through transformation the music which served as a lullaby soundtrack to, if not the childhoods of today's female rappers, at least those of their parents' generation.

In the music video for 'ZABOKA x FANM STAB RMX', featuring Shannon x Dj Tutuss, the rapper Maurane Voyer proclaims the colour pink to be the female signature. Once a colour associated with little girls or submissive women, it is revivified to become a symbol of feminist empowerment.

Female-fronted Caribbean Rap, or Babel Reinvented

Creole is both a language of emancipation and of crossing which has established itself even within serious and high-brow literature. Caribbean rap reconnects the language with the so-called 'night speech' once performed by the oral storyteller, who, having assembled their audience, would pay little heed to the perceived proper use of language, and would instead entice listeners with their linguistic virtuosity, their flow. The Creole used in rap music is a language freed from constraints, a 'mosaic' language that welcomes other languages and fuses them together. In 'Dembow Martinica',[13] Méryl's linguistic mosaic results in an amalgam of Martinican Creole, French, English, and South American

[10] Meaning *Chill* in Antillean Creole.

[11] Deriving from the French verbs *coller* and *serrer*, this Antillean Creole title roughly translates to *stick* (i.e. adhere) *and hug*.

[12] Meaning *syrup* in Antillean Creole.

[13] Loosely meaning *dembow, Martinique-style*.

Spanish: a Babel, revisited.

Altogether, these female artists excel at promoting Creole as a colloquial language, lingua franca, and mother tongue (Llewellyn). More vibrant than ever, the language demonstrates its capacity for renewal as it is updated in the context of rap music, reconfiguring itself from mother tongue to the new language of sisterly solidarity, much as with French dialects in the face of Latin, a language associated with knowledge and power.

Translation Commentary

The above article originally appeared in the French-language edition of *The Conversation*, a website founded in Australia in 2010 that specialises in publishing articles blending reportage and academic research, a form which has been termed 'exploratory journalism' (Riedlinger). The piece was subsequently republished by a variety of outlets, among them France's *Yonne Lautre* and *OnePlanète*, and the Canadian webzine *Tolerance* – testament both to the article's timeliness and its international appeal.

Stylistically, the article's origins are subtly apparent in several ways. For instance, the article's initial, italicised paragraph – which originally appeared in emboldened font – could be classified either as an abstract (likely by those in academic circles) or as a lead paragraph (vis-à-vis journalistic conventions). Perhaps even more notable typographically is the consistent use of microparagraphing, with some of the article's paragraphs as short as a single sentence. The overall result is almost telegraphic. In an era in which short-form social media content predominates, this helps to maintain momentum, alongside visually splitting the copy to better underscore key points of interest. Overall, there is little of the explication and argumentation that would be expected of traditional academic writing: instead there is a more directly, aptly *conversation*al, presentation of facts. Occasionally, this may cause the article to appear somewhat disjointed, as with the final sentence of the antepenultimate paragraph which refers to the rapper Cindy Stawz. Only tangentially related to the paragraph's preceding sentences, it figures as something akin to a conversational non-sequitur. The article's

comparatively informal tone is also encapsulated by the use of non-standard, sentence-initial conjunctions ('And if the Creole language has established its place within literature and music') and free-flowing, paratactic constructions ('Women control and reclaim their image, commanders of their sexuality, at the centre of attention').

Each of these elements I have sought to maintain in the article's English-language translation. Nonetheless, by the very nature of translation, some aspects of the original article have been altered, for one or often a combination of reasons: geographical, grammatical, political, social, or simply stylistic. For instance, the reference to 'l'Hexagon' in the original article, a colloquial term alluding to the physical shape of the French nation, has been rendered as 'mainland France' in my English language translation – more prosaic, perhaps, but also more transparent and universally neutral. Indeed, the amendments I have made frequently align with what are commonly known as 'translation universals' (Pillière); following Baker, these can be classified as 'features which typically occur in translated text[s]' and are 'a product of constraints which are inherent in the translation process' (243, 246), comprising a) explicitation; b) simplification; c) normalisation, also known as conservatism; and d) levelling out. While the potentially essentialising notion of 'universals' has proved problematic for some, and is far from uncontroversial (for a good overview, see Mauranen and Kujamäki), I have found that the typology effectively captures the diversity of linguistic strategies I employed in translating Victorin and Lucken's article from French to English. At times, the simplification was undesired yet unavoidable, as with the phrase 'la femme soumise se pi(g)mente'. The French original riffs upon the orthographical overlap between the term *piment* (pepper) and *pigmente* (colour) – wordplay obscured by its English-language translation. Elsewhere, I have attempted to atone for this loss of linguistic playfulness in translating *rejoue*, a verb with several synonymous meanings, as 'resounds', an acknowledgement of the article's focus upon the music industry.

Intriguingly, despite the article's focus upon greater gender-based representation and inclusivity, the generic masculine is still employed in its penultimate paragraph (see, e.g., 'son flow'); this I have translated

using the gender-neutral pronoun *their* in an instance of normalisation. Relatedly, I have chosen to capitalise my translation of the adjective *noir* where it relates to discussions of ethnicity, believing this to best reflect the article's ethos of inclusivity, whilst also following guidelines adhered to by prominent Anglophone publications (e.g. Froke et al.). This is a graphological consideration not pertinent to a Francophone context, given that even proper adjectives in the French language are lowercase as standard. A further difference between the English and French languages is the latter's usage of gendered nouns, as captured by the inclusion of the term *maîtresses* in the original article. A direct English translation – as *mistresses* – proved problematic, given the word's sexual connotations, whilst I felt the (generic) masculine equivalent, *masters*, too at odds with the article's focus upon female empowerment in a traditionally male-dominated industry, and the consequent usurpation of dominant discourses. For this reason, I selected instead the gender-neutral noun *commanders*, believing its military undertones an additional boon as complement to later discussions of the so-called 'fanm doubout', or *fighting woman*. Lastly, the conversion of the colloquialism 'le frigo vide' to 'food poverty' typifies the strategy of levelling out; literally meaning *the empty fridge*, the expression is something of a set phrase, akin to (British) English acknowledgements of 'the cost-of-living crisis' or, more informally, 'cozzie livs'.

Throughout the article, where the titles of songs or excerpts of their lyrics are in a language other than English, the original has been retained. This linguistic form tallies with the content of the article, following its reflection upon the political significance of particular language choices in various contexts. Additionally, often these titles and lyrics possess distinct cultural resonances that would be flattened in direct translation; additional context in this regard has been provided through footnotes, a more formalised instance of explicitation. Finally, and perhaps more prosaically, retaining the tracks' original titles renders them more easily searchable – should the reader be interested, in the future, in listening to these exemplary instances of Caribbean rap, conjugated in the feminine.

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Reflections on a PhD

Naomi Adam, Amy Bouwer, Paula Ghintuială and Katrina Rolfe

Partway through my PhD, I volunteered to co-organise the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership's annual conference. The year was 2021, we were each confined to our household bubbles, and the phrase, "Sorry, you're on mute!" was heard (pronounced with varying degrees of frustration) approximately 47,000 times per day. (Indeed, it almost became the title of our conference.) Banana breads and sourdough loaves were cross-hatched and cooling in my kitchen, and I needed some form of meaningful human interaction – even if it was to be entirely mediated through MS Teams.

For the event, we enlisted the help of Coney, an arts and social change charity specialising in theatrical, interactive experiences. We wanted to pepper the conference programme with opportunities for delegates (all fellow doctoral students) to engage in dialogue with one another outside of the traditional paper panel format. Given this brief, Coney put together a series of sessions which positioned the PhD process as a game: 'The Doctoral Adventure'. This way of conceptualising a PhD experience has stayed with me ever since. It spotlighted for me elements of a doctorate that are often overlooked: the fact that it should be inherently pleasurable (blank page days aside); the fact that it requires curiosity, sometimes even courageousness, in pursuing new strategic directions; the fact that it is ultimately a choice to 'play', but in doing so we can, day by day, improve our skillset. This metaphor refreshed my outlook – as any good metaphor should – and I reminded myself of it any time that my mindset needed changing. It also led me to realise that, as the only player in your personal PhD game, you are always guaranteed to win.

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Over the three-and-a-half years I spent chiselling away at my thesis, I garnered a strong sense of what community means in the tumultuous space of academia. Our chosen field is often rife with competition – for jobs, recognition, funding – and it is startlingly easy to slip into an individualistic mindset where all that matters is whatever you are working on and how it will be received upon publication. Nonetheless, PhDs are not completed in isolation, despite how many hours are spent alone at a desk with nothing but a blank page and a caffeinated drink for emotional support. I quite serendipitously found myself surrounded by interesting and interested people very early on in my PhD journey – people whose passion for their work resonated with and strengthened my own, and people who in turn asked provocative questions about what I was doing, and how, and why. If not for these people, who would grow into fierce friends, I don't think I would have sustained the motivation for research that seemed so strong at the beginning of the project but tends to wane with every sentence written and argument unfurled. I remember being told that the PhD is a lonely process; I was lucky enough never to test that theory, because I was supported by friends and peers and supervisors every step of the way. When I look back at what I accomplished, I have a far easier time remembering conversations over coffee or excited emails about something new I'd uncovered than the actual time spent writing my thesis. I also remember unexpected connections at conferences, long discussions in poorly lit offices, walks around campus to work through new ideas… All these things seem to me to have shaped the final product of my thesis more meaningfully than I ever could have on my own. If I have a single piece of advice for new PhD students, or even those well into their PhDs but finding themselves a bit stuck, it's to find your people and allow their interest to move you in unexpected ways.

Amy Bouwer
University of Nottingham

I can only describe my PhD as a kaleidoscope of ideas, moments, the most incredible people that are still my best friends, and plenty of emotions. I was one of the unfortunate candidates who started applying for PhDs in the first stages of the pandemic, and began their first year during the numerous lockdowns of those times. One thing that saved me – I mounted Christmas lights in my office, which might sound either hilarious, or simply sad! Another thing which saved me – the sense of belonging. I'll forever cherish meeting all my peers at my first ever conference in person, and feeling as if we had known each other since time

immemorial. Maybe I am one of the privileged students who loved their doctoral research and those three years to the brink of obsession – there's plenty of days when I wish to return! – because, as Nell Crain in the television series *The Haunting of Hill House* says, 'The rest is confetti.' Cherish the opportunity to know a topic like the back of your hand and still be amazed about how much you can still learn, the people you meet and their affection, the freedom to be a student, the opportunity to still fall, graze your knees, but be able to get up and do it all over again. You never know when you'll get another opportunity like this one.

Paula Ghintuială
Aston University

Someone once told me a PhD is a marathon not a sprint. As I sit here, weeks after submitting corrections and reflecting on what I would say to new PhD students, I'm reminded of this. I never thought I'd finish this marathon. There were times when I wanted to quit and go back home. Multiple times. You will probably have those moments too – maybe not in year 1 or 2, and maybe not to the same extent as me, but you will experience something similar at some point in your journey. And that's ok. A PhD is full of emotional ups and downs. When the downs happen, take a step away, engage in some self-care (whatever that looks like to you) and try again tomorrow. Keep going. If the downs persist, reach out to others (friends, uni professors, family, even a medical professional if necessary.) The uni can help and has support available for students in need, but they can't help unless you tell them when you're struggling on your journey. There is no shame in admitting you need help. There is also no shame in switching from full time (3-4 years) to part time study (6-8 years usually) if that feels right for you – talk to your supervisors about this as soon as possible though, as there's paperwork. And try not to compare yourself to others. Enjoy your own race. You can only run it once.

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