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“Traduit de l’américain” from Poe to the Série Noire: Baudelaire’s Greatest Hoax?

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Abstract

This article reviews the new light shed in 1952 on Baudelaire’s translation and critical analysis of Poe by W.T. Bandy, which exposed the French poet’s plagiarism of American sources. Our aim here is to suggest that Baudelaire’s Poe-project, with its wilful problematisation of originality and translation, author and translator, pre-empted Marcel Duhamel’s own translation project of 1945, the Série Noire. We compare these two Parisian translation projects as two major hoaxes of French literature and two foundational stages in the development of French crime fiction. Indeed, we suggest that Baudelaire’s original translation praxis is an act of anticipatory plagiarism (of Duhamel’s praxis) just as he himself considered Poe’s poetry to be anticipatory plagiarism of his own work.

Introduction

When, in 1952, W. T. Bandy sought to shed new light on Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe, he revealed what he playfully termed a hoax. What he offers is in fact rather more than that; or rather, the hoax is potentially far larger in scale than he imagined. Bandy’s contribution in this seminal article is to debunk the myth of Baudelaire’s expertise as a translator, in particular at the time of his production of *Les Fleurs du mal*. By doing so, he

appears to be detracting from the status of Baudelaire the translator; and yet, his aim is to counter-balance this discovery with its more positive corollary, the fact that *Les Fleurs du mal* could not have owed their genesis to Baudelaire's reading of Poe:

Certainly, in view of his lack of first-hand knowledge of Poe's writings, it must be conceded that Baudelaire was extraordinarily successful in his effort to give the impression of having mastered the American writer's works. A hoax, if you will, but a hoax that Baudelaire's master, Poe, would have appreciated to the fullest. (Bandy 1952, 69)

The hoax appears to be double-edged: Baudelaire pulls off a major conjuring trick by appearing to have mastered translation, while in fact giving Poe's texts a large infusion of French originality; and at the same time, he allows his own work to bathe in the light of Poe's reputation, seemingly feigning plagiarism, creating a debt to Poe *a posteriori*. Such a hoax doubly dilutes Baudelaire's originality by infusing it through Poe's translated texts and allowing the relationship with the latter to be refracted onto *Les Fleurs du mal*. But, of course, this complex literary symbiosis also provides Baudelaire's originality further outlets and broader coverage, and not only in terms of his impact at the time but also as a foundational influence on trans-Atlantic literary relations for years to come.

In terms of the long-term consequences of Baudelaire's hoax, two things are worthy of note here: first, the whole thrust of Bandy's article, by which he wishes to bolster Baudelaire's originality, is predicated, precisely and perversely, on the exposure of an act of plagiarism—Baudelaire's word-for-word translation of a number of critical studies of Poe by American scholars, which he passed off as his own essay on Poe, and which, in its *original* French form and subsequently in *English translation*, became in due course one of the most

famous works on Poe, if not, as Bandy claims, '[t]he most widely-known study of an American author' (1952, 65); second, the complex nexus of literary importance, originality and translation, which Bandy showcases in 1952, lies dormant to a large degree and certainly fails to be taken up sufficiently in its most logical domain, the field of French crime-fiction studies. Brought together, these two points reverse another paradigm: where Bandy draws upon a hoax composed of an act of wilful plagiarism by Baudelaire in the field of crime fiction in order to establish the originality of his own most famous poetic work, we wish to reread the hoax, to reverse the chronology and to suggest that Baudelaire's plagiarism can be productively interpreted as a reflexive, critical commentary on translation praxis, one that balances the expropriation of the original with the reappropriation in the target language while allowing for originality to emerge, and gain in intensity, in the transfer. In this way, Baudelaire's plagiarism of Poe criticism provides a perfect model for the politically and psychologically motivated translation praxis that would become synonymous with that most famous French crime-fiction series, the *Série Noire*, some one hundred years later. Furthermore, Baudelaire's own plagiarism is balanced out by another dimension: it is always already doubled, like its author's relationship with his American alter ego, by its own opposite, an act of anticipatory plagiarism. In other words, in appropriating Poe's work, Baudelaire is actively both expropriating and re-appropriating it, establishing it as itself and other; and by creating a translation that is somehow more itself in translation than it is in the original, he is making his translation into an allegory of his Parisian experience of Modernity and thereby establishing a template for a school of translation for which Marcel Duhamel will become famous in the years following the Second World War. Through a prime example of what Pierre Bayard (2009) has famously styled *le plagiat par anticipation*, we contend, Baudelaire can be considered the father of French, and especially, Parisian crime fiction.

Baudelaire and the 'Noir Hoax'

Reading Bandy's article some sixty years later one is led to wonder why his revelation of this extraordinary hoax on Baudelaire's part is not more widely known. Indeed, commentators like Anne Garrait-Bourrier continue to discuss the influence exerted by Poe on the composition of *Les Fleurs du mal*, which Bandy dismisses. While acknowledging that '[so] many critics have been suspicious about this intellectual similarity' (2002, 1), she points out Baudelaire's own rejection of plagiarism in this regard and makes no mention of his use of American critical sources in his essay.

Interestingly, the *canular*—the nearest thing to the hoax's lexical equivalent in French—is a term, and phenomenon, that first appeared in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century, at a time when Baudelaire's Poe project, including what Bandy considers his hoax, was still at the peak of its influence. The story of Baudelaire's hoax therefore emerges alongside the development of the modern *canular*. While it is not our intention here to dwell on the many important mechanisms of the hoax, we should like to discuss one aspect of it, which will allow us to gain a better understanding of the full extent of the relationship between Baudelaire and Poe, and in particular the social context of this relationship. Indeed, the hoax cannot be separated from the social context in which it is generated. All the great hoaxes of literary history have developed in contexts of great social upheaval (restructures, including architectural), change (such as new political regimes or cultural revolutions), crisis (including economic crises) or moments when life is put on hold (in times of war, for example). Whatever the nature of the change, then, be it political, economic or cultural, literary hoaxes take better against a background of instability. Let us consider the Émile Ajar *canular*, for example: it reached its height when he was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1975,

shortly after the oil crisis of 1973-1974, the Veil law on abortion (1975) and a period of economic turmoil marked by inflation and a strong rise in unemployment.

The post-war conditions that saw the emergence of the *Série Noire* are similar. With the publication of *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* in August 1946, Vernon Sullivan was unleashed on the public at a time when France, while still traumatised by the Second World War, was forced to accept a series of financial packages from the United States. At that point, all French eyes were still on the Americans who had liberated them from their Nazi oppressors. The resulting myth of the USA was multi-layered, and it included the birth of a new label, *traduit de l'américain*. Put simply, in 1946 the mention of America sold books. It was public knowledge that Americans produced best-sellers, hence the birth of the Vernon Sullivan *canular*. Boris Vian made a wager with Parisian publisher Jean d'Halluin that he could produce an American best-seller in a fortnight simply by pretending to be its translator. Two weeks later *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* was finished, and Vernon Sullivan's novel *traduit de l'américain* was put onto d'Halluin's desk at Éditions du Scorpion.

The period when Baudelaire was working on his hoax was marked by three of the four categories of instability mentioned above: France was undergoing great political change with the fall of the July Monarchy and the establishment of the Second Republic; in terms of public hygiene, the outbreak of a number of serious epidemics had put the nation on hold; and Paris in particular was in upheaval throughout the 1850s as a result of Haussmann's sweeping urban renewal (Bourillon 1999). As a direct result of this, even as the essay on Poe was being written, Parisians were being expropriated from their homes all around him (Leblicq 2000). In terms of the Poe project, therefore, expropriation has two intertwined aspects. Not only is there expropriation through transfer, or translation of text, but there is also physical expropriation in a France scarred by political, cultural and urban revolution.

What we see emerging here are two periods of French history that can reasonably be compared; each represents a key step in the development of crime fiction in France based on the translation into French of an American literary model; and each presents the perfect conditions for a literary hoax. The possibility of a common, or at least similar hoax, and still less the translation of a mid-nineteenth-century Parisian crime-fiction hoax into the Parisian literary scene of the mid-twentieth century, however, is rarely considered. The nature of the hoax in both cases is to present works that are under-appreciated (and even adjudged politically sensitive) in their native United States as simple translations when in fact they can be read, and certainly strike the critical reader, as highly original in the language of their new French market. Our contention is that these works are allegorical of the French condition in which they are released *as translations* (hence their appeal, albeit unconsciously—this is a hoax, after all) for the precise reason that they are very specific *rewrites*. In both cases, the translations have great success and, certainly in the case of the Série Noire, far greater success in their translated context. Not only, therefore, is a review of their status as literary hoaxes warranted but so too is the possibility that Baudelaire's seminal translation project is transferred, as a continuation of the same hoax, into its new, and suitably receptive, twentieth-century context. One hoax, then, and one important reason to interrogate anew what we understand by the words *traduit de l'américain*.

Poe's Translation into France

Given the instability of the historical context against which he emerged in France, it is certainly surprising that Poe's own place in the history of French crime fiction has been written with such certainty and remained so widely unchallenged. He is unfailingly considered a forefather or inspiration to the first French authors in the genre. As Bandy points

out, Poe's work had been introduced into France as early as 1844 in the form of 'imitations and translations' (1952, 65). For his part, David Platten (2009, 20) records that 'pirate copies' of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" began to circulate in Paris shortly after its publication in the United States in 1841, some fourteen years before Baudelaire's own translation of the text. The dominant view, which considers Poe a key player in the emergence of crime fiction in France and Baudelaire's role as crucial as a vehicle for Poe's success overseas, seems to us rather inadequate. On the one hand, it downplays the specific translation praxis and rationale that Baudelaire brought to Poe's work; and on the other hand, it relies on a conventional understanding of French crime fiction as crime fiction written by French authors. Both these points are reflected in what Bandy refers to as Baudelaire's campaign:

With this article ["Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages" in the *Revue de Paris* for March and April 1852], the first biographical and critical study of Poe to appear in a foreign language, Baudelaire really inaugurated his campaign to make of the American writer "a great man for France." (1952, 66)

If Baudelaire is recognised as an influential translator of Poe, can we say that he was successful in this aspect of his campaign? For this to be true, Poe would be considered not a forefather of French crime fiction but its earliest exponent. For, if Poe's translated works are not considered French, it is because the term French, when applied to literature, is considered, narrowly, to convey the nationality of the author.

The problems inherent in this dominant categorisation of fiction along national lines are not lost on Neefs, who emphasises in particular the place of translation in French literary history (1997, 161). We should at once agree with Neefs's assessment and seek to take his reasoning further. Indeed, we have elsewhere interrogated the concept of national literary

histories and, in so doing, we have posited (Rolls 2009) that French literature has an especially strong relationship to the translated text, to the extent that literary text translated into French, and again *especially* in the crime-fiction genre, can be considered *French*.

When one thinks of translation, one automatically thinks in terms of its most common definition, which is a seamless transfer of meaning. However, translation implies not only a transfer of language but also a transfer of culture, at the end of which meaning must remain intact. What the translation process exposes are the dynamics inherent in the notion of textual property: when a writer translates, how can she fail to appropriate the text that she is translating? Even if the meaning must remain the same, the finished product comes from the translator not the author. Through this process, the original author is quite simply expropriated from the text. If in principle we can still claim to have one meaning, we now at the very least have a product emanating from two different people—the author of the source text, on the one hand, and on the other the translator, who expropriates that author in order to appropriate it in the target language. In our case, the words *traduit de l'américain*, even according to the most basic mechanics of translation, must imply the becoming-French of the American, the expropriation, and thus as much the exporting as the importing, of American literature.¹ In this way, a translation is biased, even as it remains authentic. In the case of the relationship between Baudelaire and Poe, the translation process goes beyond the commonly accepted definition. By translating John M. Daniel, Baudelaire goes beyond translation, beyond transfer; he appropriates a text on Poe by expropriating its author. Indeed, Baudelaire goes rather further than anticipating the debates opposing foreignisation and domestication that will mark translation-studies debate into the twenty-first century; he significantly, and subtly, problematises the respective status of author and translator, original and translated text.

Lest things become unclear, it is important to state that the French text of Poe's *Histoires extraordinaires* remains a translation whereas "Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses œuvres" is an act of plagiarism or, to use Bandy's term, a hoax. But it is a significant hoax, for it packages the translation; it allows us to understand why, and how, the translation of *Histoires extraordinaires* is so Baudelairean. It also suggests that, for Baudelaire, translation and originality are couplets of the same verse. First of all, Baudelaire fails to meet the standards of (what will become known as) the invisibility of the translator. This invisibility, of course, depends on the reception of the text and, before that, on those who determine what this reception will be. As Jeremy Munday notes, "[a] translated text [...] is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities make it seem transparent, giving the appearance [...] that the translation is not in fact a translation but the "original"" (2001, 146). The invisibility of the translator is designed to minimise the trace of an intermediary between the source and target texts. In other words, it seeks to deny the existence of a translator and the dynamics of expropriation and appropriation. If Baudelaire's translation praxis defies this illusion of transparency, it is at least in part because he believed that he could himself have written Poe's works if only he had had the latter's literary technique:

En 1846 ou 47, j'eus connaissance de quelques fragments d'Edgar Poe [...] Et alors, je trouvai, croyez-moi, si vous voulez, des poèmes et des nouvelles dont j'avais eu la pensée, mais vague et confuse, mal ordonnée, et que Poe avait su combiner et mener à la perfection. (cited in Duquette 2003, 20)

His translations are understandably, and justifiably, biased, therefore, since he and Poe share the same thoughts, and the invisibility of the translator is redundant. Furthermore, as

Elizabeth Duquette describes (2003, 21), Poe's talents were not recognised in the United States, notably because it was such a young country. Thus, Baudelaire made it his mission to be the catalyst who would allow the true meaning of Poe's work to be revealed. This is a prime example of catalytic translation.

As a translator then, Baudelaire adopts his own set of principles. He re-sequences the short stories in his translation of *Histoires extraordinaires*; in his own words, he invents '*les intentions*' (cited in Duquette 2003, 23), reorganising Poe's ideas according to his own and stripping them of their American context—all this with a view to making Poe's texts French. For his part, in his introduction to Flammarion's 2010 version of the *Histoires extraordinaires*, Roger Asselineau begins by questioning whether it is possible to discriminate between Poe and Baudelaire's authorship of the texts; Baudelaire is, after all, translating himself (Poe 2010, 7). Asselineau does not, however, dwell on the textual specifics of Baudelaire's 'translation praxis' in order to demonstrate why it is closer to an act of original composition than what is commonly understood by a translation (and it is rather beyond the remit of our present study to perform such a reading), although he does, albeit implicitly, hint at an innate (French, and specifically Parisian) translatability of Poe's original lexical choices, including, for example, that most Baudelairean, and thus capitalised, use of the noun *Ideal* (8-9). So, while Baudelaire arguably becomes himself while mapping himself, via this translation (which, and Asselineau agrees with Bandy on this, and the reader too can judge for herself fairly readily, contains any number of calques, misunderstandings and debatable choices of phrasing) onto Poe's poetics, Poe's text becomes French. This *becoming French* lies clearly for Asselineau in the tales' prompt and complete incorporation into the French literary canon: '[Aussi font-ils] maintenant partie de notre patrimoine et [jouissent-ils] en France d'une renommée et d'un prestige que les critiques de langue anglaise ont souvent quelque peine à comprendre' (Poe, 7). To use Asselineau's terms, the 'beauty and purity' of

Baudelaire's French text notwithstanding, it is therefore fundamentally in their reception that these texts become French.

It is here that we see the first strong resonance with Marcel Duhamel's translation project. Duhamel's translations of Peter Cheyney and James Hadley Chase, which famously opened the *Série Noire* in 1945, have been widely considered loose and prone to exacerbating historical elements that will resonate with the target readership.² Furthermore, we should argue that they represent, to borrow a term from John West-Sooby, a deliberate Frenchification of the original English text designed specifically to allow the translated version not only to find a new originality in its new reading context but, more importantly, to offer an allegorical reading of France's present, post-war context.³ And yet, here again, the *becoming French* of those early numbers of the *Série Noire* was predicated less on translation choices at the micro level than on the specific climate in which they were received in France. Thus, as we shall, see translation choices at the level of the paratext played a determining role in domesticating what remained, and were marketed as, highly foreign and exotic texts.

Such re-contextualisation relies on the suppression of the source context, and an emphasis on the text itself. In Baudelaire's case, his stated aim was to express technique in all its purity and thus to allow Poe's talents to emerge fully. More than a translation, then, this was conceived of as an expropriation. And yet, it quickly emerges that Baudelaire considers himself Poe's double, with the result that the text is re-appropriated. In the case of the essay on Poe, for example, Bandy reveals the large amount of text that Baudelaire lifts verbatim from Daniel's article in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. While Bandy's aim is rather different (he reveals that the apparently original essay is in fact a translation), his description works equally well to reveal the beginnings of a Baudelairean translation praxis, in which the original author's text and the translator's own, original, contribution are difficult to dissociate:

Approximately twenty-five of the forty pages of Baudelaire's article in the *Revue de Paris* were translated almost word-for-word from the *Southern Literary Messenger* review by Daniel. [...] [Baudelaire] is content to translate Daniel quite literally, although he does not hesitate, upon occasion, to interject a few lines of personal comment, usually concerning Poe's mistreatment at the hands of his countrymen, and also to omit words, phrases and sentences in order to soften Daniel's aspersions. (Bandy 1952, 67)

Here, Baudelaire's Frenchification is implicit, taking the form of a de-Americanisation of the original.

As we have argued, social and cultural context play an important role in the credibility of the hoax. In these translations Baudelaire by-passes the Americanism of Poe's texts in order to ensure their recognition as literature. The elimination of the social context is a *tour de force*: it allows what is in fact a translation to pass for an original essay on Poe and thereby further muddies the distinction between the two. Implicitly then, the inversion at the heart of Baudelaire's translation praxis for the Poe-project, which sees translation in the original ("Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie, ses œuvres") and original in the translation (the tales that make up the *Histoires extraordinaires*), sees translated and original text brought under a tense, dynamic union in the target culture. So in this instance, we can say that translation is the vehicle for the hoax and that it is deployed in its creation.

In all likelihood, the reason this hoax is not better known lies in Baudelaire's reputation. His poems have a monumental place in French literature. Exposing a hoax committed by Charles Baudelaire would be grounds for re-evaluating his entire *œuvre*. A daunting prospect, to say the least. Added to which, the hoax, or *canular*, was necessarily the

subject of less discussion in the nineteenth century (the only *canular* of any real size known of that time being Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which was published a century earlier). While this literary hoax is generated in a specific social context, it is important to remember the power that translation has. The hoax is a translation, from context to text. Since Baudelaire eliminates all contextual aspects from Poe's texts in his translation, all power is transferred, or translated, to the text, which reveals itself in a new light. This process of recreation of the text as Other brings into play a whole series of double identities, some of which we shall review here.

Translation as Self and Other; Translation as Paris

As we have mentioned, Baudelaire's own plagiarism of critical essays on Poe is balanced out by his own distinct impression that Poe has already pre-empted him. As he notes in a letter to Théophile Thoré, he translated Poe so patiently '[p]arce qu'il me ressemblait. La première fois que j'ai ouvert un livre de lui, j'ai lu avec épouvante et ravissement non seulement des sujets rêvés par moi, mais des phrases pensées par moi et imitées par lui, vingt ans auparavant' (quoted in Neefs 1997, 168). For Baudelaire then, the act of translating Poe is one of repatriating his self as Other; it is a translation, or perhaps more properly a *re-translation*, of his own words, as plagiarised—in advance—by his exemplary Other. As we shall see shortly, this looks startlingly like anticipatory plagiarism, except that in this case the appropriation of external otherness is so tightly bound up with the recognition of the Other's sameness that, in addition to being anticipatory, it is *virtually* an act of self-plagiarism.

We might think of Baudelaire's mother, Mme Aupick, whose surprise at her son's translation talents not only bolsters Bandy's case for the originality of *Les Fleurs du mal* (insofar as she implicitly questions his knowledge of English) but also raises (again,

implicitly) his translation to the level of original text: ‘Quant à ses traductions d’Edgar Poe, comme œuvre de style, [elles] sont quelque chose de très remarquable, et même d’étonnant, cela vaut un original. Je ne me doutais pas qu’il savait l’anglais d’une manière si parfaite’ (Bandy and Pichois 1957, 117). While it may at first seem difficult to reconcile this most Parisian of poets with a translation project that recognises French selfhood in American fiction, it is important to bear in mind that auto-differentiation is at the heart of the literary endeavours that defined nineteenth-century modernity and, in particular, Paris’s place as capital city of this new, modern, poetic space. In this way, Baudelaire’s troubled, or doubled, sense of self is emblematic of French literature’s relationship to the world, which for Susan Rubin Suleiman and Christie McDonald ‘places, paradoxically, negotiations with otherness and boundary crossings at the very centre of French literary history’ (2010, X).

If we return to Bandy’s defence of *Les Fleurs du mal*, we can now posit that the originality of these verse poems is not opposed to his later work, the prose poems, across a simplistic original-*versus*-influenced dichotomy, in which it is now the prose poems that reflect Baudelaire’s reading of Poe; instead, the traditional originality of Baudelaire’s verse is critiqued by the convulsive, modern originality of prose poetry, whose tense union of self and other (with its continuous cleaving of those two aspects of the new critical world-view of poetic self and urban space that are self *versus* other and self as other) sees the one always already in motion towards the Other. The originality of self in Paris post-Haussmann, therefore, lies precisely in a constant double translation, of Other into self and of self into Other. Such an understanding of prose poetics allows us to bring together Garrait-Bourrier and Neefs’s respective considerations of the reconstruction of identity and creation of self in the translation at work in the literary-identitarian nexus that is Poe-Baudelaire.

In *Les Petits poèmes en prose*, which postdate *Les Fleurs du mal* by a decade, Baudelaire produces an entire anthology predicated around the oxymoron: in what, in a letter

to Jules Troubat in 1866, he calls ‘mon *Spleen*’, he brings together, under tense and markedly non-synthetic union, a number of mutually exclusive pairings, which, as he tells his mother in an earlier letter, combine ‘l’effrayant avec le bouffon, et même la tendresse avec la haine’ (Kopp 1973, 8). Clearly, the spleen is both his and Paris’s; the hatred and tenderness are his feelings (for the city) but also the city’s. His subjective, existential view of Paris as lived by him is always already paralleled by the belated, objective stance that he has in relation to Paris (remembered and mythologised) as a poet. Paris then, as capital of Modernity and thus exemplary site of self-alterity, is the ultimate auto-antonym: it is quite simply both itself (as urban reality or prose) and its own Other (as myth or poem). In this way, as Michel Covin (2000) argues, Paris is prose poem, and *vice versa*. For, just as a Baudelairean prose poem is a work in constant motion (it is always already a movement from the ethereal streetwards, from poetry to prose, and from the quotidian Heavenwards, from prose to poetry), so Paris is a city in flux, always aping itself in a provocation of memories of its former glories and eschewing coincidence with its own renown.

Asselineau considers Baudelaire’s translation of certain texts by Poe, notably *Eurêka* (Poe 2010, 13), to constitute prose poems. Given our contention that the *Histoires extraordinaires* are French in terms of their reception, we shall briefly consider here how they function prose-poetically at the level of the paratext, that space that, as West-Sooby has shown in relation to the *Série Noire*, constitutes the most crucial meeting point of the text and its future market. In particular, we shall briefly consider how the title—*Histoires extraordinaires*—and the opening, and thus most liminal, short story—“Double Assassinat dans la rue Morgue”—offer themselves to Baudelaire, his French readers, and the latter via the former, as prose poems. As Covin has shown, the title of *Les Petits poèmes en prose* can be subjected to an interesting chiasmic analysis when opposed to its own subtitle, *Spleen de Paris*. The oxymoron that is the prose poem, on one side of the dichotomy, is reflected by

Spleen and Paris on the other, where the existential reality of life can be said to oppose the mythological ‘meaning’ of the French capital. And yet, Paris itself, like the prose poem, can be considered to be both itself (what it means when looked at objectively, from the outside, through the prism of an overarching meaning structure) and its other, how it presents itself to those who walk through it, inside it, in real time. In the same way that all the prose poems, although seen from the inside (and thus indistinguishable from any other metropolitan re of the locale), are necessarily always already Parisian by metonymy, because of the title under which they course (and this title, like the arrangement of the poems in the collection, is Baudelaire’s), Poe’s *Histoires extraordinaires* suggest their own opposite—the *histoires ordinaires*—by virtue of the same intertextually translated metonymy. This is supported by the setting of “Double Assassinat dans la rue Morgue” (as well as “La Lettre volée”, which is the second tale in the book) in Paris. Interestingly, the title of this short story, if a translation of Poe’s own choice, “Murders in the Rue Morgue”, is nonetheless significantly different; indeed, the addition of the term ‘double’ not only picks up the inherently doubled structure of the prose poems (as in “La Chambre double”, for example) but also echoes the dichotomy of assassination—simultaneously of translation practice (whose rules are massacred by Baudelaire) and of the Other (whose identity is dissolved into auto-differentiation). The prose poems articulate their self-alterity, their Parisianness, in the same way as their chiasmic title: they are divided into sections that are predominantly poetic or predominantly prosaic; but both sides host their Other. In “Double Assassinat dans la rue Morgue” there is a distinctive opening section in which the narrator introduces the concept of analysis, and this in ostensibly abstract terms. Unsurprisingly therefore, the word *extraordinaire*, with its appeal to otherworldliness, appears early in the piece (Poe 2010, 49); indeed, it is for this reason that Asselineau describes the tale as a ‘conte de ratiocination’ (Poe 2010, 12). This abstraction, however, is almost immediately contrasted by the counter-motion of the

mundane, the word *ordinaire* appearing twice on page 51. The fetishistic balancing of the extraordinary and ordinary is played out in the example of analytic power at its most powerful; in this instance, the game of chess is considered a lower form than drafts, which is nonetheless described as a most humble game. This reflexively prose-poetic opening functions proleptically to inform Dupin's detective praxis, which is itself predicated on *flânerie* in its most Baudelairean sense: it will not be enough to analyse the case objectively, as the *voyeur*, but to confront it in its most basic elements, and thus to walk with it, alongside the *badaud* (which term is employed in the tale, alongside other typically Baudelairean terms for crowds and walking). Dupin's analytical strength will be to combine these two aspects of the *flâneur*'s interaction with urban modernity; his story, in other words, will be both extraordinary and ordinary at the same time. Or, as Dupin puts it, 'il est possible de faire disparaître Vénus elle-même du firmament par une attention trop soutenue, trop concentrée, trop directe' (Poe 2010, 70). And this is, of course, precisely what Baudelaire will do in his own prose poem that places Venus, impossibly but concretely, in the street, where her gaze can neither be met by nor removed from the gawping of the *badaud* (in "Le Fou et la Vénus").

The typical structure of Baudelaire's prose poems balances two halves (one predominantly poetic, the other predominantly prosaic) around a central pivot, which often takes the form of a deliberately misused adverb of concession. Within this structure Baudelaire deploys, *en abyme*, smaller structures that reflect this self-alterity metonymically; these include chiasmatic sentences and oxymorons. Both are found in "Double Assassinat dans la rue Morgue". The following lines (Poe 2010, 72) counter-pose the extraordinary and the ordinary across a sentence break: '[...] faute de confondre l'*extraordinaire* avec l'abstrus. Mais c'est justement en suivant ces déviations du cours *ordinaire* de la nature que la raison trouvera son chemin' (our emphasis). Finding one's way (through the city) is, of course,

what the tale is about: in this way, Poe's text informs, even as it is informed by, Baudelaire's conceptualisation of a new poetics and a new critical modernity. Oxymorons in the tale include 'un délice âcre' (Poe 2010, 55), which recalls, inter alia, the 'orgies silencieuses' of "Le Fou et la Vénus". Finally, the conclusion is itself extraordinarily redolent of the defining principals of the prose poems: Dupin explains that the failure of police procedure is to be all head and no body. Baudelaire's prose poems, like Paris, are, of course, introduced as being both head and tale, at the same time.

In this way, Baudelaire's own profound sense of alienation, the result not only of his lived experience as a poet but also, and more dramatically, of the unfolding Haussmannisation of his Paris, which became other than itself in real time even as he looked on, is mapped onto another model of self in the form of Poe. Poe's uncanny (and the term is chosen advisedly here) similarity to Baudelaire is only intensified by his radical difference. As Neefs comments, 'Baudelaire construit avec Poe une étrange figure de soi, dans la proximité et l'assimilation fervente.' Indeed, 'Baudelaire élabore une sorte de stratégie fantasmatique pour se donner un proche, pour s'exposer par le détour de ce proche' (1997, 168). It is clearly not by chance that he founds his self-alterity on a model of sameness, or nearness, that is so pointedly other; for, we should argue, geographical distance gives Baudelaire the objectivity on self (poetry) that is required to balance out his lived experience (prose). The translation of the United States onto Paris therefore represents the simultaneous splitting and converging of Paris and its myths of itself as other; in other words, the translation-originality nexus of Poe-Baudelaire, which works both with and against time and space, *equals* auto-differentiation *equals* Paris. We have thus come full circle: a hoax that ultimately defends *Les Fleurs du mal* against arguments of unoriginality has brought us to another hoax, this time one based on anticipatory plagiarism and according to which *Les*

Petits poèmes en prose can be shown to express Baudelaire's admiration of Poe's plagiarism of him (as both self and Other).

Plagiarism by Anticipation

To what extent is it in fact a viable proposition to describe Baudelaire's relationship to Poe in terms of plagiarism by anticipation? Pierre Bayard

, who, as previously mentioned, is now synonymous with the concept, describes how

[l]e plagiat est aussi ancien que la littérature, à laquelle il rend indirectement hommage. Il manifeste en effet à son égard une forme d'admiration, le propre d'un chef-d'œuvre étant d'inciter d'autres auteurs à explorer les voies qu'il a ouvertes ou même à rêver, en se l'appropriant, de l'avoir écrit eux-mêmes. (2009, 13)

We have already evoked the seemingly boundless admiration that Baudelaire had for Poe, which extends to the former's conviction that he could have written Poe's texts, having already thought of them himself, if only he had had the necessary literary technique. On this criterion alone, we are in what Bayard considers the realm of plagiarism.

Further on, however, Bayard reveals that one of the essential characteristics of plagiarism is dissimulation. Now, Baudelaire never sought to hide the fact that he had been inspired by Poe. We are therefore, necessarily, led to think that such plagiarism as there is must be of the anticipatory variety. Indeed, there are four criteria for anticipatory plagiarism: resemblance, dissimulation (common to plagiarism and anticipatory plagiarism), temporal inversion and dissonance (these last two serving to distinguish the two forms of plagiarism

and, in other words, to expose instances of anticipatory plagiarism). In the case of Poe and Baudelaire, temporal inversion is pertinent only insofar as it suggests the poetic nature of the American author drawing his inspiration from the uncanny prose poetics to be written by Baudelaire in the 1860s; to the extent that our wish is to expose the hoax at the heart of Baudelaire's translation project, the time difference between the production of Poe's texts and Baudelaire's translation is of little relevance.⁴ The instance of anticipatory plagiarism that concerns us here, therefore, is not Baudelaire's translation of Poe *per se* but, rather, the way in which this translation plagiarises the dominant discourse of translation theory as expounded in the second half of the twentieth century. In other words, anticipatory plagiarism does not apply to Baudelaire's choice of Poe but to his translation praxis and the exploitation of the translated text in the target culture. Baudelaire's principal motivation in translating Poe is, after all, to make the American author more visible in Haussmannised Paris. But what about Paris post-Liberation?

Traduit de l'américain

As we have discussed, in Paris in the years immediately following the Second World War the best-seller is almost synonymous with the label *traduit de l'américain*. The model of translation praxis introduced by Baudelaire bears an uncanny resemblance to Duhamel's *Série Noire*, which has been traditionally viewed by scholars first as a gateway for American hard-boiled thrillers into France and, second, from 1948 onwards, as the standard for a new French crime fiction, one seemingly based on this American model. This view is, however, too simplistic insofar as it ignores the creative, and allegorically self-appropriating translation praxis of Duhamel and his team. For, just like Baudelaire's project, the *Série Noire* is less concerned with translation than recontextualising. The clearest example of this is almost

certainly the novel with which Duhamel chose to inaugurate the series: Peter Cheyney's *La Môme vert-de-gris* (The Greenish-Grey Dame). As before, we shall limit our demonstration here to the paratext, in this case the title, as it is emblematic of Duhamel's recontextualisation strategy. Indeed, with this title he nails his colours to the wall in no uncertain fashion: Cheyney's *Poison Ivy* is replaced by the colours of the German military uniforms that had only abandoned Paris in the previous summer. The *môme* in question points readers to another contemporaneous French term for dame, *souris*. When the latter term is combined with the colours of the German army, one has a title that reads *La Souris grise*, or *The German Soldier*, which builds the suspense around the dame's ultimate change of colour in the novel. Thus, Cheyney's text, originally published in 1937, becomes in Duhamel's hands a vehicle for an allegorical, and proleptic, reread of the Liberation (Rolls and Walker 2009, 50-71).

But what is rather more interesting is the hoax on which Cheyney's work, and in his wake the *Série Noire* as a whole, is predicated. If Cheyney's work is no longer known to the Anglo-Saxon reading public it is largely because the original text was so strangely written; and its artificial ring is due to its attempt to pass itself off as American. The author of *Poison Ivy* was, after all, English not American. The label *traduit de l'américain* therefore markets a hoax perpetrated by Duhamel, which reflects one begun by Cheyney himself. Another case of *faked American* is the third novel of the *Série Noire*, the last to be published in that inaugural year, James Hadley Chase's *Pas d'orchidées pour miss Blandish* (the second was another Cheyney novel, *Cet homme est dangereux*, which, like the opening texts of the *Histoires extraordinaires*, is set in France). Not only is this another case of an English author passing for an American, but there are also some startling similarities with the Vernon Sullivan case of the following year. As Claude Mesplède and Jean-Jacques Schleret recount, René Brabazon Raymond was inspired to write an American-style thriller to tap into the enormous

popularity of such novels in the 1930s. Drawing on Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and a dictionary of American slang, he wrote *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939) over six weekends (Mesplède and Schleret 1996, 89). The motivation, influence and, extraordinarily, the timeframe are exactly replicated by Boris Vian when he embarks on his own hoax *traduit de l'américain*. Striking as these similarities are, the real challenge lies in extrapolating the differences between these examples of *traduit de l'américain*. For, if the case of Vian-Sullivan became the great French literary *canular* of the period, Duhamel's hoax went not so much uncriticised as unnoticed. Clearly, Sullivan was a fabrication, but the American original, while virtual, was no more faked than the purportedly American texts of Cheyney or the pseudonymous Chase (we might note in passing that even Cheyney is technically pseudonymous: while he became Peter Evelyn Cheyney he was born Reginald Southouse, or "Reggie", Cheyney). The racial aspect of the Sullivan case, which certainly served to pour petrol on the flames, fetishistically masked the important other meaning of the French term *nègre*: if Sullivan was a virtual black author, Vian was both symbolising and veiling the role of the *ghost-writer*. While Cheyney and Chase had Marcel Duhamel to thank for writing them into the annals of French crime-fiction legend, Vian had to act as his own ghost-writer. Whether the original author exists or not, the American of *traduit de l'américain* was originally, and fundamentally, virtual.

While the virtuality of Vernon Sullivan caused Boris Vian to be exposed and vilified as the originator of a hoax, the equally fraudulent original Americanness of *La Môme vert-de-gris* and *Pas d'orchidées pour miss Blandish* led to these novels becoming, as it were, 'great texts for France'. Indeed, the prestige of the Série Noire, and its label *traduit de l'américain*, was so important in France in the post-Liberation period that the first texts *originally* written by French authors to be published in the series were, almost by necessity, marketed rather deceptively. While not explicitly labelled a translation, Serge Arcouët's *La Mort et l'ange*,

the first to appear in 1948, was given a virtual American originator, Terry Stewart. If this last deception is lauded as being a pioneer of the French post-war *roman noir*, it is, we should argue, because the Série Noire had, in only three years, successfully institutionalised the hoax.⁵ Baudelaire's model of the original-translation had evolved from a successful hoax integrated into the French canon to a canonical crime-fiction genre, one so entirely predicated on the virtual-translation hoax that the hoax passed unseen. With the new Ozymandian proportions of the hoax, *traduit de l'américain* had finally become not so much the elephant as the purloined letter in the room.

Conclusion

While W. T. Bandy was able to draw on Baudelaire's own words and those of his contemporaries to infer the hoax at the heart of the Poe project, little in Série-Noire scholarship betrays Duhamel's hoax. Of course, Bayardian anticipatory plagiarism allows us to use these revelations of Baudelaire's praxis to unmask the model that was (to be) his inspiration. There is, however, little written explicitly about Duhamel's praxis. Nonetheless, his inspired, and, we should suggest, revelatory, use of titles does point the way to a reread of his autobiography, whose own title, *Raconte pas ta vie*, by advising against saying anything about one's life, potentially, and paradoxically, says it all (Duhamel 1972). In the book the one thing with which Duhamel is most closely associated, the establishment of the Série Noire, is the very thing that is not developed, above and beyond the most cursory discussion of his serendipitous discovery of the three novels by Peter Cheyney and James Hadley Chase that would inaugurate the series in 1945 (Rolls and Walker 2009, 9-10). In this oxymoronic saying/non-saying, the absence of the Série Noire in Duhamel's life can be mapped *in reverse* back onto the Série Noire, which can thus be read as the story of Duhamel's life—his

experiences in Paris at the end of the Second World War. Seen in this light, the hoax is quite a simple one, and all the more powerful for it: the *Série Noire* is less about the translation of American crime fiction into French than about making Cheyney and Chase ‘great men for France’. In other words, Duhamel’s translation project is, like Baudelaire’s campaign, an allegorical one that benefits from the objectivity of trans-Atlantic distance in order to rewrite the troubled present of an auto-antonymic Paris.

We should be tempted to see in the following comments (by Baudelaire on his adaptation of De Quincey’s *English Opium Eater*) not only a deliberate, and perhaps coyly disingenuous, commentary on the synthesis of translation and originality, but also a means of filling in the gaps in Duhamel’s wilfully non-revelatory autobiography:

[J]’y ai joint, par-ci par-là, mes réflexions personnelles ; mais jusqu’à quelle dose ai-je introduit ma personnalité dans l’auteur original, c’est ce que je serais actuellement bien empêché de dire. J’ai fait un tel amalgame que je ne saurais y reconnaître la part qui vient de moi, laquelle, d’ailleurs, ne peut être que fort petite. (Bandy 1952, 67)

Here, then, we catch a glimpse of the other side of Baudelaire’s hoax: the apparently original essay that masks its plagiarism is replaced here by an admission that his translations may be more original than even he is aware. In our opinion, Duhamel’s highly reflexive refusal to pass comment on the originality of his own translation project is a voluble one; and rather than seeking to demonstrate in detail the way in which the early titles of the *Série Noire* function allegorically, as a French rereading of the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, what is of interest here is Baudelaire’s anticipation of a crime-fiction-translation project that would combine originality and translation under the Parisian sign of auto-differentiation.

With this article, we hope to have rekindled and, perhaps more importantly, to have redirected an interest in Baudelaire's translation praxis. Far from representing a simple translation, the Poe project sets up a process of constant reflection not only on the concepts of plagiarism and faked translation but also, and especially, on the notion of the hoax, which seems to have been absent from the French vocabulary until that time. Indeed, Baudelaire's translation praxis predates the theory of Translation Studies. In this way, Baudelaire can be reread as a forefather of twentieth-century traductology by virtue of his anticipatory plagiarism of the *Série Noire*, whose target-focused translation praxis would (re)define French crime fiction one hundred years later. We hope, too, to have revealed, in a playful rejoinder to Bandy's article of 1952, one of the great hoaxes of twentieth-century translation: while the *Série Noire* translates the works of Peter Cheyney and James Hadley Chase, it also appropriates a translation praxis developed by Baudelaire.

Furthermore, and this must not be underestimated, given the famous nature of the case, the most famous French crime-fiction hoax of the post-war era, Vian-Sullivan's *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*, is deemed a hoax because it is a forged copy of a *Série-Noire*-style translation. Given that the *Série Noire* is, if not an extreme case of rewriting under the name of translation, then, at least, a translation that is heavily target-based, and, as we have shown here, a project based on a nineteenth-century translation hoax, the Vernon Sullivan case can be seen as something of a hoax of a hoax. Just as the hoax behind Baudelaire's essay on Poe has been exposed by Bandy and the full extent of anticipatory plagiarism has been brought to public attention by Bayard, it is time to denounce the anticipatory hoax at the centre of one of the largest and most successful translation projects of twentieth-century French literature. Finally, by anticipating Marcel Duhamel's use of the label *traduit de l'américain*, Baudelaire has at last made Edgar Allan Poe 'a great man for France'.

NOTES

1. For translation scholars like Sapiro the net percentage of translation exports over imports is an important means of testing national power relations. For her, “Boris Vian’s decision to publish four of his novels under the pseudonym of Vernon Sullivan [...] attest[s] to the prestige that American literature had acquired” (2010, 304). We should argue here, however, that an analysis of the phenomenon of *traduit de l’américain* based on this broad trend (of American hegemony and net exporting of literature to France) allows neither for comparative modelling of Baudelaire’s translations nor for the subtle power dynamics of the French post-war translation practice of large-scale *importing* and, significantly, appropriation. Importing here is as much an intelligent critique, and even a rejection, of foreign cultural hegemony as a blind acceptance of it.

2. On the typically free translation style adopted by Duhamel and his team, see Mesplède and Schleret (1996, 94). For examples of recontextualisation in Série Noire translation, see Lapprand (1992).

3. On the first point, see West-Sooby (2009); on the allegorical potential of post-war French noir, see Rolls (2006).

4. One of Bayard’s key, a-temporal, tests for defining the original author and the plagiarist is the question of the prestige and influence of the authors *within certain genres*. In this case,

Poe is well known for his uncanny tales and, perhaps especially in France, for his role as a forefather of modern crime fiction and less so for his poetry; Baudelaire, on the other hand, is well known as a poet and only known in the area of crime fiction as the translator of Poe. The nature of the Poe-Baudelaire nexus is such that, in anticipatory mode, Poe plagiarises Baudelaire's poetics while Baudelaire plagiarises the allegorical bias of the *Série Noire*.

5. Scholars like Gorrara (2003) see the publication of Arcouët-Stewart's novel as an important step in the development of a new wave of French roman noir.

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