‘Pour une poésie mineure’: linguistic experimentation in the work of Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Christophe Tarkos

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Contents

List of Abbreviations Used

Introduction 1

Chapter One: Linguistic experimentation and ‘littérature mineure’ 23

Chapter Two: Dominique Fourcade, ‘l’expérience de la poésie’ 82

Chapter Three: Olivier Cadiot, ‘la poésie par d’autres moyens’ 136

Chapter Four: Christophe Tarkos, ‘pour la poésie’ 201

Conclusion 259

Bibliography 272

List of Abbreviations Used

Works by Gilles Deleuze:

CC: *Critique et clinique*, 1993

Works by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari:

K: *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, 1975
MP: *Mille plateaux*, 1980

Works by Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet:

D: *Dialogues*, 1977

Works by Mikhail Bakhtin:

DI: *The Dialogic Imagination*, 1981

Works by Dominique Fourcade:

CD: *Citizen Do*, 2008
CPA: *Le Ciel pas d'angle*, 1983
EJPPM: *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, 2001
M: *Manque*, 2012
OU: *Outrance utterance*, 1990
RD: *Rose-déclic*, 1984
SBDU: *Son blanc du un*, 1986
SM: *Le Sujet monotype*, 1997

Works by Olivier Cadiot:

AP: *L'art poétic'*, 1988
FAF: *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, 1993

Works by Olivier Cadiot and Rodolphe Burger:

HR: *Hôtel Robinson*, 2002
P: *Psychopharmaka*, 2013
W: *Welche; On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage*, 2000

Works by Christophe Tarkos:

A: *Anachronisme*, 2001
C: *Caisses*, 1998
E: *L'Enregistré*, 2014
EP: *Écrits poétiques*, 2008
MC: *Morceaux choisis*, 1995
ML: *Ma langue*, 2000
S: *Le Signe=*, 1999

Introduction

In a passage in *Mille plateaux*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to the 'expressions singulières' of the American poet E. E. Cummings ('*he danced his did* ou *they went their came*'), arguing that Cummings offers an example of how, in literature, the atypical stylistic and syntactic variations of an author push language towards its limit, extending it 'vers un en-deçà ou un au-delà de la langue' (125-6). This comment forms part of an analysis, introduced in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure* (1975), developed in *Dialogues* (1977), *Mille plateaux* (1980), *Critique et clinique* (1993) and elsewhere, which elaborates the notion of 'littérature mineure'. Deleuze and Guattari's analysis situates literature within the language system more broadly; this system, which they conceptualise as a socio-political phenomenon, structured around relations of power, sees two opposing forces at work. On the one hand, there is a 'major' or 'territorialising' impulse, which seeks to suppress the intrinsic variation of language, and to assert, in its place, a homogenous system, characterised by norms and constants. On the other hand, there is a 'minor' or 'deterritorialising' impulse, which serves to resist this former impulse, and to highlight instead the heterogeneous reality of the continuous variation of language. The stylistic variation of certain types of literature present prime examples of the deterritorialisation of a major mode: they disorder language, rendering it strange, agrammatical and foreign. Thus, in Cummings's example, his subversive use of syntax highlights the homogenising tendency of prescriptive grammar, pointing toward novel possibilities in language, new 'outsides' to the parameters established by a dominant discourse. Deleuze and Guattari call this type of literature 'mineure', and argue that it is intrinsically political in so far as it destabilises a major linguistic mode, which is itself a discourse of power.

Using Deleuze and Guattari's reflections on minor literature as a framework, the following thesis will argue 'pour une poésie mineure', by exploring the 'expressions singulières' of the contemporary French poets Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Christophe Tarkos. Set against a backdrop of a long tradition of experimental poetry in France, these poets are engaged in a sustained practice of linguistic experimentation, where the boundaries of language, this 'en-deçà ou au-delà de la langue', continue to be the locus of poetic innovation. By definition, the experiment involves the questioning of normal or major linguistic modes which rather than being taken as read, are dismantled and destabilised. In Chapter One, I trace a trajectory of experimental, language-focused poetry, inaugurated by figures such as Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Lautréamont in the nineteenth century, that has systematically dissected the normative functioning of major literary and non-literary discourses with regard to voice, meaning, form, and so on. In the subsequent chapters, I explore how Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos sustain, revise and develop the experiments of their predecessors, and in so doing, produce a form of 'poésie mineure', whose minor quality hinges on the centrality of the experiment. In my analysis, the nuances of Deleuze and Guattari's account will be considered in detail, and brought to bear in close readings of the poets' work. I hope to demonstrate how Deleuze and Guattari's theory of a minor literature sees the meeting point of a number of issues that are pertinent to the discussion of contemporary poetry: agrammaticality, style, and the foreign, disordered and political dimensions of literary language, for example. These notions, which tend to be explored in isolation elsewhere, are configured in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis in a unique assemblage that sets out a vision 'pour une littérature mineure'.

One of the original starting points for this thesis was a fleeting reference found in Emmanuel Hocquard's essay on contemporary poetry 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste'. In the

essay, Hocquard refers to a certain strand of language-focused poetry, which might include, to varying degrees, the three poets I consider here, as 'poésie mineure (au sens deleuzien du terme)'.[1] This reference to a 'poésie mineure' prompts several questions that, to my knowledge, have not been addressed elsewhere. Firstly, how might this particular strand of contemporary poetry be read as 'mineure'? More broadly, what constitutes minor poetry, and what would set certain types of poetry apart from others in this regard? A second set of questions arose from an article by Christian Prigent, where a passing remark evokes the possibility of applying Deleuze's analysis to our understanding of poetic language:

> [Pour Deleuze, la littérature] est un « devenir-autre de la langue, […] une ligne […] qui s'échappe du système dominant » […]. C'est un procès de « déterritorialisation » dont le dynamisme excentrique « trace du réel » […]. On peut voir là une définition du « langage poétique ».[2]

Prigent's comment resonates with a further remark made by Michael G. Kelly in *Strands of Utopia* (2008):

> To envision according to another terminological dyad originating with Deleuze and Guattari, the poetic would thus be that entry into language which serves to 'de-territorialize' all that supposedly dominant forms of language use had served to 'territorialize' – to establish and impose upon the reader-addressee with the self-evidence of power.[3]

This idea that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialisation might offer a definition of 'the poetic' or of poetic language itself, poses a number of questions that will be explored in the following thesis. Given that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the defining feature of minor literature is that it involves a high coefficient of deterritorialisation, then if Prigent's reflection is true, is any instance of poetic language

[1] Emmanuel Hocquard, 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste' in *ma haie* (Paris: P.O.L., 2001), p. 26.
[2] Christian Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »', *Sitaudis* (2015) <http://www.sitaudis.fr/Incitations/deleuze-poesie.php> [accessed 1 February 2017] (unpaginated).
[3] Michael G. Kelly, *Strands of Utopia: Spaces of Poetic Work in Twentieth-Century France* (London: Legenda, 2008), p. 6.

then an instance of 'littérature mineure'? What is the status of poetry and poetic language in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, and would 'poésie mineure' be distinct in any significant way from 'littérature mineure'? More broadly, what then constitutes poetic language, and how does this relate to or differ from 'ordinary' or other types of language? What is the role of style or syntactic variation in this? Are there ways in which poetry can have a political dimension in its very use of language? One of the aims of the following chapters is to investigate what Deleuze and Guattari's analysis might offer to the consideration of these questions.

Existing research

In recent years, there have been a significant number of critical works reading contemporary literature through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. Of these works, relatively few are focused on poetry, which might reflect the fact that Deleuze and Guattari tend to focus more on novelists and playwrights in their analysis (Kafka, Artaud, Beckett and Proust, for example). In an article entitled 'Deleuze / « Poésie »', Christian Prigent remarks that although Deleuze and Guattari refer to poetry in its broadest sense, they rarely consider individual poets, and when they do, the references are often fleeting and underdeveloped.[4] This is particularly true for contemporary poets, who are largely absent from Deleuze and Guattari's writing; the one figure who does appear is Gherasim Luca, but, as Prigent suggests: 'Deleuze ne fait guère plus qu'agiter ce nom comme une clochette à chaque fois qu'il parle de bégaiement stylistique'.[5] However, as Deleuze and Guattari form part of the philosophical and intellectual Zeitgeist of the last forty years, allusions to their work are nonetheless frequent in contemporary criticism. To give just one example, a recent volume on the 'subject' in contemporary French poetry, *Sens et*

[4] Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »'.
[5] Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »'.

présence du sujet poétique (2006), contains no less than six essays that draw on Deleuze and Guattari to varying degrees in their analysis.[6] A number of works address the connection directly, for example, Jon Clay's *Sensation, Contemporary Poetry and Deleuze: Transformative Intensities* (2010) which focuses on Deleuzian 'intensities' in relation to contemporary British poets, such as J. H. Prynne and Douglas Oliver. Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet's collective volume, *Deleuze et les écrivains* (2007), assembles various articles on Deleuze, including a number on poetry, such as Christian Prigent's 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs, Note sur la poésie, en parcourant Deleuze', Jean-Claude Pinson's 'Poéthique de Gilles Deleuze', and Jérôme Game's 'La répétition différentiante dans la poétique deleuzienne: bégaiement, ritournelle, galop'.[7] Reprising themes found in his contribution to *Deleuze et les écrivains*, Prigent's aforementioned article 'Deleuze / « Poésie »' considers the particular place granted to poetry within Deleuze's oeuvre. Alongside Prigent, Jérôme Game is the critic who has most systematically applied Deleuze's thinking to the analysis of poetry. His book *Poetic Becomings: Studies in Contemporary French Literature* (2011), which is based on his doctoral thesis, represents, to my knowledge, the only book-length exploration of contemporary French poetry through a Deleuzo-Guattarian lens.[8] Given Game's theoretical framework and corpus (Christian Prigent, Dominique Fourcade, Olivier Cadiot and Hubert Lucot), there will be several instances in the following chapters where I will draw on his analysis. However, the central focus of his work, that of the poetic subject, means that my own discussion will be covering very different ground. A final article to note is Michael G. Kelly's 'Poetry as a foreign language: unhoused writing subjects in the

[6] Michael Brophy and Mary Gallagher (eds), *Sens et présence du sujet poétique*: *La poésie de la France et du monde francophone depuis 1980* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).
[7] Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet (eds), *Deleuze et les écrivains. Littérature et philosophie* (Nantes: Cécile Defaut, 2007).
[8] Jérôme Game, *Poetic Becomings: Studies in Contemporary French Literature* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

extrême contemporain' (2011), which also considers Deleuze and poetic subjectivity, by exploring the notion of 'deterritorialised', or 'unhoused' writing subjects.[9]

As for the poets themselves, to varying degrees, all three considered here are familiar with Deleuze and Guattari's work.[10] At a conference in 2015, Olivier Cadiot described Deleuze as his 'chef', and he often uses Deleuzo-Guattarian terminology, such as 'langue mineure' and 'bégaiement', in interviews.[11] In his musical collaborations with Rodolphe Burger, Cadiot samples recordings of Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza at the Université de Vincennes, lectures that he attended in person.[12] We know that Christophe Tarkos read and annotated texts by Deleuze and Guattari, and the philosophical underpinnings of his work demonstrate several parallels with their thinking.[13] In two interviews held in 2015, Dominique Fourcade and I discussed at length Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a 'littérature mineure', and, despite taking issue with a perceived lack of nuance in their analysis, Fourcade confirmed their undeniable significance in ways of thinking about literature and literary language today. That said, it is not my intention to demonstrate the influence of Deleuze and Guattari's thought on these poets' work, but rather to use their analysis to explore what Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos's poetic language does. Indeed, I have chosen these three poets because Deleuze and Guattari's analysis configures differently with their respective projects, and using their analysis as a framework serves to

[9] Michael G. Kelly, 'Poetry as a foreign language: unhoused writing subjects in the *extrême contemporain*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (2011), pp. 393-407.
[10] For a useful survey of Deleuze and Guattari's influence on contemporary French poets more generally, see the introduction to Nathalie Wourm's *Poètes français du 21ème siècle: entretiens* (Leiden: Rodopi, 2017), pp. 1-9. Wourm argues that a deconstructionist tendency, manifested notably in an engagement with the works of Deleuze and Guattari and Derrida, forms 'une philosophie commune' (7) that groups together the otherwise heterogeneous poetry of Portugal, Game, Cadiot, Chaton, Alferi, Quintane, and others.
[11] The conference, dedicated to Cadiot's work and entitled 'Expérience morte, expérimentez!', took place in October 2015 at the Université Paris Diderot and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. For an example of Cadiot's use of Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, see Olivier Cadiot, Philippe Mangeot and Pierre Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux: *entretien avec Olivier Cadiot*', *Vacarme*, No. 45 (2008), pp. 4-12.
[12] Rodolphe Burger and Olivier Cadiot, *Hôtel Robinson* (Dernière bande, 2002) [CD].
[13] Philippe Castellin points this out in his introductory essay, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »' in Christophe Tarkos, *L'Enregistré* (Paris: P.O.L., 2014), p. 22.

highlight similarities and differences between them. The three poets represent an interesting cross-section of linguistically experimental poets in the contemporary field; each exhibits various affinities to different broader trends and movements. The following 'parcours' will serve to introduce the three poets, to situate them within the contemporary landscape, and to outline some of the key issues that are at stake in poetry and its criticism today.

Contemporary field

This 'parcours' comes with the usual caveat that, despite the various attempts to offer a coherent account of contemporary poetic practice, a degree of caution must be used in handling the taxonomies that are elaborated. As Jean-Marie Gleize writes: 'il est extrêmement difficile de percevoir ce qui, de façon pertinente, organise ce champ, le constitue autrement que comme un chaos de pratiques individuelles'.[14] Critics frequently identify a division of the field into two broad groups, which mark an extension of two general trends in poetry from across the second half of the twentieth century. This division has been formulated in several ways: some talk about a 'poétique du texte' or 'poétique de la lettre', as opposed to a 'poétique du sens' or 'poétique du sujet'. Elsewhere it is described according to Saussure's terminology, with the opposition being made between a 'poétique du signifiant' and a 'poétique du signifié'. As Jérôme Game points out, when talking about the binary opposition between 'literal poetry, materialist and intransitive on the one hand, and subjective poetry, neo-lyrical and transitive on the other', '[t]here is, in this structuring of the field, something dissatisfying ; it is too static and reductive'.[15] The categories elaborated are often too neatly defined to account for the complexity of the actual situation, and there are, of course, multiple overlapping concerns between poets

[14] Jean-Marie Gleize, *A noir: poésie et littéralité: essai* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 93.
[15] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 12.

associated with the seemingly oppositional movements. However, this conceptualisation has carried such weight in criticism and poetic practice, whether upholding the division, or working against it, that it nonetheless requires some elaboration.

The appellation of 'poètes du signifiant' or 'poètes du texte' assembles a number of movements from across the twentieth century: textualism in the 1960s and 1970s, typically associated with the review *Tel Quel*; the 'modernité négative' or 'écriture blanche' of poets such as Jean Daive, Claude Royet-Journoud, Emmanuel Hocquard and Anne-Marie Albiach; 'poètes sonores' such as Bernard Hiedsieck and Henri Chopin; and the constraint-based poetic practices of the Oulipo, for example. A 'poétique du signifiant' places emphasis on the materiality of the text itself and is characterised by self-reflexivity. Following from the experiments with poetic voice of nineteenth-century figures such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, the traditional lyric 'je' is thrown into question, with Francis Ponge's famous evocation of a 'cancer romantico-lyrique', embodying the rejection of earlier lyric forms and the accompanying significance granted to subjective, emotional experience. A major part of the destabilising of the lyric 'je' was the recognition of an 'écart énonciatif', where the intrinsic properties of the language system require the divorce between poet and first-person pronoun. As Dominique Rabaté suggests, the way that poets deal with this gap delineates:

> deux tendances selon que la poétique d'un écrivain va dans le sens d'une fusion de l'écart énonciatif, vers ce qu'il faudra appeler une « voix » poétique, qui transcende ses manifestations ou les unifie dans le rythme d'un chant ; ou qu'à l'inverse l'effort poétique tende vers le maintien de cet écart.[16]

[16] 'Enonciation poétique, énonciation lyrique' in Dominique Rabaté (ed.), *Figures du sujet lyrique* (Paris: PUF, 1996), p. 77.

The distinction is not entirely clear cut, particularly after the 'néo-lyrique' movement shortly to be discussed, but broadly speaking the language-focused poets of the twentieth century align with the latter 'tendance', and the lyric poets with the former.

The 'poètes du signifié', which includes figures such as Yves Bonnefoy, André du Bouchet and Philippe Jaccottet, or, in a different guise, Jacques Réda, Henri Thomas and Paul de Roux, have resisted the perceived stasis and self-reflexivity of the linguistic turn, and have maintained the importance of the world outside the text. The 1980s saw a 'retour en force du lyrisme', following the dominant linguistic focus of the previous decades.[17] This revival of lyricism, which as Michel Collot suggests had been 'longtemps tenu à distance et revendiqué par une nouvelle génération de poètes', appeared in two forms: firstly, in poetry that reprised a seemingly uncomplicated use of the lyric 'je', and revisited traditional lyric themes in turn; and secondly, in poetry that assessed critically the lyricism of nineteenth-century Romanticism or twentieth-century Surrealism, presenting in its place a 'néo-lyrisme' or 'lyrisme critique'.[18] Championed by figures such as Jean-Michel Maulpoix, Michel Collot and Jean-Claude Pinson, this second mode was more self-reflexive than its previous incarnations, and set about engaging with the criticisms of lyricism raised by the 'poètes du texte'. In such a way, neo-lyricism reprises the lyric voice with a greater consciousness of what this gesture entails; as Maulpoix writes: 'Le lyrisme d'aujourd'hui est critique en ce qu'il exprime un état critique du sujet […]. Il constitue un espace de quête, d'interpellation et de questionnement'.[19] The question remains open as to how novel this new lyric poetry actually is – Jean-Marie Gleize, for example, would brand much of it 'la re-poésie', arguing that it represents a return to old forms in a new guise.[20]

[17] Michel Collot, 'Lyrisme et littéralité', *Lendemains*, Vol. 34 (2009), p. 14.
[18] Collot, 'Lyrisme et littéralité', p. 14.
[19] Jean-Michel Maulpoix, *La Poésie comme l'amour* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1998), p. 123.
[20] Jean-Marie Gleize, *Sorties* (Paris: Questions théoriques, 2009), p. 58.

As Collot suggests, its legitimacy is constantly under examination: 'la question s'est posée de savoir si l'on avait affaire à un "néo-lyrisme", reconduisant de vieilles recettes ou à un lyrisme réellement nouveau'.[21]

At the beginning of the 1990s, Jean-Marie Gleize's elaboration of the notion of 'littéralité' saw the distinction described above reformulated as a division between 'lyrique' poets on the one hand, and 'littéraliste' poets on the other. This paradigm has carried particular weight in recent criticism, and thus requires some consideration. In *A noir: poésie et littéralité*, Gleize describes a 'poésie littéraliste' which involves the rejection of a traditional mode of lyricism, a suspicion of the poetic image, and a grappling with the hopelessness or indeed impossibility of poetry as a genre.[22] Taking up Rimbaud's famous phrase 'littéralement et dans tous les sens', Gleize's notion of 'littéralité' stresses 'le primat de la lettre', a 'réalisme radical' close to American Objectivism, and a 'neutralisation des images' in poetry (despite the fact that, as Gleize himself concedes, all language is to some degree 'imagé').[23] Jean-Claude Pinson writes:

> [La notion de « littéralité »] peut d'abord renvoyer, comme dans l'expression « sens littéral », à un usage idéalement transparent, dénotatif, du langage, usage qu'on situe traditionnellement aux antipodes du recours littéraire au registre métaphorique. Le littéraire se définit alors par opposition au littéral.[24]

The 'littéraliste' poetry that Gleize evokes attempts to expunge the figures associated with literary language – metaphor, simile, and the image understood in its broadest sense. Gleize writes:

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[21] Collot, 'Lyrisme et littéralité', p. 14.
[22] Gleize, *A noir*, p. 16.
[23] Collot, 'Lyrisme et littéralité', p. 14. Gleize writes 'le sens est toujours déjà figuré', but notes that there is nonetheless a tangible difference between the excess of poetic imagery in Surrealist poetry, and the resistance to imagery in 'littéraliste' poets. *A noir*, pp. 15-16.
[24] Jean-Claude Pinson, *Habiter en poète: essai sur la poésie contemporaine* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1995), p. 251.

> Il y a une poésie de l'évitement ou de la neutralisation des images. Une poésie que je voudrais pouvoir appeler « littérale ». Au-delà, sans doute, du partage du propre et du figuré. Au-delà, peut-être, simplement, du sens.[25]

In Gleize's elaboration of 'littéralité', he discusses two significant and interrelated movements that crystallised in the 1970s and 1980s: 'poésie blanche' and 'poésie négative' (or, more generally, 'modernité négative'). In *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953), Barthes evokes 'une écriture blanche', that is 'neutre', 'transparente' and 'amodale', characterised by 'un style de l'absence qui est presque une absence idéale du style'.[26] Citing, among other examples, Mallarmé's poetry, Barthes continues: 'l'écriture se réduit alors à une sorte de mode de négatif dans lequel les caractères sociaux et mythiques d'un langage s'abolissent au profit d'un état neutre et inerte de la forme'.[27] Derived from Barthes's analysis, 'poésie blanche' places emphasis on ellipses and fragments, on the white space of the page, on a stylistic minimalism often described as 'écriture plate', and on silence, negation, absence and whiteness as thematic motifs. It is associated most immediately with Royet-Journoud, Albiach, Hocquard, and Gleize himself, although, as the essays in the collective volume *Ecritures blanches* would suggest, many poets writing during this period could also be evoked: Jean Daive and Dominique Fourcade, for instance.[28]

Involving many of the same poets associated with 'poésie blanche', and closely linked with this former term, 'modernité négative' evokes not an organised literary movement *per se*, but a broader literary Zeitgeist, critical of the once triumphant faith in the power of

[25] Gleize, *A noir*, p. 16.
[26] Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Seuil, 1953), pp. 59-60.
[27] Barthes, *Le Degré zéro*, p. 60.
[28] Dominique Viart, 'Blancheurs et minimalismes littéraires' in Dominique Rabaté and Dominique Viart (eds), *Ecritures blanches* (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2009), p. 7.

literature. The term was coined by Hocquard in 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste', where he gives the following description:

> Pas la *modernité triomphante* de l'avant-guerre, celle des avant-gardes de tous bords, dont on a pu déclarer, à juste titre, qu'elle avait pris fin avec Auschwitz ; mais l'autre versant de cette modernité, la *modernité négative* (apophatique) de l'après-guerre, celle de la suspicion, du doute, des interrogations sur tout et sur elle-même, dont les temps forts en poésie se situent dans les années soixante et soixante-dix.[29]

As Hocquard suggests, negative modernity saw literature rounding upon itself, questioning the value of its practice and the possibilities of its future production. This contributed to the widespread 'crise de poésie' in the latter half of the twentieth century, one of the most well-known formulations of which was Denis Roche's conclusion that 'la poésie est inadmissible, d'ailleurs elle n'existe pas'.[30] This crisis has become, as Jean-Marie Gleize argues, a constitutive element of the poetic act. Gleize, whose own contribution to this discussion involved leaving '*la* poésie' behind, in favour of a '*post*-poésie', evokes this crisis in the following terms:[31]

> « La poésie » n'existe pas, n'existe plus, ce qui ne signifie pas, bien sûr, le tarissement de la pratique poétique, mais simplement que la poésie vit son état de crise, sans doute *de* son état de crise, un état critique et autocritique permanent qui est certainement sa seule définition possible aujourd'hui […]. La question est ouverte, la poésie est ouverte à ses questions : celle de sa spécificité (certains y croient très fortement, comme Jacques Roubaud ; certains n'y croient plus), celle de sa relation à son histoire, à différents moments de son histoire, à l'évaluation de l'héritage (prosodique notamment), celle de sa relation à des traditions autres, à d'autres langues, celle de la validité de l'expérimentation dont elle est le lieu depuis maintenant un bon siècle, celle du lieu de son effectuation […], celle de sa capacité à dire l'être, ou à en suggérer le manque, celle de son occultation sociale, de ses raisons, celle même, évidemment, de son existence, etc.[32]

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[29] Hocquard, 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste' in *ma haie*, p. 25.
[30] Denis Roche, *La Poésie est inadmissible. Oeuvres poétiques complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 1995), p. 511.
[31] By '*la* poésie', Gleize means a traditional mode of predominantly lyric poetry. Like Roche, Gleize believes '*la* poésie' has had its day, and advocates a form of '*post*-poésie' that, as Christophe Wall-Romana writes, will '[approach] poetry as if from the outside, bringing to it other media and discourses, in a different ecology of meaning built upon *dispositifs de montage*'. See Christophe Wall-Romana, 'Is "postpoetry" still poetry? Jean-Marie Gleize's *dispositif*-writing', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (2011), p. 443.
[32] Gleize, *A noir*, p. 102.

As Gleize suggests, poetry today is characterised by a state of perpetual self-questioning. Each poet's subsequent response to these questions might situate them on a continuum of 'poésie positive' and 'poésie négative'. In the following chapters, it will become clear that Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos arrive at very different conclusions in this regard, each of them reflecting broader trends in the contemporary field. Fourcade, linked as we saw above with 'poésie blanche', and Cadiot, the most closely associated with 'littéralité', demonstrate many affinities with negative modernity; Tarkos, on the other hand, describes the inaugural gesture of his poetry as an affirmative 'oui', which works against the '« non » désespéré' of many of his contemporaries (*E*, 245). The 'crise de poésie' that Gleize evokes goes hand in hand with a questioning of its own social or political significance. In *A quoi bon encore des poètes* (1994), Christian Prigent asks what is the purpose or use of poetry: 'à quoi ça sert?'[33] Addressing the role of the poet he writes: 'Penser ce rôle en termes de génie civil, d'efficacité sociale immédiate, d'« engagement » ne peut plus que faire rire'.[34] As will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter, Prigent, like many contemporary poets, looks towards the differential discourse of poetic language for an answer. He sees poetic language as fundamentally opposed to ordinary language '[p]arce que le découpage étrange, alambiqué, démultiplié de l'écrit « poétique » impose un autre régime du sens (un autre rythme d'apparition, de constitution et de dispersion du sens dans le temps – le temps d'écrire et le temps de lire)'.[35] Poetic language thus serves a purpose and involves a political dimension in so far as it presents an alternative to normative discourses and signifies 'une protestation […] contre la réduction de la dimension linguistique à celle de la « communication »'.[36]

[33] Christian Prigent, *A quoi bon encore des poètes?* (Valence: ERBA, 1994), p. 12.
[34] Prigent, *A quoi bon*, p. 12.
[35] Prigent, *A quoi bon*, p. 14.
[36] Prigent, *A quoi bon*, p. 14.

New lyricists, such as Jean-Claude Pinson, have also approached the question of the social or political role of poetry. In *Habiter en poète* (1995), Pinson assesses the existential dimensions of poetry as a practice, elaborating the notion of a 'poéthique'.[37] He reminds us that, etymologically, 'ethos' conveys the notion of 'dwelling', evoking a way of being, or existing in the world. In a subsequent collection of essays that elaborate this notion, he writes the following:

> Toute grande œuvre poétique (littéraire), telle est du moins ma conviction, n'est pas seulement un objet verbal offert à la jouissance esthétique, à l'analyse ou à la réflexion, ni même simplement vecteur d'un questionnement. Elle est aussi *proposition de monde* – et notamment proposition, une ou plurielle, quant à telle ou telle modalité possible de son habitation. En même temps qu'elle est invention de formes, événement de langage, elle est, plus ou moins directement, *en vue* de l'existence ; en vue d'une habitation ragréée du monde. En faisant entendre une voix, en racontant (ou ne racontant pas) des histoires, en jouant des émotions ou en les déjouant, elle pose, plus ou moins obliquement, la question « poéthique » du comment vivre, la question de la « vraie vie » toujours absente et toujours recherchée.[38]

These questions around the social, political or ethical position of poetry, and its place in the world today, continue to be of great significance in contemporary criticism and practice. They will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter, in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of 'littérature mineure'. They are intimately linked with a second question that Gleize alludes to in the passage above, where he evokes poetry's 'capacité à dire l'être, ou en suggérer le manque'. In light of the 'écart', produced by the semiotic structure of the linguistic system, between language and the world it designates, poets have three broad choices: i) to accentuate absence ('modernité négative', 'littéralité'); ii) to reaffirm presence, despite acknowledging certain irreducible properties of the linguistic system, by asserting language's capacity to *point towards* presence ('néo-lyrisme'); or iii) to see any such gap as inconsequential and carry on regardless ('lyrisme').

[37] Pinson, *Habiter en poète*, p. 20.
[38] Jean-Claude Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve: nouveaux essais sur la poésie contemporaine* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2002), p. 186.

As we can see from how these various approaches configure onto the contemporary landscape, this issue is intimately bound up in ongoing discussions of lyricism. Indeed, Olivier Cadiot reformulates Gleize's reference to the 'capacité à dire l'être' in the following terms: 'Le lyrisme, c'est bien ça, l'expression des affects importants. Il y a des affects importants. Il y a des choses importantes qui se passent dans la vie. Comment les dire ?'[39] Cadiot's question gets to the heart of what is at stake in poetry today: we can agree that there are important things to say, how then do we set about saying these things, despite the obstacles posed by the intrinsic properties of poetry as a language-based practice? What place is there for the world outside the text (subjective experience, emotion, politics, the everyday, etc.) in poetry, and what then, do we do with description, narrative and voice? The centrality of these questions reconcile poets from all areas of the contemporary field, 'littéraliste' and 'néo-lyrique' poets alike.

The reflections in Cadiot and Alferi's *Revue de littérature générale 95/1* (1995), and the second volume *Revue de littérature générale 96/2* (1996), represent an important moment in this discussion, as they see the crystallisation and convergence of a number of different concerns. The reviews assemble texts and critical essays from various twentieth-century poets; Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos all contributed, along with Hocquard, Prigent, Roubaud, Portugal, and many others. Cadiot and Alferi provided an overall critical framework for the enterprise in the shape of two editorial essays – 'La Mécanique lyrique', which opens the first review, and 'Digest', which concludes the second. Surveying the contemporary landscape, they outline a series of features that unite the poets collected in the volume. Agnès Disson summarises these into six key points: 1) 'primauté à la grammaire/ à la syntaxe', 2) 'le désir de fiction/ le brouillage des genres', 3) 'le

[39] Xavier Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', *Le Matricule des Anges*, No. 41 (2002), p. 23.

télescopage des points de vue, des perspectives, des dispositifs', 4) 'la vitesse/le mouvement', 5) 'la répétition comme figure lyrique' and 6) 'l'humour'.[40] Two principal aspects of Alferi and Cadiot's discussion have had particular currency in recent criticism: the notion of the 'OVNI' and that of a 'mécanique lyrique'. In their account of the OVNI or 'objet verbal non identifié', which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, Alferi and Cadiot evoke the variegated and generically-unclassifiable literary forms that pervade the contemporary field.[41] In their notion of 'la mécanique lyrique', they explore a novel approach to lyricism, whereby poetry is conceptualised as a machine or mechanism that fabricates texts from a raw linguistic material comprised of 'boules de sensation-pensées-formes'.[42] Using artisanal processes (among which, cut-up and collage, 'greffes' and 'samples'), the text is thus an eclectic motor or engine where subjecthood and lyricism are constructs of the various devices at work. Eric Lynch gives the following account of 'La Mécanique lyrique':

> While they place a high value on formal experimentation, Alferi and Cadiot do not wish to oppose formalism to lyricism. By entitling their introduction, 'La mécanique lyrique,' they seek rather to integrate lyricism within a formalist theory of poetry. Lyricism becomes the energy or tension that animates the work and creates a unified ensemble from multiple registers of language. Far from implying an intimate voice of the author, lyricism is inscribed within the literary text through techniques of acceleration applied to heterogeneous textual materials.[43]

In this respect, like the 'néo-lyristes', Alferi and Cadiot seek a way to bypass or overcome the stasis of post-lyrical theory (often referred to as the 'Mallarméan impasse' of modern poetry). They work against 'une sorte de vulgate du manque propre à la France littéraire',

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[40] Agnès Disson, 'Poésie années 90: les enfants de Gertrude Stein et de Jacques Roubaud', *French Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 79 (2001), pp. 13-17. For two further useful accounts of Alferi and Cadiot's essays, see Gaëlle Théval, *Poésies ready-made, XXe-XXIe siècles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015), pp. 199-223 and Alain Farah, *Le Gala des incomparables : invention et résistance chez Olivier Cadiot et Nathalie Quintane* (Paris: Garnier, 2013), pp. 83-6.
[41] Pierre Alferi and Olivier Cadiot (eds), *Revue de littérature générale 95/1* (Paris: P.O.L., 1995), p. 5.
[42] Alferi and Cadiot (eds), *Revue 95/1*, p. 5.
[43] Eric Lynch, *Unidentified Verbal Objects: Contemporary French Poetry, Intermedia, and Narrative* (unpublished doctoral thesis, The City University of New York, 2016), p. 18.

and look for ways to produce lyricism *by other means*.[44] The integration of lyricism into a formalist theoretical framework can be seen across a number of poetic practices in the contemporary field, but finds its most noteworthy formulation in Alferi and Cadiot's 'mécanique lyrique' and it is therefore with this particular incarnation of the idea that certain neo-lyrical theorists have engaged. Michel Collot, for instance, questions the plausibility of producing 'l'émotion à partir d'un traitement mécanique du langage', writing that Alferi and Cadiot's approach maintains a distinction between emotion and language that is illusory. He argues that lyricism becomes possible when '[le travail sur la lettre] traite le signifiant non comme un simple matériau linguistique mais comme une "matière-émotion".'[45] Here, we might reasonably argue that this is precisely what Cadiot and Alferi are suggesting when they talk of handling language as 'boules de sensation-pensées-formes', and it is interesting to see the overlaps in these supposedly oppositional approaches. In any case, the debate continues, and the chapters to follow will explore the particular ways in which Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos address these questions.

Fourcade, Cadiot, Tarkos

It is against this backdrop that Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos are writing; they reflect three successive generations of contemporary poetic practice, and although none is comprehensively representative of a broader movement or 'tendance', their poetry is nonetheless inflected in various ways by the particular moment in which they were working. Of the three poets, Dominique Fourcade is the oldest; born in 1938, he began publishing poetry in the 1960s. His early writing, such as *Epreuves du pouvoir* (1961) and *Lessive du loup* (1966), has a lyrical inclination and demonstrates the influence of René Char, a poet whom Fourcade deeply admired. It is not until the 1980s, after a long hiatus

[44] Pierre Alferi and Olivier Cadiot (eds), *Revue de littérature générale 96/2* (Paris: P.O.L., 1996), (unpaginated).
[45] Collot, 'Lyrisme et littéralité', p. 23. See also Michel Collot, *La matière-émotion* (Paris: PUF, 1997).

from writing, that he returns with a series of books published by P.O.L.: *Le Ciel pas d'angle* (1983), *Rose-déclic* (1984), *Son blanc du un* (1986), *Xbo* (1988). This return marked a distinct change in his poetic project, and he has continued to publish throughout the 1990s until the present day: *Outrance Utterance* (1990), *IL* (1994), *Le Sujet monotype* (1997), *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?* (2001), *Sans lasso et sans flash* (2005), *En laisse* (2005), *Eponges modèle 2003* (2005), *Citizen Do* (2008), and *Manque* (2012). The self-referential nature of Fourcade's writing, and its emphasis on the materiality of language, links him to many of the textualist movements of the second half of the twentieth century. The use of the fragment, and the motif of whiteness in, for example, *Son blanc du un*, sees his association with 'poésie blanche'.[46] His interest in the American Objectivists and his on-going dialogue with certain L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, offer a link to the 'réalisme radical' of Gleize's 'littéralité'. However, there is also a sustained lyrical inclination to his work, and a conceptualisation of poetry as a distinct way of inhabiting the world, that reflects something of his generation and the discussions of neo-lyricism that shaped the field in the 1980s. This unique configuration of features serves to situate him outside the 'lyrisme' and 'littéralité' camps. Chapter Two will examine the significance of the 'langue maternelle and 'langue étrangère' in his work, exploring his use of actual foreign language within the text, as well as the way he elaborates these notions as a conceptual paradigm for different experiences of literary and non-literary language. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, the chapter will ask to what end Fourcade uses agrammatical, stuttered and disordered language in his poetry. Investigating Fourcade's self-proclaimed mantra 'tout arrive', and the related notion, formulated by Jérôme Game, of his 'poetics of the rhizome', I explore how multiplicity, simultaneity and heterogeneity are guiding principles

[46] Didier Alexandre, 'Le blanc, le brut, le transparent: sur Dominique Fourcade, Emmanuel Hocquard, James Sacré' in Rabaté and Viart (eds), *Ecritures blanches*, pp. 255-67.

in his work.[47] The chapter traces how these principles play out across a number of different domains: in the subject matter, discourse, voice, and generic status of his texts.

Born in 1956, Olivier Cadiot is a generation younger than Dominique Fourcade, with his earliest works being published by P.O.L. from the late 1980s onwards: *L'art poétic'* (1988), *Roméo & Juliette I* (1989), *Futur, ancien, fugitif* (1993), *Le Colonel des Zouaves* (1997), *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé* (2002), *Fairy queen* (2002*), Un nid pour quoi faire* (2007), *Un mage en été* (2010), *Providence* (2015), and *Histoire de la littérature récente* (2016). His work, which includes books of poetry, novels, adaptations of texts as operas and plays, and musical collaborations, has a distinctly heterogeneous, hybrid feel to it. Although he is wary of the label, of the three poets Cadiot is the most closely associated with 'littéralité', and the reasons for such an association are clear. The sincerity of traditional lyric voice is wholly absent in his work, and there is a humorous, detached, and often cynical tone to much of his writing. The influence of Gertrude Stein and Charles Reznikoff can be traced in his experiments with grammar and with his use of certain compositional techniques such as cut-ups and audio-sampling. Chapter Three explores the use of the 'ready-made' in his work, investigating how this intersects with questions of voice, lyricism and heteroglossia. I argue that his reworking of cut-ups from grammar manuals and dictionaries into stuttered, disordered assemblages, presents a prototypical example of Deleuzo-Guattarian deterritorialisation. I return to themes of multilingualism and foreign language, looking at how Cadiot engages with various forms of 'langue mineure', particularly through his interest in regional and minority languages. The chapter explores how Cadiot began his literary career writing poetry, but soon abandoned the enterprise to focus on prose. In his explicit rejection of poetry, Cadiot maintains a generic

[47] 'Dominique Fourcade, or a Poetics of the Rhizome' in Game, *Poetic Becomings*, pp. 107-50.

distinction that his formulation of the 'OVNI' in the *Revue de littérature générale* appears to resist. Exploring these questions of genre, Chapter Three pursues the idea that Cadiot's later musical collaborations with Rodolphe Burger present a form of Gleizian post-poetry, marking a continuation of his earlier poetic project outside the poem.

Christophe Tarkos, born in 1963, is the youngest of the three poets. He died in 2004 at the age of 41, after years of treatment for what proved to be a fatal brain tumour. He started writing and performing his poetry in the 1990s, publishing his earliest works with various small publishing houses. Among his early work is: *L'Oiseau vole* (1995), *Morceaux choisis* (1995), *Le train* (1996), *Oui* (1996), *Processe* (1997) and *Le Bâton* (1998). In the late 1990s, four further texts were published by P.O.L.: *Caisses* (1998), *Le Signe* = (1999), *PAN* (2000), and *Anachronisme* (2001). P.O.L. subsequently brought out two posthumous collections: *Ecrits poétiques* (2008), which collects together his earlier written work, and *L'Enregistré* (2014), which contains a CD, DVD and transcripts of his performance work. Tarkos's concern for 'la projection *orale*' establishes a link with 'la poésie sonore' and the performance poetry of figures such as Bernard Heidsieck and Jean-Pierre Bobillot.[48] Whether written or performed, his poetry has a stylistic unity to it; the immediate familiarity of the poem's language, which is resolutely 'ordinary' and accessible, is rendered strange and unfamiliar through the vertiginous repetitions and revisions of a central phrase. Alongside a number of poets who began publishing in the 1990s, such as Charles Pennequin and Nathalie Quintane, his poetry sustains the metalinguistic and experimental dimension of earlier textualist poets, but sees a return of the 'réel' in the poem. Language is still of primary importance, but the gap between word and world is not maintained with the brutal insistence of certain textualist predecessors. As will be explored

[48] Christian Prigent's term in *Salut les anciens: lectures; Salut les modernes: sur ce qui apparaît* (Paris: P.O.L., 2000), p. 82.

in Chapter Four, this stems from Tarkos's conception of language as a 'pâte-mot', and his rejection of Saussure's concept of the sign which has significantly defined the way poets across the twentieth century have thought about language and its relationship to the world. In opposition to the 'poésie négative' of the preceding decades, he elaborates a poetics of presence, where narration, description and the reinstatement of lyric voice affirm the existence of the real outside the text. Chapter Four will explore this dimension of Tarkos's work, arguing that rather than representing a regressive gesture that simply reprises lyric voice in a form of Gleizian 'repoésie', it stems from a fundamental re-evaluation of the binary relationship between language and world. In this broader monistic, continuist conception, we see certain parallels to Collot's notion of language as 'matière-émotion'. Against a backdrop of 'modernité négative' and the 'crise de poésie', Tarkos is quick to assert the value of poetry, and to evoke the revolutionary potential of its language. Chapter Four will subsequently explore how Tarkos conceives of poetic language, linking this to Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of 'littérature mineure'.

If there is one thing that unites these three poets, it is that they have all been considered to contribute something new and idiosyncratic to the contemporary field. One of the aims of this thesis will be to discern precisely what form this takes. Written at the turn of the twenty-first century, Christian Prigent's survey of contemporary poetry, *Salut les anciens*; *Salut les modernes,* opens with the following address: 'Chers amis, voici le siècle nouveau. Tout a changé. Rien n'a changé'.[49] Prigent raises the same question as Carrie Noland who, in her study of linguistic experimentation in modern French poetry, asks: 'Are the "chercheurs" (researchers) of today radically distinct from the poets of yesteryear? Or can we discern profound continuities between poets as distinctive as Heidsieck and Rimbaud,

[49] Prigent, *Salut les anciens*, p. 13.

Roche and Mallarmé?'[50] Both critics pose the questions that lie behind any consideration of experimental or innovative literature: where is the new today? What makes it new? And what is its relationship with the innovative practices of the past? The following chapter will trace some of the principal developments of experimental poetry in the twentieth century, outlining the trajectory in which Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos are situated, before highlighting some of the new areas of experimentation found in poetry today.

[50] Carrie Noland, 'Poetic experimentation' in John D. Lyons (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to French Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), p. 171.

Chapter One: Linguistic experimentation and 'littérature mineure'

At the limits of language

Since the nineteenth century, a defining feature of modern French poetry has been its tendency towards linguistic experimentation. If poetry can be understood as an '*événement* de langage', as Jean-Claude Pinson would have it, or a 'language game', to use Wittgenstein's terminology, then the game or event most relevant to the poetry considered here is the experiment.[1] As Carrie Noland suggests, the Surrealists were the first to formalise overtly the idea of the poet as 'researcher', conceptualising the poem as 'an experiment, an unfinished and provisional interrogation'.[2] In a short essay entitled 'Les mots sans rides' (1922), André Breton describes 'la poésie d'aujourd'hui', citing as examples Paulhan, Eluard and Picabia, who in his eyes 'restent attachés à des recherches dont participèrent aussi l'œuvre de Ducasse, Un coup de Dés de Mallarmé, La Victoire et certains calligrammes d'Apollinaire'.[3] Breton's description of the linguistic 'recherches' of modern poetry is subsequently reformulated by Emmanuel Hocquard, who describes contemporary poetry as a series of 'enquêtes de langage'.[4] Today, the conceptualisation of the poem as experiment is so embedded in the fabric of poetic practice, that evoking poetry in these terms is ubiquitous. To give just two further examples relevant to the poets in hand: when Tarkos established, with Katalin Molnàr and Pascal Doury, the review *Poézi Prolétèr* in 1997, it was subtitled 'Revue semestrielle de poésie contemporaine et de recherche expérimentale sur la langue française'; a recent conference dedicated to Cadiot's work was entitled 'Olivier Cadiot: Expérience morte, expérimentez!'[5] In *Caisse à outils*

[1] Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve*, p. 183. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).
[2] Noland, 'Poetic experimentation', p. 171.
[3] André Breton, 'Les mots sans rides', *Littérature*, No. 7 (1922), p. 13.
[4] Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 451.
[5] Conference in October 2015 at the Université Paris Diderot and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

(2006), Jean-Michel Espitallier addresses what is meant by the term 'expérimental' in contemporary practice:

> Terme fourre-tout qui fascine ou effraie, label d'excellence ou acte d'accusation, synonyme de laboratoire ou de création avec un grand C, l'expérimental est une façon de parler. De quoi? De l'éternelle recherche d'une étrangeté de et dans la langue (une « absolue singularité » comme l'écrit Jean-Pierre Bobillot), d'une mise en cause des formes traditionnelles, d'une tension pour essayer de nouveaux outils bricolés avec de nouvelles machines, d'un *déplacé* dans la technique.[6]

Encapsulated in the dual signification of the French word 'expérience', the experiment represents, as Espitallier suggests, a quest for a novel or foreign experience of language. The 'étrangeté' of this experience differentiates poetic language from other discourses, and is produced precisely through its relationship of difference. The experiment thus involves the questioning of 'des formes traditionnelles', and is often motivated by the perceived inadequacy or insufficiency of pre-existing linguistic modes, as Rosmarie Waldrop points out in *'Against Language?: 'Dissatisfaction with Language' as Theme and as Impulse towards Experiments in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (1971).[7]

In *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1996), Marjorie Perloff describes the language game of poetry as the '"bumping of one's head" against the limits of language'.[8] Perloff's formulation reflects a frequent motif where the experiment is conceptualised as taking place at a limit or border point of language. Indeed, in her discussion of Gertrude Stein's work, Perloff writes that, far from being involved in a game of 'information-giving', Stein is instead involved in a 'game of testing the limits of

[6] Jean-Michel Espitallier, *Caisse à outils* (Paris: Pocket, 2006), p. 57.
[7] Rosmarie Waldrop, *Against Language?: 'Dissatisfaction with Language' as Theme and as Impulse towards Experiments in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).
[8] Marjorie Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 21.

language'.[9] It follows from Wittgenstein's proposition, 'the limits of my language mean the limits of my world', that experimenting with the limits of language represents an attempt to access a reality unattainable through ordinary speech. Experimenting with new linguistic forms entails the possibility of new modes of perception, therefore offering a means of, as Perloff puts it, 'running against the walls of our cage'.[10] Many poets and critics have used these spatial metaphors of a liminal point between language and its outside or beyond to explore the experimental dimension of poetic or literary language. For instance, Bernard Noël writes that 'la poésie est l'expérience des limites intérieures de l'expression verbale : en touchant ces limites, la poésie touche à la fois l'origine et l'avenir'.[11] In *Gestes lyriques* (2013), Dominique Rabaté evokes modern poetry's desire to 'chercher la sortie' in language:

> A la suite d'Emmanuel Hocquard, il faudrait donc de se demander si l'affaire même de la poésie moderne et contemporaine ne consisterait pas justement dans la recherche des façons pour trouver la sortie, mais selon une inflexion ou une clause à mes yeux capitale : trouver la sortie une fois que l'on a renoncé à la possibilité (parce qu'on n'en a pas ou plus les moyens) de se situer dans quelque dehors du langage.[12]

Here, Rabaté identifies the bind of experimental poetry: while attempting to find an outside of language, any such experiment must be conducted within the confines of language itself. Deleuze explores the same theme in the 'Avant-propos' to *Critique et clinique* (1993):

> l'écrivain, comme dit Proust, invente dans la langue une nouvelle langue, une langue étrangère en quelque sorte. Il met à jour de nouvelles puissances grammaticales ou syntaxiques. Il entraîne la langue hors de ses sillons coutumiers, il la fait *délirer.* […] en effet, quand une autre langue se crée dans la langue, c'est

[9] Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, p. 85. Here, Perloff echoes Wittgenstein: 'Do not forget that a poem, although it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information'. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p. 28.
[10] Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, p. 181.
[11] Bernard Noël, 'Où va la poésie?' in David Kelley and Jean Khalfa (eds), *The New French Poetry* (Newcastle upon Tyne : Bloodaxe, 1996), p. 218.
[12] Dominique Rabaté, *Gestes lyriques* (Paris: José Corti, 2013), p. 235.

> le langage tout entier qui tend vers une limite « asyntaxique », « agrammaticale », ou qui communique avec son propre dehors.
>
> La limite n'est pas en dehors du langage, elle en est le dehors : elle est faite de visions et d'auditions non-langagières, mais que seul le langage rend possibles. […] Beckett parlait de « forer des trous » dans le langage pour voir ou entendre « ce qui est tapi derrière ». […]
>
> [Ces visions, ces auditions] sont des événements à la frontière du langage. (9)

In this passage, Deleuze's evocation of limits and borders, and the movements towards or beyond this liminal point, elaborate a spatialised conception of language which is crystallised, as will shortly be explored, in his notion of deterritorialisation. For Deleuze, literary language occupies a space at the limits of ordinary language, an immanent outside towards which language *tends*. As he goes on to say, this literary language presents itself as 'une sorte de langue étrangère, qui n'est pas une autre langue, ni un patois retrouvé, mais un devenir-autre de la langue' (*CC*, 15). The distinction is slight but significant: literary language is not the fully-realised creation of an other language (which might represent an external beyond or outside of language), but rather a becoming-other, a future-orientated process that takes place within language and that points towards a potentialised outside. This accords with Noël's observation above ('en touchant ces limites, la poésie touche à la fois l'origine et l'avenir'), as well as with the conception of poetry as a quest for a utopic space of language, by definition always unrealisable.

Evoking Proust, in the passage above Deleuze describes the widespread idea that literature seeks to elaborate 'une nouvelle langue, une langue étrangère en quelque sorte'. To give just two recent examples of the prevalence of this line of thought: the cover photo of the *Revue de littérature générale 96/2* depicts Poto and Cabengo, two American identical twins who, being socially isolated and having minimal linguistic contact with their negligent parents, invented their own language to communicate between themselves. As figures of ingenuity and linguistic innovation, their significance on the front of the literary

revue, which sought to identify some of the unifying themes and concerns of contemporary poetry, is clear. Elsewhere, in *A quoi bon encore des poètes?*, Prigent gives the following definition of literary modernity, stressing the significance of a Rimbaldian desire to 'trouver' or 'créer une langue':

> J'appelle ici *modernité* l'objet de ce désir qui pousse quelques-uns à ne pas se contenter de l'expérience du monde telle que les langages communautaires la représentent, à vivre toute langue comme étrangère et donc à refonder un langage (à « trouver une langue », disait Rimbaud) pour re-présenter autrement ces représentations.[13]

Prigent's suggestion that the purpose of developing novel linguistic modes might be to 're-présenter autrement' configures with Deleuze's description of the 'visions et d'auditions non-langagières' that literary language engenders, as well as with Perloff's Wittgensteinian analysis that sees language's limits intimately connected to the limits of cognition. In his later article on poetry and Deleuze, Prigent expands on the way in which experimental literature might offer new forms of representation:

> Du coup, il y a toujours un excès innommable aux figures que forme le contrat verbal socialisé pour que le « monde » soit par nous nommable. La reconnaissance empirique de cet innommable porte à trouver des langues pour le symboliser *malgré tout.* Pas pour le *nommer* positivement. Mais pour en *suggérer* l'instance : pour laisser sa présence agir en négatif dans le concert des énoncés positivés. Et donc pour former des figures plus justes du « réel » : des figures plus conformes à l'expérience pour autant que capables d'inclure en elles le négatif dont se trame l'expérience. En somme : des représentations plus *justes*. Dont la justesse *stricto sensu* inouïe fait défaillir toutes les représentations déjà stabilisées.[14]

As a post-TelQuelian formalist, Prigent belongs to the school of thought, outlined above, that sees the language system as characterised by an inescapable absence, produced by the 'écart' between the real and the language that figures it. For Prigent, and many contemporary poets like him, poetic language will oppose and destabilise the norms of representation in 'le contrat verbal socialisé', in its desire to 'former des figures plus justes

[13] Prigent, *A quoi bon*, p. 10.
[14] Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »'.

du « réel »'. Prigent's reflection identifies one among many of the possible motivations behind the desire to 'trouver une langue' in experimental poetry. It also identifies a key constituent of poetic experimentation whereby the normative, referential function of language is called into question.

Experiments with meaning

A primary reference point in this regard is Stéphane Mallarmé, whose poetry inaugurated a number of experiments on meaning, representation and referentiality that are still in play today.[15] Mallarmé's metapoetic poetry places language at the centre of the poet's enterprise; the poem becomes a self-reflexive space to explore all its constituent features: its typographic layout, the phonemic, graphemic, syntactic and semantic functioning of its words, and so on. In poems such as his 'Sonnet en –yx', the referentiality of ordinary language is subverted: reference is multiplied, sometimes partially suspended, and words tend towards pure signifiers or pure sound. His emphasis on the musical quality of poetic language is significant; as Prigent points out with regard to Verlaine's famous phrase 'de la musique avant toute chose', the idea is not 'qu'il faut préférer la musique, mais que la musique fait surgir dans la langue une sorte *d'avant de la chose* : de la figure, de l'image, du nom'.[16] Mallarmé's influence on the course of modern French poetry can hardly be overestimated: the self-referential dimension of his poetry, and its emphasis on the materiality of language in the text, shaped considerably the various language-focused movements of the twentieth century. The way his reflections on the language system underpin his poetry, placing emphasis on the 'inanité sonore' of the text and the

[15] His primacy for contemporary poetry is evident. For example, in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, Dominique Fourcade refers to 'le poème de Mallarmé, à qui je dois tout' (61).
[16] Christian Prigent, 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs, Note sur la poésie, en parcourant Deleuze' in Gelas and Micolet (eds), *Deleuze et les écrivains*, p. 436.

'disparition élocutoire du poète', has engendered the evolution of 'la poésie blanche' and 'la poésie négative', discussed above.

In a different and more radical guise, Dadaist practices in the early twentieth century also experimented with the suspension of reference and non-signification of language in the poem. The poetic performances of figures such as Tristan Tzara, Hugo Ball and Kurt Schwitters presented chaotic auditory collages of linguistic and non-linguistic sounds, incorporating glossolalia, musical instruments, simultaneous recitations in multiple languages, and nonsensical verse, spoken, shouted or sung. To give just three well-known examples: Tzara's 'L'amiral cherche une maison à louer' is an an acoustic assemblage combining German, French and English with a rattle, a whistle and a bass drum; Ball's 'Gadji Beri Bimba' dissects language into nonsensical, phonetic combinations to distil the shamanistic, incantatory quality of non-semantic sound; Schwitters's 'Ursonate' presents a 'Sonate in Urlauten' (a Sonata in Primitive and Original Sounds) composed of protolinguistic babbling, vocal trills, and imitation of bird song.[17] These experiments draw attention to the phonetic or sonorous quality of the poem's signifiers, rather than their referential value; as Thomas and Winspur put it, 'Dada says nothing, Dada phoneticizes'.[18] In turn, these practices involved a political dimension, presenting a critique of the bourgeois norms of meaning production, and exposing the myths and assumptions that lie behind ordinary language use. 'Saying nothing' and 'phoneticizing' thus becomes a form of revolt and a means of liberation from the constraints of traditional, meaning-driven poetry.

[17] Tristan Tzara, 'L'amiral cherche une maison à louer', *UbuWeb,* <http://www.ubu.com/sound/tzara.html> [accessed 17 April 2017]. Hugo Ball, 'Gadji Beri Bimba', *UbuWeb,* <http://www.ubu.com/sound/ball.html> [accessed 17 April 2017]. Kurt Schwitters, 'Ursonate', *UbuWeb,* <http://www.ubu.com/sound/schwitters.html> [accessed 17 April 2017].
[18] Jean-Jacques Thomas and Steven Winspur, *Poeticized Language: the Foundations of Contemporary French Poetry* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 44.

This political dimension is also present in the work of Antonin Artaud, whom Deleuze and Guattari identify as an 'auteur mineur' *par excellence*.[19] His oeuvre presents a radical attack on the normative production of language and on orthodox ideas around language and thought more generally. From earlier texts such as *L'Ombilic des limbes* (1925), through his subsequent development of the 'théâtre de la cruauté', and in his later radio recordings (such as the infamous *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu* recorded in 1947), Artaud experiments with the possibility of an ideal, pre-verbal state that transcends the limits of ordinary language, instead splintering communication into the whole spectrum of non-semantic sound. In this sense, Artaud's performances, with their cries, glossolalia and exaggerated breathing techniques, demonstrate a desire to 'chercher la sortie' (to use Rabaté's term), to find a true outside of language by experimenting with the non-referential and the non-linguistic. Like the Dadaists, his work presents a political dismantling of meaning, not so much a flirting with the limits of sense as a complete immersion in the world of non-sense. In an essay on Artaud, Christian Prigent writes the following:

> Tout se passe comme si l'Artaud des glossolalies voulait écraser la distance (du) symbolique pour retrouver la « viande vraie » et pour fixer *en langue (dans* le symbolique, malgré tout – forcément) du concret, du direct, du non-médiatisé, etc. Ça ne se peut, en soi. D'où le perpétuel enragement d'Artaud : c'est avec cette aporie que son écriture se bat. Il s'agit, encore une fois d'une utopie : il n'y a pas de lieu verbal pour l'effectuation radicale de ça.[20]

As Prigent suggests, Artaud's work battles with the desire to 'retrouver la viande vraie' of an immediate and concrete language, where the gap between language and world is

[19] Deleuze and Guattari champion Artaud as an 'auteur mineur', taking their key notion of the 'corps sans organes' from the end of *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*. The notion of the 'corps sans organes' has several reverberations in Deleuze and Guattari's work, not least with the 'rhizome' structure that will be an important conceptualisation of Fourcade's poetics in the second chapter of this thesis.
[20] Christian Prigent, *La Langue et ses monstres* (Paris: P.O.L., 2014), pp. 203-4.

reduced. For Prigent, the semiotic structure of the language system means that this quest will always be met by its own inevitable failure. Artaud's project thus exhibits several affinities with the literary projects of the following decades. It involves a desire for poetic language, via the experiment, to fight against the shortcomings of ordinary language, and to behave differently to it. Where this quest is, from the off, recognised as unrealisable, the language of the resulting text or performance nonetheless reveals the very limitations that it cannot transcend.

The influence of these early experiments on the work of contemporary poets is readily apparent. One thinks of Artaud, for example, when first seeing Tarkos's performance poem 'Je gonfle', with its exaggerated inhalations and exhalations and its self-reflexive narrative: 'je gonfle … je gonfle … ça fait … ça fait trente ans que je gonfle comme ça […] ça m'ennuie pas de gonfler …' (*E*, 311). His poem 'Le Voyage autour du monde', which involves the simultaneous reading of passages by Christophe and his wife Valérie, recalls Tzara's simultaneous poetry (*E*, 437). Likewise, Cadiot's collaborations with the musician Rodolphe Burger on the albums *Welche* (2000), *Hôtel Robinson* (2002) and *Psychopharmaka* (2013) reprise many of the same techniques of these early poetic experiments. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, Cadiot's project prompts a return to the same questions posed by early Dada experiments: what are the necessary conditions required in order for poetry to exist? Does it have to be written, or sensical, or even linguistic? Sitting at the intersection between musical composition and performance poetry, Cadiot's albums combine voice, guitar, techno-music, an eclectic use of sampling, collages of different languages and non-linguistic sound (laughter, animal noises, the sound of a car door, and so on). *Psychopharmaka* contains prevalent references to Dadaist practices: three of the album's track titles evoke Dada directly ('Dadasophe', 'Dada-

Bewegung' and 'Da da da'), and Kurt Schwitters's performances at the Cabaret Voltaire are sampled throughout. Even in Cadiot's earlier, written poetry we find a kind of transcribed 'sound poetry': *Futur, ancien, fugitif* transcribes proto-linguistic babbling ''Va ta a rapnama lajafadaba pu vi mi dizrilibiti' (20), alongside nonsensical clanging: 'grune greil grace grob gra grette gri gro gren' (20) and animal noises 'Bzzz les vaches Bzzz les vaches / les mouches Bzzz / Bzzz' (13).

Anne Tomiche writes the following about the influence of these early linguistic experiments on contemporary poetry:

> Héritière en cela des avant-gardes de la première moitié du siècle, la poésie contemporaine semble avoir pour enjeu majeur, dans les termes de Christian Prigent, « de défaire […] le mur de la langue, le bloc opaque et atone ». Des jeux formels de la poésie dadaïste aux glossolalies d'Artaud, de la *zaoum* à la poésie phonétique ou sonore et jusqu'aux « *language poets* » américains, on a affaire à des pratiques d'écriture qui, quelle que soit la différence de leurs enjeux, produisent l'effet d'un désinvestissement, d'un retrait, voire d'un évidement de sens. A des degrés divers, elles s'inscrivent toutes dans une tradition littéraire de la critique de la représentation et ont en commun d'attester le refus de réduire la langue à sa fonction instrumentale de représentation et de communication d'un message rationnel et logique, pour souligner la matérialité du mot et de la langue.[21]

Tomiche highlights the 'évidement de sens' and the focus on linguistic materiality that developed out of these earlier practices, which involves a movement away from unmarked, referential language use, towards a more experimental form of linguistic play. These early experiments involved a process of exploring the limits of language, the place at which communication ceases to be linguistic but is instead music, sound or gesture. Subsequently, contemporary poetry has had to rebuild from a position where ordinary language has seen its complete dismantling; the question remains: where do we go from here? As Jean-Marie Gleize points out, in recent decades writers like Nathalie Quintane

[21] Anne Tomiche, 'Poétiques de l'altération dans/de la langue' in Anne Tomiche (ed.), *Altérations, créations dans la langue : les langages dépravés* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2001), pp. 5-6.

(and, as I will argue in Chapter Four, Christophe Tarkos) have sought to oppose the 'survalorisation avant-gardiste d'une certaine « monstruosité » idiolectale, ou sociolectale, de groupes constitués'.[22] Gleize argues that 'l'illisibilité' has itself become a marker of an avant-garde sociolect that has crystallised, in turn, into what is paradoxically a major discourse wielding an equivalent power to the very discourses it originally aimed to dismantle. The ideological or political underpinnings of avant-garde experiments have also been re-examined; in response to the perceived obscurity of earlier, radical experimentation, recently poets have sought to find more 'readable' (and, they would argue, more democratic) ways to experiment within a poetic language that is accessible to all, and not just to a literary elite.

Experiments with grammar

As Tomiche suggests, one of the legacies of early avant-garde experiments (and indeed Mallarmé's poetry) is a focus on 'la matérialité du mot'. In recent French poetry this has manifested itself in the emphasis placed on grammar. Grammar plays a key role in the work of each of our three poets: in Fourcade's use of anacoluthon and agrammatical sequences; in Cadiot's grammar book cut-ups; and in Tarkos's polyptotons, which place emphasis on the repetition and revision of different parts of speech. As Disson suggests, the poets assembled in the *Revue de littérature générale* accord a 'primauté à la grammaire / à la syntaxe' in their quest to 'redécouvrir le squelette de la langue, de faire jouer ses jointures, ses articulations'.[23] Disson's article 'Poésie années 90: les enfants de Gertrude Stein et de Jacques Roubaud' highlights how the American writer was a key figure in this generation of 'poètes grammairiens' (to use Hocquard's term).[24] Stein's influence has been

[22] Jean-Marie Gleize, 'La post-poésie: un travail d'investigation-élucidation', *matraga*, Vol. 17, No. 27 (Rio de Janiero, 2010), p. 129.
[23] Disson, 'Poésie années 90', pp. 13-14.
[24] Emmanuel Hocquard, *Tout le monde se ressemble* (Paris: P.O.L., 2001), p. 232.

far-reaching: she is the first poet to feature in Roubaud and Deguy's *Vingt poètes américains* (1980), published shortly after a conference dedicated to Stein at Cerisy-la-Salle in 1980. Cadiot has translated her work for the stage, *To be sung* (1995), *Oui dit le très jeune homme* (2004), and his text *Fairy Queen* (2002) depicts a fictional lunch with Gertrude Stein and Alice Babette Toklas. In *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?,* Fourcade describes Stein as being one of the first writers to activate the 'tout arrive' poetics that shapes his own work (61), and there are frequent references to Stein in his writing (for example, 'there is a there there' in *IL*, 19). Christian Prigent's recent collection of essays, *La Langue et ses monstres*, opens with a study of Stein that focuses on the distinct reading practice that the grammatical repetitions and revisions of her writing requires. Fittingly, the collection closes with an essay on Tarkos; the parallel structuring of the collection highlights many of the similarities between these two writers. Prigent argues that Stein's writing requires a particular '*tempo* de lecture', which in contrast to the unmarked reading process is 'ralenti par la résistance du texte' (18), slowed down by the grammatical 'dédale' of the paragraph, and by its 'circularité « blanche », atone, labyrinthique et tramée sans drame' (13). He describes Stein's writing style as 'treading water' ('Stein fait du sur-place', 11), and, using terminology that he employs elsewhere to evoke the 'mastication verbale' of Tarkos's poetry, Prigent states that, for Stein's reader: 'Lire ne dévore plus, mais mastique' (14).[25] The result is that the reader has not only a heightened awareness of their own act of reading, but also a heightened experience of the surface of the text: its pared-back stylistic minimalism or neutrality, its 'absence d'« épaisseur »' (12), and its 'platitude « blanche »' (17). Written in a language stripped of metaphor, characterised by a 'pauvreté lexicale' and 'le simplisme des énoncés isolés' (12), emphasis is placed instead on the grammatical functioning of the poem. I cite Prigent extensively here because his

[25] Prigent, *Salut les anciens,* p. 88.

choice of words is telling ('atonalité', 'platitude', 'blanche'), and reflects the way that Stein's writing had a significant influence on the 'poésie blanche' of later decades.

Prigent suggests that, in approaching Stein's texts, the reader is hindered not by the difficulty of the words or ideas, which are relatively simple, but by something altogether different:

> L'entrave est plutôt le fait de l'engrenage de ces énoncés, des séquences syntaxiques, des chapitres et de leurs connexions bizarrement *détachées*, au sens double du terme: *non liées* (ou liées autrement que dans l'ordre syntaxique attendu) et *indifférentes* (privées d'affect).[26]

The detached quality of Stein's writing is immediately striking, and, as Prigent points out this sense of detachment is reinforced grammatically by a lack of conjunctions, and the use of paratactic non-sequiturs. A lyric impulse is replaced by an emphasis on the grammatical functioning of the text and, as Prigent goes on to describe, her writing has an almost autistic quality to it: 'l'extinction des feux de la rhétorique, le piétinement tautologique (« a rose is a rose is a rose ») peuvent donner à penser du mutisme de l'autiste' (21). A similar reading is found in Nancy Bombaci's essay 'Performing mindblindness: Gertrude Stein's autistic ethos of modernism', which evokes the performative autistic mode of Stein's texts.[27] Stein's use of repetition is likened to autistic echolalia; her affect-less sentences, which focus primarily on objects rather than emotions or relationships, convey a kind of literary solipsism. This analysis of Stein's writing forms part of a broader motif, shortly to be explored in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'stutter', which seeks to characterise poetic language as a form of disordered language.

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[26] Prigent, *La Langue et ses monstres*, pp. 11-12.

[27] Nancy Bombaci, 'Performing mindblindness: Gertrude Stein's autistic ethos of modernism', *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2012), pp. 133-50. See also David Lodge's analysis, based on Roman Jakobson's work on language disorder, of the aphasic quality of Stein's writing. David Lodge, 'The Language of Modernist Fiction: Metaphor and Metonymy' in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds), *Modernism 1890-1930* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 486.

Also influenced by Gertrude Stein, Emmanuel Hocquard has played a prominent role in theorising the significance of grammar in contemporary poetry. In an interview with Stéphane Baquey, he says the following:

> [J'aime bien] l'idée d'être des mécaniciens de précision du langage […]. Je suis aujourd'hui convaincu que nous avons moins besoin d'écrivains, de linguistes ou de philosophes (sauf si ce sont des gens comme Wittgenstein ou Gilles Deleuze […]) que d'ingénieurs-grammairiens du langage ordinaire, celui avec lequel, dans lequel nous vivons, pensons, communiquons peut-être.[28]

The image of the grammatical 'mécanicien' or 'ingénieur' ties in clearly to the 'poem as machine' imagery that is widespread among the 'mécanique lyrique' generation. It conveys how experimenting with grammar constitutes a desire to examine the functioning of language within the text. In this sense, the pre-eminence of grammar in contemporary poetry might be seen to reflect certain developments in linguistics during the twentieth century. Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar, and the subsequent rise of transformative syntax as a discipline, has placed grammar at the centre of linguistic enquiry, conflating the study of grammar and language so that grammar is increasingly viewed, by linguists, as the very essence of language. (The reasons being that it is the dimension of language that is potentially innate, universal, and the element of human language that sets it apart from animal communication.) Hocquard makes a further precision, referring to these poets as 'ingénieurs-grammairiens du langage *ordinaire*' (my italics). This evokes the recent movement towards a more 'lisible' form of poetry, described above, but also contains a reference to Wittgenstein and the school of linguistics that stresses the importance of ordinary language as the object of study. In his reference to the grammar of 'langage ordinaire', Hocquard evokes the distinction between descriptive

[28] Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 279.

grammar (the grammatical functioning of actual language use) and prescriptive grammar (a set of grammatical rules, often ideologically motivated, that do not always reflect current usage, but which attempt to regulate it). Indeed, in the interview, Hocquard goes on to describe the 'immuabilité de la grammaire, ce Monopole grammatical d'État', thus highlighting a further significant dimension to the primacy of grammar.[29] As will shortly be discussed, grammar plays a central role in many contemporary poets' work because it represents an element of language that is most immediately bound up with questions of power, regulation and control. As Deleuze and Guattari's own analysis suggests, the tension between grammatical and syntactic variation and the imposition of norms and rules that attempt to govern it, is a prime locus for the operation of a major language, and its subsequent subversion within minor literature.

Experiments in voice

As discussed in the introduction, experimentation with voice has been a key preoccupation in modern French poetry; the fact that the contemporary field is often described according to the 'littéralité'/'néo-lyriste' paradigm reflects its centrality in theoretical reflection and poetic practice. Since the mid-nineteenth century, much of this experimentation has worked against a certain conception of lyric voice which involves, to use David Nowell Smith's phrase, a 'metonymic relation of voice and authorship'.[30] In this conception, the first-person pronoun 'je' converges with the poet him or herself, and the words of the text are read as the direct expression of the poet. Consequently, the lyric 'je' often becomes a vehicle for voicing the poet's interior affective or psychological states. Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of the monologism of poetic discourse exemplifies this conception of voice:

[29] Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 280.
[30] David Nowell Smith, *On Voice in Poetry: the Work of Animation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 5.

> The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. […] Each word must express the poet's *meaning* directly and without mediation; there must be no distance between the poet and his word.[31]

This notion of voice, typically associated with the dominant lyric mode of Romantic and Surrealist poetry, has been revised across the last 150 years, through the theoretical re-evaluation of the metonymic relationship that underlies it, and through the development of new poetic practices. In the nineteenth century, Baudelaire inaugurates a depersonalisation of poetry, using ironic voice to undermine the perceived lack of distance, as Bakhtin puts it, between poet and his word. Lautréamont's *Poésies* (1870) extends this depersonalisation further; with its collage of unattributed and reworked aphorisms from canonical moralist writers, it presents an early example of the use of the 'ready-made' in poetry and puts into practice his famous phrase 'La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un'.[32] The result is a subversion of literary authority, a revaluation of plagiarism as a means to expand the possibilities of the literary text, and a radical revision of poetic discourse, where monologic lyric voice is replaced by an experimental plurivocalism. In 1871, Rimbaud's famous remark that 'JE est un autre' encapsulates the fragmentation of the subject and the divorce of the writing subject from the first-person pronominal form.[33] Alongside Mallarmé's evocation of 'la disparition élocutoire du poète', these formulations anticipate the destabilisation of voice in the post-lyrical poetry of the twentieth century.[34]

The dominance of Surrealism in the first half of the following century means that, although experimental in other respects, many poets sustained a certain attachment to a

[31] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 296-7.
[32] Lautréamont, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: GLM, 1938), p. 327. For a study of Lautréamont and his influence in the twentieth century, see Roland-François Lack, *Poetics of the Pretext: Reading Lautréamont* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).
[33] Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 268.
[34] Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Crise de vers' in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 366.

traditional notion of lyric voice. As Noland suggests, '[poetry during the first half of the twentieth century] persisted in maintaining two traditional features of lyric poetry: a central interest in the affective life of a single subject; and a fundamental preference for figurative language'.[35] However, questions of voice do persist during this period; for example, in 1917 Apollinaire made the following prophetic remark, which addresses the potential future direction of lyricism:

> [Les poètes] veulent enfin, un jour, machiner la poésie comme on a machiné le monde. Ils veulent être les premiers à fournir un lyrisme tout neuf à ces nouveaux moyens d'expression qui ajoutent à l'art le mouvement et qui sont le phonographe et le cinéma.[36]

Apollinaire's comment prefigures a prevalent motif of mechanic imagery in twentieth-century poetry, where the poem is conceived alternately as an 'engin' (Francis Ponge), a 'writing machine' (Brion Gysin), or 'a small (or large) machine made of words' (William Carlos Williams).[37] His remark accords with Espitallier's description of experimental poetry and its 'nouveaux outils bricolés avec de nouvelles machines', as well as with Cadiot and Alferi's discussion in 'La Mécanique lyrique': 'On pourrait raconter l'écriture comme la construction d'un barrage, ou d'un moulin, ou d'un moteur'.[38] As Cadiot and Alferi write, in refusing a traditional 'je lyrique', the poem itself must develop new ways and new forms of mobilising affect; it must become a 'Machine à émouvoir. Mécanique lyrique'.[39] In all of these instances, conceptualising the poem as a machine symbolises the radical depersonalisation of lyricism, placing emphasis on the operation of the text, rather than the agency of the poet behind it. Apollinaire's comment pre-empts some of the poetic

[35] Noland, 'Poetic experimentation', p. 173.
[36] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Œuvres en prose. Tome II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 954.
[37] Brion Gysin, 'Minutes to go', in Jason Weiss (ed.), *Back in No Time: the Brion Gysin Reader* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), p. 74. Francis Ponge, *Entretiens de Francis Ponge avec Philippe Sollers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 72. William Carlos Williams, *The Wedge* (Cummington: The Cummington Press, 1944), p. 8.
[38] Espitallier, *Caisse à outils*, p. 57. Alferi and Cadiot, 'La Mécanique lyrique', *Revue 95*/1, p. 3.
[39] Alferi and Cadiot, 'La Mécanique lyrique', *Revue 95*/1, p. 14.

experiments of the modern, technological era: from Oulipian algorithms that generate poems based on aphorisms or canonical literary texts, to the wide range of 'cut-up' websites. Here, the once conceptual notion of a 'writing machine' now takes the shape of a literal writing machine – a computer-coded poem generator.[40]

The famous lines of Apollinaire's *Alcools* (1913), 'Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut / Voilà la poésie ce matin', anticipate the significance of ready-made and found language in the revision of poetic voice.[41] In 'Pour faire un poème dadaïste' (1920), Tristan Tzara advocates one such ready-made technique:

> Prenez un journal.
> Prenez des ciseaux.
> Choisissez dans ce journal un article ayant la longueur que vous comptez donner à votre poème.
> Découpez l'article.
> Découpez ensuite chacun des mots qui forment cet article et mettez-les dans un sac.
> Agitez doucement.
> Sortez ensuite chaque coupure l'une après l'autre dans l'ordre où elles ont quitté le sac.
> Copiez consciencieusement
> Le poème vous ressemblera
> Et vous voilà « un écrivain infiniment original et d'une sensibilité charmante, encore qu'incomprise du vulgaire ».[42]

This mode of poetic composition clearly dismantles the idea that poetry constitutes the direct expression of the poet's voice, and invites the possibility of the text as a collage of heterogeneous voices. Writing around the same time, Blaise Cendrars also experimented with poetic language and the use of pre-existing texts. Like the Dadaists he was at one

[40] For examples, see: http://www.lazaruscorporation.co.uk/cutup/text-mixing-desk, http://www.languageisavirus.com/cutupmachine.html#.VsMWlMeOU7Y, and http://permutations.pleintekst.nl/tzara/poeme_dadaiste.cgi. In 1980, the Oulipians Jacques Roubaud and Paul Brafford formed the *ALAMO* (*Atélier de Littérature Assistée par la Mathématique et les Ordinateurs*), which aimed to develop the possibilities of computer-generated literature. Cadiot and Tarkos also experimented with machines in their poetry: Cadiot samples Kraftwerk and their 'machine music' in *Psychopharmaka*; Tarkos created performance pieces by putting his poems through a reading machine intended for visually impaired readers at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (*E*, 229).
[41] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Alcools* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1913), p. 7.
[42] Tristan Tzara, *Œuvres complètes. Tome I* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), p. 382.

stage associated with, Cendrars was influenced by Lautréamont, whose *Chants de Maldoror* he had published at *Editions de la Sirène* in 1920. In 1924, he published *Kodak: (Documentaires)*, which presented a collage of unattributed cut-ups from Gustave Lerouge's *Le Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius.* A clear realisation of Apollinaire's vision of the significance of modern technology in poetry, *Kodak* experimented with the notion of the poet as a camera, producing documented snapshots of found language or 'photographies verbales'.[43] In a 'supercherie poétique', as if following Lautréamont's advice that 'Le plagiat est nécessaire. Le progrès l'implique', Cendrars does not announce the poem's cut-up technique until years later, and the text passes as his own, original creation.[44]

After the dominance of Surrealism in the first half of the twentieth century, the post-war 'ère du soupçon' saw a reaction against the desire for transcendence in literature, the faith in the value of literary production, and the aestheticising of reality in poetry. Noland suggests that Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*? (1945-6) and Bataille's *La Haine de la poésie* (1947) mark two principal examples of 'an exhaustion with the preciousness of certain forms of Surrealistic poetry'.[45] Alongside the criticism of the ideological underpinnings of Surrealism came a criticism of their sustained use of lyric voice. A key figure in this regard was Francis Ponge who, as early as the 1940s, was 'undermining the expressive/emotive model of poetry' and 'debunking the historical and institutional aura around [it]', as Christophe Wall-Romana suggests.[46] Ponge's anti-lyrical, language-

[43] Cendrars uses this term to describe *Kodak.* See Blaise Cendrars, *Poésies complètes avec 41 poèmes inédits* (Paris: Denoël, 2001), p. 382.
[44] Lautréamont, *Poésies II* (Librairie Gabrie, 1870), p. 6. Cendrars doesn't give an account of the cut-up method used in *Kodak* until *L'Homme foudroyé* (Paris: Denoël, 1945), where he describes this 'supercherie poétique'.
[45] Noland, 'Poetic experimentation', p. 173.
[46] Wall-Romana, 'Is "postpoetry" still poetry?', p. 443.

focused poetry involved a resolute de-subjectivisation of poetry, where the affective states of the writer are relegated in favour of a 'parti pris des choses' and a 'compte tenu des mots'.[47] Ponge's influence on the language-focused movements of later decades was significant: his involvement with the *Tel Quel* group in the 1960s and 1970s saw his work appropriated into the textualist movement; Jean-Marie Gleize heralds him as the first writer of 'postpoésie', and the forefather of contemporary 'littéralité'. Wall-Romana sees a 'tacit homage to Ponge' in Cadiot and Alferi's *Revue de littérature générale*, and the similarities between Ponge and the 'mécanique lyrique' generation are manifold.[48] A self-proclaimed 'technicien […] du langage', Ponge's metalinguistic poetry draws attention to the functioning of language within the text, just as Hocquard's 'mécaniciens de précision du langage' will do with their emphasis on grammar.[49]

In the second half of the twentieth century, there was a lively exchange between French and American poets that centered around the extension of various compositional techniques and experiments with poetic voice.[50] Influenced by Lautréamont, Tzara and the Surrealists, as well as by T. S. Eliot and his polyphonous collage of intertextual citations in 'The Waste Land', William Burroughs and Brion Gysin popularised the use of ready-made techniques in the 1960s, coining the term 'cut-up'.[51] When Gysin describes his own practice of cut-up in the poem 'Minutes to Go', the language of his description effectively plagiarises both Tzara's 'Pour faire un poème dadaïste' and Lautréamont's *Poésies*, in such a way as to perform the very practice that it describes:

[47] Francis Ponge, *Le Grand Recueil: Méthodes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 19.
[48] Wall-Romana, 'Is "postpoetry" still poetry?', p. 448.
[49] Francis Ponge, *Le Grand Recueil: Lyres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 149. Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 279.
[50] For an excellent study of these compositional techniques, particularly the various experiments with the 'ready-made', see Théval's *Poésies ready-made* (2015).
[51] In an interview, Burroughs writes: 'Of course, when you think of it, "The Waste Land" was the first great cut-up collage'. William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), p. 3.

Pick a book any book cut it up
cut up
prose
poems
newspapers
magazines
the bible
the Koran
[…]
anything
letters
business correspondence
ads
all the words

slice down the middle dice into sections
according to taste
[…]
the writing machine is for everybody[52]

In texts such as *The Third Mind* (1978), Gysin and Burroughs theorised the ready-made more extensively than any of their predecessors, reflecting on what these writing techniques had to say about literature and the language system more broadly. They accentuate the demythologising power of the cut-up and its capacity to subvert norms of representation in ordinary language.[53] This leads Christian Prigent, in his contribution to the *Revue de littérature générale*, to describe Gysin and Burroughs's use of the ready-made as a 'forme particulière d'engagement littéraire'.[54] Prigent evokes how, for Burroughs:

> [Le cut up] doit répondre à la demande qu'engage la reconnaissance de la « réalité » comme trucage. Il faut un instrument rhétorique pour parler contre les contrôles, déchirer le voile du symbolique spectacularisé et défaire, pour le refaire autrement, le tissu des langues. Et il faut que ce geste développe un espace littéraire

[52] Gysin, 'Minutes to go', pp. 73-4. Gysin's assertion, 'the writing machine is for everybody' echoes Lautréamont's 'la poésie doit être faite par tous', now replacing poetry with a 'writing machine'. It is worth noting here Gysin's choice of the Bible and the Koran as possible sources of cut-ups. This has clear resonances with Cadiot's project, as we shall see in the third section of this chapter, where I examine how these potent symbols/tools of major institutions are subsequently subverted and destabilised through the cut-up.
[53] 'What you call "reality" is a complex network of necessity formulae… association lines of word and image presenting a prerecorded word and image track. […] I am here to show you young officers a few tricks that you call "reality"'. Burroughs and Gysin, *The Third Mind,* pp. 27-8.
[54] Christian Prigent, 'Morale du cut-up', *Revue 95/1*, pp. 107-22 (p. 110).

> capable à son tour de soutenir une pensée socio-critique : tels sont effectivement les romans de Burroughs dans le contexte avant-gardiste, underground et protestataire de l'époque. (110)

Similar ready-made techniques were also explored by the American Objectivists, who in turn had a significant influence on many contemporary French poets, particularly those associated with 'la poésie blanche' and 'la littéralité'.[55] The French poet Henri Deluy gives the following description of Objectivist poetry, writing that it is characterised by 'une tendance à l'objectivation, à la constatation, aux possibles dépersonnalisations de la langue, à une certaine neutralisation de l'émotion pour mieux donner à voir'.[56] In the pursuit of this 'neutralisation', the Objectivists resisted poetic imagery and metaphor, often employing ready-made writing techniques to experiment with new modes of poetic voice. Charles Reznikoff's three-volume poem *Testimony* (1934-1979), translated into French by Jacques Roubaud, has been a particularly influential text in this regard.[57] A lawyer by training, Reznikoff spent a large part of his literary career working from legal documents, rearranging testimonies from criminal trials into poetic 'compilations' of lines, stanzas and cantos.[58] The testimonies, which through legal obligation must avoid conveying emotion or rhetoric, offer an exemplary instance of the neutrality and flatness that the Objectivists sought in poetic language. Despite the descriptive neutrality of the original testimonies, the poem produces moments of extraordinary affect, and delivers a powerful political commentary on American society and its justice system. Significantly, the political or affective dimensions of the text do not come from any traditionally recognisable lyric

[55] Immediately after Gertrude Stein in Michel Deguy and Jacques Roubaud (eds), *Vingt poètes américains* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980) we find Zukofsky (translated by Albiach) and Oppen (translated by Royet-Journoud). Jacques Roubaud's article 'La Tentative objectiviste' in the *Revue de littérature générale 96/2*, highlights the influence of the Objectivists on the poets associated with the *Revue*.
[56] See Agnès Disson, 'Turbulences et mutations: la poésie française contemporaine des années 50 aux années 2000', *Gallia*, No. 47, (2007), p. 115.
[57] Emmanuel Hocquard writes extensively about *Testimony* in *ma haie* (2001) and elsewhere; as does Jean-Marie Gleize, who entitled the third section of *Néon: actes et légendes* (2004) 'Témoignage', in homage to the American poet.
[58] Emmanuel Hocquard uses the term 'compilations' to describe Reznikoff's practice. See Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 289.

voice, but instead, are the product of the poem's compositional techniques. In this respect, *Testimony* represents an exemplary instance of Cadiot and Alferi's concept of a 'mécanique lyrique', and indeed, extracts of Reznikoff's poem were included in the second *Revue de littérature générale.* Acting as a linguistic archive, presenting, without comment, the sociohistorical realities encoded within the language that is documented, *Testimony* offers an example of how, without exploring overtly political subject matters in the first-person voice of the poet, poetry can nonetheless contain a 'dimension politique très singulière' that rests on the use of certain literary techniques.[59] Recalling Cadiot's question, 'Il y a des choses importantes qui se passent dans la vie. Comment les dire?', for contemporary French poets, Reznikoff and the Objectivists present a model for a mode of post-lyrical poetry that, far from being affect-less and apolitical, can offer a novel form of 'engagement'.[60]

The use of these compositional techniques consequently implies a new role for the poet. In the following passage, Emmanuel Hocquard describes how Reznikoff conceives of this role:

> Charles Reznikoff demande au poète de se contenter de donner à voir, à la manière d'un témoin devant un tribunal, sans chercher à influencer le jugement ou l'émotion du lecteur. Pour cela il met en place un espace neutre, il ménage une distance sans laquelle aucune tentative d'élucidation ne saurait être possible. Cette distance, cet écart, est le (théâtre du) travail poétique, un théâtre de mots puisque la langue est à la fois le matériau et l'outil quotidiens du poète. Tant qu'est tenue cette distance, tant qu'est maintenu cet écart, tout le répertoire peut être représenté. À cette condition, mais à cette condition seulement, vous pouvez jouer avec tout, absolument tout, écrire en alexandrins si cela vous chante, réintroduire images et métaphores, raconter votre vie ou celle de votre grand-mère, marcher sur les mains ou rouler par terre.[61]

[59] Hocquard describes the singular political dimension of this strand of American poetry in *ma haie*, p. 449.
[60] Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', *Le Matricule des Anges*, p. 23.
[61] Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 28.

As Hocquard suggests, the poet seeks to construct a neutral space in poetry, something akin to the witness box in a courtroom, where the language itself bears witness to the society from which it is drawn. The Objectivist desire for 'neutralisation' does not involve the eradication of affect and emotion from the text, nor the complete exclusion of stories from the poet's personal experience. Instead, it involves the instigation of a certain 'distance' or 'écart' between poet and text, from which point, Hocquard suggests, anything is possible. In such a way, in his essay 'Ma vie privée' in the *Revue de littérature générale*, Hocquard details how he used cut-ups from a tourist guidebook to Rome to create a seemingly lyrical poem in *Les Elégies* (1990). Here Hocquard plays with the conventions of the elegiac tradition, exploring the tension between the objectivity or neutrality of the poem's underlying compositional technique, and the subjectivity that, at face value, is present in the resulting poem. Hocquard's comment, 'vous pouvez jouer avec tout, absolument tout', evokes a desired openness of subject matter and poetic language that he describes elsewhere in an interview with Serge Gavronsky:

> My sources are as much Latin historians as pre-Socratic philosophers, or pulp novelists or cookbooks or books on botany. For me all of that is language, and I think I've tried to listen in on language. I don't see why poetry should be some sort of sieve that retains only the serious part of language and filters out the rest. That's a rather monstrous selection to undertake, and what gives one the right?[62]

Here Hocquard emphasises how, in the use of ready-made techniques, poetic discourse should draw on all areas of a language. This desire for a heteroglottic mode of poetic language has gone hand in hand with the development of ready-made techniques: in the

[62] Serge Gavronsky, 'Emmanuel Hocquard' in *Toward a New Poetics: Contemporary Writing in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 232. In this interview, Hocquard champions Cadiot, writing that he sees the younger poet's work as possessing the humour and suppleness of American poetry that is often lacking in the serious, too resolutely 'literary' poetry of many of their French counterparts (237). Indeed 'l'humour' is one of the six defining principles of the 'mécanique lyrique' generation, as set out by Agnès Disson, cited in the introduction. The comic dimension of Cadiot's work, which often arises from the juxtaposition of different registers and tonalities of language and the contrast of 'high' and 'low' cultural forms, will be explored in Chapter Three, particularly in relation to Bakhtin's notion of the 'carnivalesque' and 'parodic-travestying' forms.

poem cited above, Gysin stresses the variety of his linguistic sources ('cut up / prose / poems / newspapers / magazines […] anything / letters / business correspondence / ads / all the words'); elsewhere, Blaise Cendrars described his desire to 'créer un style nouveau en collaboration avec les ingénieurs. Ce style nouveau travaille toutes les formes du langage et toutes les parties du discours'.[63] That the poem should be receptive to 'toutes les formes du langage' is now a given in many contemporary poets' work; Fourcade, for example, describes how the poet must resist the desire to 'trier' or 'épurer' language; in Cadiot's texts the vast range of linguistic sources (dictionaries, party invitations, literary citations, infantile babbling, and so on) see this principle in operation.[64]

The impact of the development of ready-made techniques, and the extension of what forms of language can be used in poetic discourse, has been far reaching in contemporary French poetry. Influenced by Reznikoff, Frank Smith's *Guantanamo* (2010) reworked documents produced by the American Department of Defense containing transcripts of interviews with Guantanamo detainees. *Gaza, d'ici-là* (2013) is based on the Goldstone Report, an official UN report on the Gaza conflict.[65] In *Des documents poétiques* (2007), Franck Leibovici explores the notion of the ready-made and the 'document poétique', taking *Testimony* as a key reference point.[66] Leibovici's own writing, for example *Portraits chinois* (2007), explores overtly political topics, such as the Iraq war, using 'un jeu de prélèvement et de redisposition d'énoncés trouvés sur internet'.[67] Evolving out of earlier

[63] Blaise Cendrars, *Aujourd'hui: 1917-1929; suivi de Essais et réflexions: 1910-1916* (Paris: Denoël, 1987), pp. 98-9.
[64] Dominique Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', *Le Matricule des Anges*, No. 22 (1998), p. 46.
[65] Frank Smith, *Guantanamo* (Paris: Seuil, 2010) and *Gaza, d'ici-là* (Marseille: Al Dante, 2013). The Goldstone Report presents the findings of a UN inquiry into violations of international human rights law during the Gaza conflict.
[66] Franck Leibovici, *Des documents poétiques* (Bandol: Al Dante, 2007).
[67] Franck Leibovici, *Portraits chinois* (Bandol: Al Dante, 2007). See http://al-dante.org/shop-4/franck-leibovici/portrait-chinois-franck-leibovici/.

Dadaist and Futurist sound experiments, and significantly influenced by the elaboration of ready-made practices in written poetry, poets such as François Dufrêne, Henri Chopin and Bernard Heidsieck developed 'la poésie sonore' (originally defined as 'la poésie action'). In 1962, Heidsieck met Gysin in Paris and was introduced to his cut-up technique; Heidsieck subsequently experimented with cut-ups transplanted into an acoustic form, editing and reworking samples of tape-recorded material. In *Biopsies (1965-69)*, he used cut-ups from the linguistic fragments encountered in daily life: bank statements, a driving licence and 'formules de politesse'.[68] Given the auditory/performance element of Heidsieck's 'la poésie sonore', there are clear resonances between his poetic project and Cadiot's in *Welche, Hôtel Robinson* and *Psychopharmaka*. Both compose collages of samples that are edited, cut short, repeated and overlaid. Also exploring the possibility of the ready-made, in this instance the everyday language of receipts, metro tickets and promotional flyers, Anne-James Chaton's *Événements 09* (2011) are multimedia experiments that use sampling, collage, and the superimposition of recorded, computer-generated voices. 'Événement No 23', for example, revolves around the newspaper headline 'the king of pop is dead'; it was composed of found linguistic fragments, assembled on Friday 26 June 2009, the morning after Michael Jackson's death.[69] Chaton's poems recall the collage effects in the sound poetry of Jean-Pierre Bobillot, and certain poems by Denis Roche, such as *Notre antéfixe* (1978) which, albeit in a written rather than spoken medium, also makes use of linguistic objects from the poet's everyday life: letters, bills, diary entries and advertisement brochures.[70] In all of these instances, the way that contemporary poets have extended and revised earlier forms of experimentation sees the

[68] Bernard Heidsieck, *Biopsies : 1965-1969* (Al Dante, 2009) [CD].
[69] Anne-James Chaton, *Événements 09* (Raster-Noton, 2011) [CD].
[70] Interestingly, *Notre antéfixe* is made up of two texts, the first of which is entitled 'L'entrée des machines'. Roche's post- or anti-poetic poetry explores the possibilities of the interaction between photography and literature, building upon Cendrars's initial exploration of 'photographies verbales' in *Kodak*. See Denis Roche, *Notre antéfixe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).

elaboration of other modes of poetic voice to the traditional lyric mode that Bakhtin describes in *The Dialogic Imagination*.[71] Three principal features contribute to this: the distance of the poet from his language, the language of the text as *object* of representation, and the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the languages represented in the poem.

In the chapters that follow I explore how Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos continue to engage with these questions of voice in their poetry. Chapter Two examines how the lyric 'je' is fragmented in Fourcade's work by the interplay of various heteroglottic forms, and by a multilingual dialogism within the poem. Chapter Three investigates how the cut-ups in Cadiot's *L'art poétic'* exploit a tension between the depersonalised, subjectless 'je' of the original grammar book examples, and a reactivated lyric mode that arises from their rearrangement within the poem. It subsequently explores the model or metaphor for poetic voice that is presented in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, where the protagonist Robinson is shipwrecked on an island, compelled to reconstruct himself out of the variegated linguistic fragments that have washed up ashore with him: letters, etiquette manuals, and dinner party invitations. Chapter Four analyses Tarkos's reinstatement of a lyric 'je' which, after a long history of experimentation and theoretical discussion, constitutes a marked decision, not an unthinking reflex. The chapter will pursue what the significance of such a gesture is, and will ask how Tarkos's engagement with voice ties into his broader poetics.

Formal experimentation

Across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries poets have sought to revise, and ultimately break with the traditional poetic forms that they had inherited, from Baudelaire's 'petits poèmes en prose' and Rimbaud's 'vers libre', to the radical experimentation with

[71] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 296-7.

typographical layout in Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* (1897). Against this backdrop, the contemporary field is characterised by a wide variety of forms, among which certain trends can be identified. In response to the dismantling of traditional verse forms, certain poets have sought to re-evaluate and reaffirm the significance of using formal constraints in poetry. A principal example of this comes from the poets associated with the Oulipo, a group of writers and mathematicians who stress the innovative potential of elaborating novel constraints in the production of literary texts. Revising or rejecting traditional forms altogether, they experiment instead with numerical, alphabetical and compositional constraints: from Jacques Jouet's *Poèmes de métro* (2000), where poems are structured according to their composition on the Parisian metro; to Jacques Roubaud's *Quelque chose noir* (1986), structured around the number nine, and *Trente et un au cube* (1973), which combines a numerical constraint (31) with a revision of the Japanese 'tanka'. Elsewhere, the experimental forms that once constituted a break with tradition have in turn crystallised as reproducible models. Their reprise in contemporary poetry often marks a return to the questions that provided the initial impulse for such experiments. For example, the seemingly arbitrary scattering of words and phrases in Fourcade's *IL* owes something to Mallarmé, and his oeuvre revisits questions around linguistic materiality, meaning and the 'inanité sonore' of the text. The abstract, child-like drawings gathered together in a section entitled 'Calligrammes' in Tarkos's *Ma langue* (2000) engage with Apollinaire's typographic experiments in *Calligrammes* (1918). Moving from language ordered into pictograms, to non-linguistic 'poems' that trace the lines of basic visual shapes, by labelling these simple pictorial forms 'poésies', Tarkos extends further Apollinaire's own exploration of what counts as poetry. Elsewhere, Baudelaire's experiments with prose poetry see their legacy in the expansion and contraction of Cadiot's verse line in *Futur,*

ancien, fugitif, a book that Cadiot describes as a 'roman par poèmes'.[72] As Disson points out, the hybridisation of forms, and the now prevalent plasticity between prose and poetic line, has led to a 'brouillage des genres', particularly among the writers collected in the *Revue de littérature générale*.[73] Embodied, for this generation, in Cadiot and Alferi's notion of the 'OVNI', these poets have often sought to leave behind the prose/poetry distinction, and to resist the generic classification of texts altogether.

A further prevalent feature of poetic form in the contemporary field stems from the work of Francis Ponge. His poetry is characterised by a transition from the earlier, page-length, completed 'textes clos' in *Le Parti pris des choses* (1942), to the later, open-ended, draft-like 'textes ouverts' in, for example, *Pièces* (1961), *Le Savon* (1967) and *La Fabrique du Pré* (1971). These later texts exemplify the 'réseau mobile vers-proses' that Fourcade describes in his own work, and that is now prevalent in contemporary practice.[74] With this transition comes a change in emphasis, whereby poetry is no longer seen as a completed, verbal artefact, the final product of a poetic process, but rather as the process itself, suspended in a continual state of rewriting and reworking. As Noland puts it, Ponge 'introduced the genre of the poem-as-work-in-progress', which goes hand-in-hand with the focus on the poem as an 'enquête' or 'expérience'.[75] For Ponge, this draft-like, process-orientated writing is precisely how poetry resists petrifaction and maintains momentum: repeating, redefining and rearranging. He writes: 'Que mon travail soit celui d'une rectification continuelle de mon expression (sans souci *a priori* de la forme de cette

[72] Olivier Cadiot, Ludovic Lagarde, Laurent Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique* (Centre Pompidou, 2010), (unpaginated).
[73] Disson, 'Poésie années 90', p. 14.
[74] Dominique Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Frédéric Valabrègue' in 'Dossier Dominique Fourcade', *Cahier Critique de Poésie*, No. 11 (Marseille: Centre International de Poésie, 2006), p. 15.
[75] Noland, 'Poetic experimentation', p. 176.

expression) en faveur de l'objet brut.'[76] For Jean-Marie Gleize, Ponge represents a clear example of a 'post-poète'; he describes Ponge's *Carnet du bois de pins* (1940-41) as the 'premier « livre » non livre, ou poème non poème, dispositif complexe […], le journal de l'échec d'un poème, progressivement fait puis défait, puis refait'.[77] Elsewhere, Philippe Sollers evokes Ponge's 'volonté d'inachèvement perpétuel', and in this respect, the poem as work-in-progress implies both its own inexhaustibility, and its ultimate, inevitable failure.[78] In this sense, Ponge exemplifies very clearly the following reflection by Deleuze:

> Ecrire n'est certainement pas imposer une forme (d'expression) à une matière vécue. La littérature est plutôt du côté de l'informe, ou de l'inachèvement, comme Gombrowicz l'a dit et fait. Ecrire est une affaire de devenir, toujours inachevé, toujours en train de se faire, et qui déborde toute matière vivable ou vécue. C'est un processus, c'est-à-dire un passage de Vie qui traverse le vivable et le vécu. L'écriture est inséparable du devenir : en écrivant, on devient-femme, on devient-animal ou végétal, on devient-molécule jusqu'à devenir-imperceptible. (*CC*, 11)

Deleuze's conception of the text as 'une affaire de devenir, toujours inachevé, toujours en train de se faire' certainly accords with Ponge's project, and resonates also with all three poets considered here. Chapter Two, for example, will identify certain parallels between Fourcade and Ponge's draft-like poetry. Both insist on the inescapable failure of the literary project, as well as the competing compulsion to write, despite the perceived inevitability of poetry's intransitivity. Chapter Four examines how Tarkos's poetry is characterised by a Pongean 'rectification continuelle de [s]on expression', where the poetic line advances through continuous repetition and revision, and where certain subjects, motifs and refrains are reprised across multiple texts. The theme of literary and linguistic inexhaustibility is significant in Tarkos's poetry, reinforced by the motif of lists, and by several formal properties of his texts. In Tarkos's large body of performance work, only a

[76] Francis Ponge, 'Berges de la Loire' in *La rage de l'expression. Tome I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 257.
[77] Jean-Marie Gleize and Bernard Veck, *Francis Ponge: actes ou textes* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1984), p. 31.
[78] Ponge, *Entretiens de Francis Ponge avec Philippe Sollers*, p. 19.

part of which was recorded, we find a further parallel with Ponge's notion of the 'poem-as-work-in-progress', where emphasis is on poetry as event, rather than the production of a completed artefact.

Between performance poetry, 'la poésie sonore' and 'la cinépoésie', a significant development in twentieth-century poetry has been its extension into different medias and domains. This extension has brought the question of form to the fore, and has subsequently prompted broader reflections on what constitutes poetry as a genre. For Christophe Tarkos, the very tradition of experimental poetry resides in this development. He describes a:

> tradition poétique qui, depuis Apollinaire :
> 1. sort le texte de son cadre versifié,
> 2. utilise tous les moyens sont bons
> 3. réalise des performances, des expositions, des disques, des objets, des films, etc.
>
> **Une tradition ? – celle des poésies expérimentales.**[79]

As Tarkos suggests, experimental poetry involves not only a break with traditional versification, but also a displacement of the locus of the poem, whereby performances and multimedia experiments take poetry off the page altogether.[80] Espitallier writes that '[la poésie contemporaine] travaille aux frontières', at the boundaries of different media, and in the thesis to come the stakes of this practice will be explored in the consideration of Tarkos's performance work and Cadiot's musical collaborations.[81] These formal and media experiments have radically changed the shape of poetry, raising the question: how

[79] Tarkos, *L'Enregistré*, p. 19. It is possible that here Tarkos has in mind the famous recordings of Apollinaire reading his own poetry out loud, recordings that constitute one of the earliest examples of recorded performances, and therefore, in many respects, a precursor to contemporary multimedia experiments.
[80] Eric Lynch provides a useful survey of recent intermedia experiments: from Alferi's 'Cinépoèmes' and 'Films parlants', to Roche's use of photography, and Gleize's work on the polaroid. See Lynch, *Unidentified Verbal Objects*, p. 31.
[81] Espitallier, *Caisse à outils*, p. 48.

do we recognise a poem today?[82] It becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint what unites, for example, Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques* and Hiedsieck's *Biopsies*, as the last two centuries have seen the dismantling, one by one, of the defining features that once constituted poetry as a genre. The fact that poetry no longer represents a straightforward, easily recognisable form has no doubt compounded the on-going 'crise de poésie' discussed in the introduction. If poetry is under threat, then its desire to determine its essence and in turn to establish its value as a practice, is all the more pressing. It is perhaps unsurprising then that so many contemporary poets are also literary critics (Gleize, Prigent, Hocquard, and so on), who theorise their practice and address such questions directly.[83] Carrie Noland describes this inclination towards self-analysis, writing 'Perhaps the single most defining characteristic of twentieth- and twenty-first century poetry is, paradoxically, its tendency to place the definition of poetry in question'.[84] For Gleize, contemporary poetry is thus animated by its own identity crisis; the opening lines of *A noir* read as follows: 'Reste pour nous : la poésie. L'ignorance de ce qu'elle est. La faire, l'écrire, « pour savoir ». Pour progresser dans cette ignorance. Pour savoir cette ignorance. Pour l'élucider.'[85] As Gleize suggests 'écrire la poésie, c'est l'inventer absolument'; every act of poetry is subsequently a self-reflexive gesture that ventures an answer to the question 'what is a poem?'[86] If, as we saw above, the poem is a 'work-in-progress', in a continuous state of becoming, then it is also engaged in a sustained process of becoming-poetry, of rediscovering and redefining its very identity as a genre.

[82] Espitallier ask this question in *Caisse à outils*, p. 23.
[83] All three of the poets considered here haven written extensively about poetry and literature more generally. See Cadiot's *Histoire de la littérature récente* (2016), Fourcade's reflections in *Est-ce que je peux placer un mot?* (2001), and Tarkos's literary 'manifestes' in *Ma langue* (2000).
[84] Noland, 'Poetic experimentation', p. 171.
[85] Gleize, *A noir*, p. 11.
[86] Gleize, *A noir*, p. 21.

Taking into account the heterogeneity of contemporary practice, many attempts to address precisely what constitutes poetry today look towards all-encompassing notions of form, rhythm and movement. For example, in place of narrower, traditional accounts of form (poetry as verse, poetry as the 'découpe' of the prose line, and so on), critics and poets alike have instead emphasised broader, comprehensive notions such as 'plasticity'. Often used in relation to experimental poetry, the term 'plasticity' has had particular prominence in French thought, for example in the work of Catherine Malabou.[87] Etymologically derived from 'plassein' 'to mould', plasticity offers a clear link to Tarkos's poetics of the 'patmo' ('pâte-mots'), where poetry is engaged in a process of kneading ('malaxer') the dough of linguistic material, until it can be modelled into the infinite possibilities of a resultant poem. Rhythm is then understood in similar terms as the forming of patterns within an acoustic material (either in the performance poem, or the language of the text). This shall be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, but these notions of 'patmo', 'malaxage' and 'plasticité' replace traditional accounts, offering ways of conceiving of the underlying gesture of poetry, which involves some sort of shaping of ordinary language into variant forms. The second half of this chapter will attempt to illustrate how Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'littérature mineure' has a similar merit. It offers a comprehensive account of what literary language does, how this differs to other instances of language use, and in such a way identifies certain fundamental properties that unite the wide variety of texts that their analysis might apply to.

'La langue majeure'

[87] Maulpoix for example uses the term to describe Apollinaire's work: 'Plasticité que l'on pourrait dire temporelle et spatiale autant que formelle, puisque son œuvre sollicite à la fois une multiplicité de formes classiques ou novatrices, une multiplicité d'époques et une multiplicité de lieux.' See Jean-Michel Maulpoix, 'Alcools de Guillaume Apollinaire' <https://www.maulpoix.net/Apollinaire.htm> [accessed 1 February 2017]. See, for example, Catherine Malabou, *Plasticité* (Paris: Léo Scheer, 2000).

Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of 'littérature mineure' rests on a particular conception of the language system, elaborated most extensively in the chapter 'Postulats de la linguistique' in *Mille plateaux* (1980). Here they emphasise how language, rather than being simply a communication system involved in the giving of information, is first and foremost a socio-political system, structured around relationships of power. In their discussion, they develop the notion of a 'langue majeure', that is language which is 'homogénéisée, centralisée, standardisée, langue de pouvoir, majeure ou dominante' (127). A major language is characterised by standards, norms, rules and universals that 'territorialise' language, eliminating variation and tending towards homogeneity. These norms will take various forms: grammatical, syntactic, stylistic, phonological, and so on. In turn, the 'langue majeure' is wielded as a sociopolitical tool, used to dominate, control and reinforce power relationships within society. Various 'major' institutions underpin this; a brief glance at the history of the French language will flag up a range of examples, from the beacon of prescriptive language ideology that is the *Académie française*, to the widespread imposition of standard French and eradication of regional dialects that went hand in hand with Jules Ferry's educational reforms at the end of the nineteenth century. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the idea of a 'langue majeure' is reinforced by linguistics which, in its desire to make language the object of scientific study, approaches it as a 'système homogène', comprised of universal grammatical or syntactic rules (127).

Ultimately, a major language is more a language ideology than an attainable reality for a spoken, living language. It is an ideal linguistic state, that any given language will tend towards or diverge from, but never fully realise. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the reality of the language system is that it is characterised by intrinsic heterogeneity: 'C'est la variation elle-même qui est systématique' (118). Referring to the work of the

Polish-American linguist Weinreich and the variationist sociolinguist Labov, they write: 'il n'y a pas de langue en soi, ni d'universalité du langage, mais un concours de dialectes, de patois, d'argots, de langues spéciales. […] La langue est, selon une formule de Weinreich, « une réalité essentiellement hétérogène »' (14). Any given language, they argue, is already characterised by continuous variation, and by a multitude of languages intrinsic to it. In any one day, an individual will switch between different linguistic codes in his or her multiple social roles; there are as many linguistic variants as there are facets to one's individual or collective identity (119). Where the 'langue majeure' attempts to deny the heterogeneous reality of the language system, imposing standardising norms and creating a myth of a singular, unified language, we might expect that a 'langue mineure' would do the reverse. However, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, in their desire for political recognition, minor languages (for example patois or regional dialects belonging to a community of minority speakers) tend to impose in turn their own set of homogenising norms and standards. A 'langue mineure' is thus often 'une langue localement majeure' (130). Rather than talking about major versus minor languages, Deleuze and Guattari insist instead on using the terms 'majeur' and 'mineur' to qualify two usages or functions of a language:

> Il n'y a donc pas deux sortes de langues, mais deux traitements possibles d'une même langue. Tantôt l'on traite les variables de manière à en extraire des constantes et des rapports constants, tantôt, de manière à les mettre en état de variation continue. (130)

For Deleuze and Guattari, there are two principle operations on and within language, and true to the sociopolitical dimension of their analysis, they conceptualise these operations in terms of territories. On the one hand, there is a territorialising operation, an 'usage majeur', which constructs a homogenous linguistic territory that suppresses variation and accentuates constants. On the other hand, there is a deterritorialising operation, an 'usage

mineur', which seeks to accentuate the heterogeneity and continuous variation that is already inherent in the language system, and to destabilise or deconstruct the territory of the major language. In so doing, an 'usage mineur' involves a movement outside such a territory; it traces a 'ligne de fuite', as Deleuze and Guattari would have it (*MP*, 16). The point at which such a movement fixes, becoming a 'langue mineure', this would constitute a re-territorialisation (the construction of a new territory). Thus the truly minor usage of the major language is 'le devenir-mineur de la langue majeure' (134), a process or movement of deterritorialisation, not its end point.

'La littérature mineure'

It is in these terms, using the paradigm of 'territorialisation', that Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of minor literature in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure* (1975):

> Une littérature mineure n'est pas celle d'une langue mineure, plutôt celle qu'une minorité fait dans une langue majeure. Mais le premier caractère est de toute façon que la langue y est affectée d'un fort coefficient de déterritorialisation. (29)

Minor literature is thus characterised by its deterritorialisation of the major language within the text. In several respects, this notion of 'déterritorialisation' resonates with other ways that critics have sought to conceptualise literature. We saw above how envisaging poetry as the exploration of the limits of language, as the probing of the boundaries of conventional expression, or the movement towards a utopic linguistic mode, offers a similar spatialised conception of the relationship between poetic or literary discourse and language more broadly. Indeed, when Christian Prigent advances the hypothesis that Deleuze's notion of 'déterritorialisation' might offer a definition for poetic language, he evokes 'le dynamisme excentrique' of literature, which echoes references he makes elsewhere to 'les voix excentriques' and the linguistic 'excentricité' of experimental

poets.[88] This term 'excentriques' aligns with the notion of deterritorialisation in so far as it denotes a movement outside the centre, where the centre designates the comfort of a mother tongue, the firm ground of a sane mind or the reassuring normality of a 'major' territory.

In *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that deterritorialisation appears with 'l'expression atypique' of certain writers:

> L'expression atypique constitue une pointe de déterritorialisation de la langue, elle joue le rôle de tenseur, c'est-à-dire fait que la langue tend vers une limite de ses éléments, formes ou notions, vers un en-deçà ou un au-delà de la langue. (126)

Atypical expressions act as tensors, which set the process of deterritorialisation in motion, highlighting the 'tensions intérieures d'une langue' (*K*, 41). These tensors are stylistic features which undo the familiar expressions of the major language, making language strange and foreign. A marked use of syntax in Cummings's poetry, for example, destabilises the normative function of grammar; Artaud's non-linguistic 'cris-souffles' (*K*, 49) point to the conventions of meaning production in ordinary language use. In turn tensors create lines of flight, pointing to new linguistic possibilities, as Zornitsa Dimitrova suggests in *Literary Worlds and Deleuze* (2016):

> The tensor shows just what language could also become, what variegated potentialities is it yet capable of unlocking. […] [The] tensor paves the way to a new becoming of language. It triggers an encounter with what language could be, what forces it could evoke within itself while remaining the same well-known system.[89]

As Jérôme Game suggests, the author's style is the locus for such a process:

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[88] Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »'. See the description of *La Langue et ses monstres* on the P.O.L. website: http://www.pol-editeur.com/index.php?spec=livre&ISBN=978-2-8180-2147-7 and *A quoi bon encore des poètes*?, p. 11.

[89] Zornitsa Dimitrova, *Literary Worlds and Deleuze: Expression as Mimesis and Event* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), p. 173.

> The goal of writing for Deleuze is to trace a line of flight ('une ligne de fuite') out of fixed patterns of expression […]. Yet concretely, how is all of this achieved in the effective world of poetic production? Through *style*, as effect of syntactic/lexicographic systems. If there cannot be any preferred themes, the overall stylistic *mot d'ordre* is to create another language within language, to stretch or dig into common language and its grammar, prosody and vocabulary, so as to push linguistic expression towards its logical extreme, its facticity or outsideness: sheer noise and ultimately silence.[90]

For Deleuze and Guattari, the becoming-minor of major language takes place in the stylistic variation of the major language of the author; these stylistic variations will take several forms, and in their analysis of authors such as Kafka, Beckett, Artaud and Luca, they offer several examples. Prigent gives a helpful account of the recurring stylistic characteristics Deleuze and Guattari allude to; he begins by highlighting their emphasis on the decomposition of language (e.g. into phonetic components in Artaud's glossolalia, or in the alliterative and prosodic effects of poetry), which stresses its materiality, and brings language into continuity with music.[91] He subsequently identifies their emphasis on repetition ('les polyptotes du *Cap au pire* de Beckett ou les « bégaiements » de Gherasim Luca').[92] Among these various features, Deleuze and Guattari also evoke a stylistic 'pauvreté' of minor literature, a notable example being the suppression of metaphorical language in Kafka's work (*K*, 40). Here, the linguistic features of minor literature exhibit certain unsurprising parallels with 'des langues dites mineures': 'un appauvrissement, une déperdition des formes, syntaxiques ou lexicales' (*MP*, 131). This 'appauvrissement' is reminiscent of Barthes's conception of 'une écriture blanche'. In *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, he writes:

> Cette parole transparente, inaugurée par *L'Etranger* de Camus, accomplit un style de l'absence qui est presque une absence idéale du style ; l'écriture se réduit alors à une sorte de mode négatif dans lequel les caractères sociaux ou mythiques d'un langage s'abolissent au profit d'un état neutre et inerte de la forme […].[93]

[90] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 51.
[91] Prigent, 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs', p. 435.
[92] Prigent, 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs', p. 436.
[93] Barthes, *Le Degré zéro*, p. 60.

Here Barthes evokes a style that is characterised precisely by an impoverishment or absence of style, a form of writing that strips language of the stylistic conventions of a given literary mode or genre. The connection to Deleuze and Guattari's observations on certain stylistic features of 'littérature mineure' is apparent. Indeed, Emmanuel Hocquard has already gestured towards this connection in 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste', where he describes the 'modernité négative' of contemporary poets (who were significantly influenced by Barthes's 'écriture blanche') as 'cette poésie mineure (au sens deleuzien du terme), cette poésie sans accent poétique'.[94]

'L'agrammaticalité'

Having stressed that the deterritorialising of language takes place at the level of style, in his later work *Critique et clinique*, Deleuze underlines the significance of syntax:

> Création syntaxique, style, tel est ce devenir de la langue: il n'y a pas de création de mots, il n'y a pas de néologismes qui vaillent en dehors des effets de syntaxe dans lesquels ils se développent. Si bien que la littérature présente déjà deux aspects, dans la mesure où elle opère une décomposition ou une destruction de la langue maternelle, mais aussi l'invention d'une nouvelle langue dans la langue, par création de syntaxe. (15-16)

The emphasis placed on syntax in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature is significant, particularly when it is applied to Hocquard's 'poètes-grammairiens' and, more generally, to a generation of contemporary poets where grammar and grammaticality are primary motifs. In their discussion, Deleuze and Guattari oscillate between a literal and a metonymic use of terms such as a 'syntax' and 'grammaticality'. For example, they use the term 'agrammaticalité' to describe particular syntactic features of Cummings's or Luca's poetry, but also to evoke more generally the 'expression atypique' of minor literature. In the following passage, they define the scope of the term so that it encompasses not just

[94] Hocquard, 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste' in *ma haie*, p. 26.

syntactically or grammatically incorrect forms, but all language use that is atypical and that subverts the rules or conventions of the major language:

> L'agrammaticalité, par exemple, n'est plus un caractère contingent de la parole qui s'opposerait à la grammaticalité de la langue, c'est au contraire le caractère idéal de la ligne qui met les variables grammaticales en état de variation continue.
> (*MP*, 125)

It is significant that Deleuze and Guattari focus on 'agrammaticality' in their discussion; as alluded to above, grammar conveys one very tangible instance of the sociopolitical policing of language, where particular linguistic variables connote levels of education, socioeconomic status and so on (think: 'I aint' versus 'I am not', 'me and John' versus 'John and I'). It is both a tool and a symbol of the various forms of power structures that regulate language use, and insist on conformity to the standard. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari begin the chapter 'Postulats de la linguistique' in *Mille plateaux*, by evoking the grammar classroom and 'la maîtresse d'école' (95):

> Les mots ne sont pas des outils; mais on donne aux enfants du langage, des plumes et des cahiers, comme on donne des pelles et des pioches aux ouvriers. Une règle de grammaire est un marqueur de pouvoir, avant d'être un marqueur syntaxique. (96)

Later on in the chapter, they expand this reflection:

> Qu'est-ce que la grammaticalité, et le signe S, le symbole catégoriel qui domine les énoncés? C'est un marqueur de pouvoir avant d'être un marqueur syntaxique, et les arbres chomskiens établissent des rapports constants entre variables de pouvoir. Former des phrases grammaticalement correctes est, pour l'individu normal, le préalable de toute soumission aux lois sociales. Nul n'est censé ignorer la grammaticalité, ceux qui l'ignorent relèvent d'institutions spéciales. L'unité d'une langue est d'abord politique. (127-8)

Hocquard, like Deleuze and Guattari, identifies this capacity for grammar to operate as a monopolising, standardising regulator. In his introduction to *Tout le monde se ressemble*, where he discusses the 'poètes-grammairiens' gathered in the anthology, he writes:

> Nous vivons tous avec l'idée reçue – avant même l'école primaire – que la grammaire (le squelette de la langue), comme la Loi, doit être la même pour tous et qu'elle est immuable. […] La grammaire dit: « Tout le monde se ressemble. » Nous la « respectons » comme un monopole d'Etat, jusque dans les aspects les plus anodins et les plus intimes de notre vie. Ses lois régissent nos manières de parler et d'écrire, de lire et d'écouter. Mais aussi le ton et le débit de notre parole. (15)

A subversive use of syntax and grammar, the 'minorising' of major grammatical forms, has particular purchase in the discussion of poetry, where syntax has historically been of heightened significance because of the rhythmic, prosodic and structural constraints of various traditional poetic forms. It could be argued that poetic discourse has involved a greater degree of variation and flexibility in syntax than other literary discourses, and that it presents an instance of language use where the grammatical and syntactic properties of the poem are most divergent from those of ordinary language. In this sense, we might pursue the thesis, shortly to be explored in more detail, that certain constitutive features of poetry, or poetic language understood in a broader sense, render it a prime locus for the deterritorialising processes of minor literature. The chapters that follow will investigate some of the ways in which Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos experiment with grammatical and syntactic forms and engage with notions of grammaticality and its subversion within the text. Fourcade, for example, uses grammar as a metaphor to describe the structural constraints that shape not only our language, but also the way we live and the way we experience space.[95] Cadiot's cut-ups in *L'art poétic'* explore the tension between the grammaticality of their original sources (prescriptive language manuals) and the agrammaticality of their 'usage mineur' in the displaced context of the poem.

'Une destruction de la langue maternelle'

In the passage above where Deleuze refers to the 'création syntaxique' of minor literature, he evokes a second, significant dimension of his analysis: 'la littérature […] opère une

[95] 'La grammaire on l'apprend la vivre comme espace oui l'apprendre et simultanément l'espace on se prend à l'éprouver comme grammaire.' Fourcade, *Son blanc du un,* p. 59.

décomposition ou une destruction de la langue maternelle' (*C*, 16). Throughout their discussion, Deleuze and Guattari make frequent recourse to 'la langue maternelle' and 'la langue étrangère'. These terms are occasionally used in their literal sense, for example when they point out that many of the 'auteurs mineurs' considered are writing in distinct sociolinguistic situations, sometimes writing in a language that is not their mother tongue (for example, Beckett). They argue that the bilingual or multilingual situations of figures such as Kafka, Luca and Godard offer prime conditions for the occurrence of minor literature (*MP*, 123). This is a product of the often political nature of diglottic or polyglottic language situations, an idea which is illustrated by a discussion of the configuration of German, Czech, Hebrew and Yiddish in Kafka's Prague. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, situations of language contact involve a consciousness of the existence of a linguistic 'other', and a more immediate access to a position outside or exterior to the mother tongue, from which new possibilities for the stylistic properties of the major language might be gleaned (*MP*, 124). However, as we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari stress that any given language is already constituted by a plurality of codes, varieties and lects within it, which makes every writer a polyglot of sorts: 'C'est dans sa propre langue qu'on est bilingue ou multilingue' (*MP*, 133). Thus, within any one language there will be a similar situation of language contact between different codes, and a degree of exteriority and otherness permitted within a mother tongue. Although the sociolinguistic situations of the examples given have a heightened pertinence, the minor author might equally be a monolingual writer living in a monolingual community. Indeed, minor literature will appear wherever a writer resists the illusory monolingualism of the major language, developing a kind of multilingualism in his or her own language that accentuates variation rather than suppressing it:

> Etre un étranger, mais dans sa propre langue, et pas simplement comme quelqu'un parle une autre langue que la sienne. Etre bilingue, multilingue, mais dans une seule et même langue, sans même dialecte ou patois. Etre un bâtard, un métis, mais par purification de la race. C'est là que le style fait langue. C'est là que le langage devient intensif, pur continuum de valeurs et d'intensités. (*MP*, 124-5)

In their analysis, Deleuze and Guattari configure the terms 'mother tongue'/'foreign language' onto 'langue majeure'/'usage mineur'. The 'major' quality of the mother tongue is felt primarily in the way that it requires a 'being within' or an 'être-chez-soi', to use Derrida's term; the 'minor' quality of a foreign language is that it involves a position of exteriority and an encounter with linguistic otherness.[96] In turn, minor literature is thus constituted by 'une agression contre la langue maternelle', as Prigent puts it, and is comparable, as Deleuze suggests, to a foreign language:[97]

> Ce que fait la littérature dans la langue apparaît mieux: comme dit Proust, elle y trace précisément une sorte de langue étrangère, qui n'est pas une autre langue, ni un patois retrouvé, mais un devenir-autre de la langue, une minoration de cette langue majeure, un délire qui l'emporte, une ligne de sorcière qui s'échappe du système dominant. (*C*, 15)

As Deleuze points out, the evocation of literature as a form of foreign language is far from new: here he cites Proust, but one thinks also of Mallarmé ('le vers qui de plusieurs vocables refait un mot total, neuf, étranger à la langue'), Sartre ('On parle dans sa propre langue, on écrit dans une langue étrangère'), and more recently, Pierre Alferi ('La littérature commence quand l'adhérence à la langue maternelle, son immanence, est conjurée').[98] Above we saw how Christian Prigent describes certain writers' desire to 'ne pas se contenter de l'expérience du monde telle que les langages communautaires la représentent' and to 'vivre toute langue comme étrangère […] pour re-présenter autrement

[96] Jacques Derrida, *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, La prothèse d'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996).
[97] Prigent, 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs', p. 429.
[98] See 'Crise de vers' in Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes,* p. 920. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots et autres écrits autobiographiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), p. 89. Pierre Alferi, *Chercher une phrase* (Paris: Bourgois, 1991), p. 17.

ces représentations'.[99] Prigent contrasts foreign language with the 'langues communautaires' of the mother tongue, drawing attention to how the strangeness of alternative modes of representation engenders a novel experience of the world. This idea recalls the notion of defamiliarisation, now a commonplace in literary analysis, where the strange or foreign quality of literary language invites new modes of perception. In Victor Shklovsky's essay 'Art as Technique', which first formulated the concept of 'ostranenie', or 'estrangement', he sets up an opposition between automatic or habitual perception and 'the sensation of holding a pen or of speaking in a foreign language for the first time'.[100] This distinction between first language and foreign language is developed into a distinction between 'ordinary speech' and the 'deautomatized perception' involved in poetic language.[101] To conflate defamiliarisation and deterritorialisation into one and the same thing would be to oversimplify Deleuze and Guattari's analysis. However, Shklovsky's notion of defamiliarisation clearly constitutes an example of a deterritorialising practice in so far as it involves a dismantling of the major modes of representation (and with that, perception).

The following chapters will illustrate how the mother tongue/foreign language paradigm is significant in Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos's work. Like Deleuze and Guattari who alternate between a literal understanding of maternal and foreign language, but go on to use the terms for their broader, conceptual value, we see a similar duality of reference in contemporary poetry, where the use of actual foreign language in the text configures with a theoretical consideration. Chapter Two explores how Fourcade frequently uses English to create dialogic passages where the two languages act metonymically as different voices.

[99] Prigent, *À quoi bon*, p. 10.
[100] Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as technique' in David Lodge, *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 19.
[101] Shklovsky, 'Art as technique', p. 27.

The presence of English in his texts forms part of a broader exploration of 'langue maternelle' and 'langue étrangère', understood as two fundamentally different experiences of language. Fourcade's analysis accords in part with Deleuze and Guattari's (literature is understood as a form of foreign language), but he elaborates a more complex understanding of the mother tongue. Drawing on Derrida's *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre* (1996) and Khatibi's essay 'La Langue de l'autre' (2008), the chapter will examine how Fourcade harnesses the foreign/maternal paradigm to explore what literary language does, and how it relates to other types of language use.

'Le bégaiement'

Alongside references to 'la langue étrangère', a second significant motif in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of minor literature is the stutter. In *Mille plateaux*, they write:

> Bégayer, c'est facile, mais être bègue du langage lui-même, c'est une autre affaire, qui met en variation tous les éléments linguistiques, et même les éléments non linguistiques, les variables d'expression et les variables de contenu. […] Proust disait : « les chefs-d'œuvre sont écrits dans une sorte de langue étrangère ». C'est la même chose que bégayer, mais en étant bègue du langage et pas simplement de la parole. (124)

Understood in its most literal sense, the stutter deforms the structures of ordinary language: the course of speech is disrupted, its referential function is temporarily suspended, and the phonemic repetitions of the stutterer draw attention to the signifying elements. Both rhythmically and structurally, the linear, arborescent arrangement of the major language disintegrates and is cast instead into a minor, rhizomatic mode, as Deleuze suggests in his essay 'Bégaya-t-il' (*C*, 140). In such a way, the stutter operates as a metonym for the disordered language of minor literature more generally. Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of 'bégaiement' has had a significant influence on contemporary French poetry, for example, on Jérôme Game's multimedia experiments, or on Cadiot's

schizophrenic protagonist Robinson in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*.[102] From Stein's autistic echolalia, evoked above, to 'la figure dominante' of Tarkos's poetry: 'une sorte de polyptote sérialisé […] tautologiquement radicalisé […], parfois aphasiquement hoqueté', literature is often conceptualised as a form of disordered language, and Deleuze and Guattari's stutter represents a recent and popular formulation of the idea.[103] As in the passage above, in 'Bégaya-t-il' Deleuze suggests that in minor literature the stutter appears on a systematic level, in 'la langue' of the author's style, not in 'la parole' of the text's characters. The distinction is an interesting one, and might well pose the question of whether, in fact, style is not simply the utterance or 'parole' of the writer. Deleuze addresses this question himself, asking 'Faire bégayer la langue: est-ce possible sans la confondre avec la parole?' (*C*, 136). The answer, he suggests, depends on how we conceive of language: if we see language as a homogenous system comprised of constants and universals, then the stutter represents malfunctional variants of these constants on the level of speech, but not on a structural level. If, as is the case for 'auteurs mineurs', the language system itself is conceived as characterised by continuous variation, then the stutter merely reflects the system as a whole, and the stuttered 'parole' is an expression of this internal, structural state. Deleuze gives the example of Gherasim Luca's disordered poetry ('Passionné nez passionnem je/ je t'ai je t'aime je'), suggesting that through his 'parole […] éminemment poétique […] il fait du bégaiement un affect de la langue, non pas une affection de la parole' (*C*, 139). Given the emphasis in Deleuze's analysis on style as the locus of deterritorialisation (and therefore minor literature more generally), there is

[102] As will be explored in Chapter Three, Robinson recalls Louis Wolfson and his compulsive translation procedures, which Deleuze discussed in his preface to *Le Schizo et la langue*, and later in *Critique et clinique*. See Gilles Deleuze,'Schizologie' in Louis Wolfson, *Le Schizo et les langues* (Paris: Minuit, 1970), pp. 5-23.

[103] See Prigent's preface, 'Sokrat à Patmo', in Tarkos, *Ecrits poétiques*, p. 17. Prigent frequently uses terms such as these when describing Tarkos's writing. He depicts his poetry as 'secoué de tremblements parkinsoniens', evoking his 'phrases hoquetées', his 'rythmique obsessionnelle', 'une mécanique déréglée' and 'l'étrangeté de la langue, son tournis ahuri'. Prigent, *Salut les anciens*, pp. 85-7.

clearly a degree to which the writer can manipulate their 'parole' to be a greater or lesser expression of the continuous variation of the 'langue'. This will be explored further in the following chapters, where the stylistic use of foreign or disordered language in their most literal sense (asyntactic phrases, stuttered performance pieces, use of English in French texts) complements a broader engagement with these notions. For example, the decomposition of language into basic phonemic components in Fourcade's poetry operates a sort of performative stutter, acting as a 'tensor' or marker that in turn draws attention to the notion of poetry as disordered language more generally.

'Un comportement politique'

In response to Deleuze's analysis of the stutter, Hocquard writes the following:

> Et si, précisément, le bégaiement était une manière de désobéissance, de résistance aux mots d'ordre de la grammaire imposée? Gilles Deleuze dit qu'écrire c'est bégayer dans la langue. En cela, bégayer serait aussi un comportement politique.[104]

In what sense might the stuttered quality of minor literature be seen as political? As Charles J. Stivale suggests: 'Minor writers make language stammer; they deform and transform its regular patterns […]. And in the process, minor writers contest and undo the power relations immanent within the dominant, major usage patterns of a language'.[105] As minor literature is, by definition, constructed in its opposition or resistance to various major discourses, and these major discourses are, following Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, intrinsically founded on relationships of power, then this makes the transformational linguistic capacity of minor literature a political phenomenon of sorts. In the following analysis of Deleuze, Prigent elaborates this idea, offering a particular example of how this might be the case:

[104] Hocquard, *Tout le monde se ressemble*, pp. 15-16.
[105] Charles J. Stivale (ed.), *Deleuze Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen, 2011), p. 134.

> Ce que je nommais d'entrée « contrat verbal socialisé » est un système articulé de représentations. C'est ce système que nous appelons « réalité » […]. Les « lignes de fuite » que trace la littérature *mineure* sont des gestes de résistance à cette dictée idéologique. Elles creusent des trous dans ce décor et dérèglent son système. Inclure dans la langue des trouées de négativité venue de l'expérience réelle, c'est empêcher que ne coagule sans reste la représentation idéologique […]. Un geste poétique digne de ce nom est une action contre les « dispositifs de pouvoir qui travaillent nos corps » […]. C'est en cela qu'il « fait de » la politique. Voire, comme dit Deleuze, que « tout y est politique » […].[106]

Here, Prigent stresses the political dimension of the treatment of language in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature, which in turn unites it with several other influential ways of conceptualising literary language (Roland Barthes being a key figure in this regard). As Jean-Marie Gleize suggests, in the wake of Sartre's notion of 'engagement' and his critique of poetry, contemporary poets sought to answer the following question: 'Quels sont les moyens d'action positive auxquels, non risiblement, la poésie actuelle peut prétendre?'[107] One response to this is 'la notion de « langagement »', which Gleize describes as:

> subversion de l'ordre des représentations par la langue, par le travail sur la langue ou les langues (la contamination du haut par le bas, le familier, le vulgaire, le dialectal), subversion par la langue, subversion de la langue, transgression des codes, du code, dissidence par dissonance, discordance, néologisme, cacophonie, dérégulation morphologique et syntaxique, excentricité verbale, grandes irrégularités, en un mot « mécriture ».[108]

Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of minor literature highlights a similar form of 'langagement', in so far as it evokes not the engagement with overtly political themes, but the intrinsically political dimension of the use of language in certain literary texts.

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[106] Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »'.

[107] Gleize cites this question, which appears on the back cover of Christophe Hanna's *Poésie action directe* (Paris: Al Dante, 2003), before addressing possible answers to it. Gleize, 'La post-poésie: un travail d'investigation-élucidation', pp. 125-6.

[108] Gleize, 'La post-poésie: un travail d'investigation-élucidation', p. 126. In his discussion, Gleize outlines two contrasting approaches: the first, described in this passage, involves a 'travail sur la langue', but has the consequence of tending towards 'illisibilité'. The second works within dominant discourses and accessible media; these poets: 'travaillent dans la langue de l'ennemi pour mieux s'insinuer dans ses réseaux de communication, pervertir ou détourner ses messages, ses systèmes de figuration etc.' (126).

At the risk of oversimplifying the complexity of their analysis, it is nonetheless true that a central component of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'littérature mineure' reframes the idea that literary language performs certain operations on ordinary language, making it foreign, strange, and other. In this sense, literary language is constituted by its difference or deviation from other discourses. This idea is far from new, and a notable example of such an approach would be Jean Cohen's *Structure du langage poétique* (1966), which defines poetry by its 'écart' from ordinary language, or by its difference to prose.[109] However, what sets Deleuze and Guattari's analysis apart from Cohen's is that, as we have seen, the difference that they identify in 'littérature mineure', namely the minor usage of major discourses, is a form of difference operating within a system of power, and therefore one that is inflected with a political dimension. Elsewhere, Michael G. Kelly highlights the similarities between Deleuze and Guattari's analysis and Bernard Noël's in 'Où va la poésie?', where he writes 'la poésie est le foyer de résistance de la langue vivante contre la langue consommée, réduite, univoque'.[110] Kelly argues that Noël's comment is 'representative of a widely held version of the difference of poetic practice' (6). Kelly goes on to observe that, for Noël and Deleuze and Guattari, poetic language is understood as an 'othered' discourse to 'both established discourses and discursive sclerosis' (6), and, in both of their accounts, 'Poetry's minority becomes bound to rhetoric's majority' (6). In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the deterritorialising processes of minor literature applies well to many experimental modern French poets. As suggested by the preceding 'parcours' through the poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as will hopefully become clear in the following chapters, the experiment involves the revision of accepted conditions and unmarked norms (of syntax, style, form, meaning, voice, and so on), and the seeking of differential forms. We might hypothesise that it is precisely this

[109] Jean Cohen, *Structure du langage poétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966).
[110] Noël, 'Où va la poésie?', p. 214. Kelly, *Strands of Utopia*, p. 6.

difference-seeking, experimental dimension of modern poetry that then qualifies it as 'littérature mineure'.

'La parole poétique'

In the narrowest sense of the words, poetry and poetic language are not granted any prominent position in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, where questions of literary genre are largely absent. In their discussion, examples of minor literature are drawn from poetry as well as prose, and the 'auteurs mineurs' that they evoke are poets, novelists, playwrights and film directors alike. That said, a number of references pose interesting questions in this regard, for example in 'Bégaya-t-il', where the term 'poétique' is used synonymously with the notion of 'littérature mineure'. Here, the stuttering of the linguistic system (as opposed to the character's 'parole') is described as 'une opération poétique' (*CC*, 135), and Gherasim Luca's verse is analysed as 'éminemment poétique' precisely because it sees the stuttering of 'la langue' (*CC*, 139). Deleuze writes 'Si la langue se confond avec la parole, c'est seulement avec une parole très spéciale, parole poétique qui effectue toute la puissance de bifurcation et de variation, d'hétérogenèse et de modulation propre à la langue' (*CC*, 136-7). In these instances, Deleuze appears to be equating 'parole poétique' with the distinctive language use of minor literature (i.e. with the becoming-other of language, with deterritorialisation, with the presence of tensors and lines of flight, and so on). Taken alongside Deleuze's analysis elsewhere, poetic language as it is understood here is not confined strictly to the poem, and reflects a broader use of the term that transcends straightforward generic boundaries. It is nonetheless significant that he uses 'poétique' rather than 'littéraire', and it certainly invites, for example, Christian Prigent's argument that deterritorialisation might offer a possible definition for poetic language more generally.

With this in mind, the final section of this chapter will outline a contrastive approach to poetic language, one which addresses these generic questions more directly, and which, despite several similarities to Deleuze and Guattari's in its conception of language and literature *in toto*, arrives at a very different conclusion. Mikhail Bakhtin's essays on literary discourse, especially 'Discourse in the novel' and 'From the prehistory of novelistic discourse', provide a set of interesting parallels with Deleuze and Guattari's work.[111] Like Deleuze and Guattari, Bakhtin describes the language system as characterised by inherent variation: variation of style, lexis, phonology, grammar, syntax, and so on. Within this system two forces are at work: one that attempts to suppress variation, imposing norms and constants, desiring 'centralization and unification' (*DI*, 272); and one that desires 'decentralization and disunification' (*DI*, 272), allowing variation to multiply and proliferate. These 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' forces are at work throughout language, and intersect in every utterance of a given language system. Clear parallels can be found here with Deleuze and Guattari's notions of 'territorialisation' and 'deterritorialisation'. Bakhtin refers to this inherent variation of language as 'heteroglossia', as opposed to 'monoglossia' which describes the highly codified, unitary language.[112]

Bakhtin suggests that, throughout the history of Western literature, 'major' genres have reinforced the 'centralizing (unifying) tendency' (*DI*, 67) of periods of comparative monoglossia. He argues, for example, that the 'major straightforward genres of the ancient

[111] 'From the prehistory of novelistic discourse' and 'Discourse in the novel' in Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 41-83 and pp. 259-422. In *Mille plateaux* Deleuze and Guattari make a series of references to Bakhtin, particularly in relation to Bakhtin's conception of the language system as a whole. At various points in 'Postulats de la linguistique', they reference his work on 'discours indirect' (97), 'le caractère social de l'énonciation' (101), his observation of the emphasis placed in linguistics on 'constantes' (104), and his definition of language as 'forme de l'idéologie' (113).

[112] Whether monoglossia is possible within a living language (as opposed to a dead language or a literary genre) is questionable. In any case, it is always a question of relative states rather than absolutes.

Greeks' – epic, lyric and tragedy – were born out of a period of 'confident and uncontested monoglossia' (*DI*, 66). In turn, Bakhtin argues that for every major genre there has arisen a 'parodic-travestying' counterpart. These parodic-travestying forms serve as a critique or corrective to their major counterparts, highlighting how these major forms are artificially narrow in their scope, suppressing heteroglossia, and with this, the inherent richness of reality. Bakhtin goes on to argue that authors of major genres express a singular and direct relationship to their language, they are forever *within* language. In contrast, authors of parodic-travestying forms inhabit an indirect relationship with the language(s) of their writing, they find an outside of the direct word and thus 'liberate the object from the power of language' and '[destroy] the homogenizing power of myth over language' (*DI,* 60). He argues that this ability to perceive language from the outside comes from a situation of polyglossia. His analysis begins by identifying particular historical periods of national polyglossia, where the presence of a second national language allowed the writers of the time to see their own language from the outside. He writes:

> After all, it is possible to objectivize one's own particular language, its internal form, the peculiarities of its world view, its specific linguistic habitus, only in the light of another language belonging to someone else, which is almost as much 'one's own' as one's native language. (*DI,* 62)

The suggestion that parodic-travestying forms (that align roughly with Deleuze and Guattari's term 'littérature mineure') typically arise in situations of bilingualism or multilingualism has clear resonances with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, and like Deleuze and Guattari, Bakhtin goes on to qualify his definition of polyglossia. Bakhtin describes 'the internal stratification of any single national language' (*DI,* 262), writing: 'one's own language is never a single language: in it there are always survivals of the past and a potential for other-languagedness that is more or less sharply perceived by the working literary and language consciousness' (*DI,* 66). Thus, although these historical

moments of national polyglossia have been significant, Bakhtin argues that any given language is internally polyglottic, and an encounter with a 'foreign' language need not involve exposure to another national language.

Bakhtin contends that the parodic-travestying forms that worked against the monoglossia of major genres paved the way for the emergence of the novel. It is here that Bakhtin establishes a fundamental distinction between poetic and novelistic discourse. He argues that the novel, unlike poetry, is characterised by heteroglossia. He writes: 'the language of the novel is a *system* of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyse it as a single unitary language' (*DI,* 47). These languages are dialogised, in relationship with each other within the space of the text, and the novel is thus a heterogeneous 'system of intersecting planes' (*DI,* 48), a 'dialogized system made up of the images of "languages," styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation' (*DI,* 49). The author, Bakhtin argues, is outside language; he has very little direct language of his own within the novel, but instead presents this system of languages that interanimates itself. As a result, the novel exposes two crucial myths: 'the myth of a language that presumes to be the only language, and the myth of a language that presumes to be completely unified' (*DI,* 68). In contrast to the novel, Bakhtin argues that poetry involves only the direct language of the author:

> The language of the poet is *his* language, he is utterly immersed in it, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning (as it were, 'without quotation marks'), that is, as a pure and direct expression of his own intention. (*DI,* 285)

Later on in 'Discourse in the novel', Bakhtin writes:

> The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. […] Each word must express the poet's *meaning* directly and without mediation; there must be no distance between the poet and his word. (*DI,* 296-7)

As a result of this, the poet cannot turn language into an object within the text: the language of poetry represents but, unlike the novel, is unable to be the object of representation. Although Bakhtin rejects the possibility that true monoglossia can exist, as all language is characterised by intrinsic variation, poetic style is nonetheless monologic, in so far as it perpetuates the myth of a unitary language, gesturing towards monoglossia in its suppression of 'alien languages' (*DI,* 285), other discourses and voices. In a later passage, Bakhtin writes:

> Poetry behaves as if it lived in the heartland of its own language territory, and does not approach too closely the borders of this language, where it would inevitably be brought into dialogic contact with heteroglossia, poetry chooses not to look beyond the boundaries of its own language. (*DI*, 399)

This comment is starkly contrastive to Prigent's analysis of deterritorialisation as a potential definition for poetic language, or Perloff's description of poetry as the '"bumping of one's head" against the limits of language'. For Bakhtin, poetic discourse must be qualified, according to his own terminology or that of Deleuze and Guattari, as 'major'.

A fundamental distinction between Bakhtin's analysis and that of Deleuze and Guattari, is that he sees the different operations on language (i.e. those found in monologic or dialogic discourses) as properties of generic conventions, as opposed to as properties of the individual author's style. Indeed, Bakhtin argues that poetry is, by definition, monologic, and at the point where this ceases to be the case, it ceases to be poetry. Bakhtin writes that the foreign, alien languages of heteroglottic reality 'could not find a place in the *poetic style* of [the poet's] work without destroying that style, without transposing it into a prosaic key and in the process turning the poet into a writer of prose' (*DI,* 285). In both

Bakhtin and Deleuze and Guattari's analyses, style plays a central role. However, the same stylistic features that Deleuze and Guattari identify as tensors for deterritorialisation (such as Cummings's use of syntax or Luca's disordered phrases), for Bakhtin are evidence of a stylistic unity in poetry that sustains the myth of monoglossia. The tension between these two analyses will be explored in further detail in relation to Christophe Tarkos's poetry in Chapter Four. Tarkos's oeuvre is characterised by a direct poetic voice and a unity of style that Bakhtin would see as exemplary of monologic poetic discourse. However, that same unity of style manifests itself in the disconcerting syntactic revisions and reformulations of ordinary language that could be read as an example of the deterritorialising force of 'littérature mineure'. Tarkos's poetry poses the question: if a poet's style is characterised by difference and variation from a set of stylistic or linguistic norms, is it not therefore an internally dialogic discourse, and one that is interested precisely in an outside or other to an implicit major language? Could we see, in Tarkos's example, a form of discourse that, albeit taking a different overt shape to novelistic discourse and involving a unity of style or voice in a very immediate sense, nonetheless performs a dismantling of the monologic mode that Bakhtin would otherwise assign it? Indeed, as Kelly suggests above, the conception of poetic language as an othering of major or normative discourses is now widespread, and ultimately casts poetic discourse as implicitly dialogic (in so far as the language of the poem evokes, by implication, another language that is not present). Similarly, we saw above the significant motif of poetry as the creating or imagining of another language (cf. Rimbaud, Noël or Prigent, to cite just a few already mentioned), a notion which sits directly at odds with Bakhtin's analysis of poetry as the upholding of the myth of a singular, unitary language.

In his analysis, it is clear that Bakhtin has a very particular notion of poetry in mind. As Michael Eskin suggests, writing in the 1930s and early 1940s, Bakhtin is addressing 'lyric poetry as private, emotionalized and highly personal – in short, as the more or less unmediated expression of its author's states of mind, which was prevalent in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century'.[113] In this respect, Bakhtin's conception resonates with other ways poetry was construed in the same period in France; we saw above how the mid-twentieth century saw a 'crise', precisely in response to criticism levelled at a notion of poetry that was akin to Bakhtin's conception. In any case, if Bakhtin's analysis holds for certain types of poetic discourse (nineteenth-century Romantic or twentieth-century Surrealist lyric poetry for instance), there are numerous counter-examples that predate his analysis, and it sits ill-at-ease with modern French poetry as we understand it today.[114] Several critics have already taken issue with Bakhtin's account: Rabaté offers Rimbaud, Apollinaire and Pound as examples of poets whose work cannot be characterised by a singular, centralised voice; Perloff highlights how modern American poetry also refutes this monologic analysis.[115] Cadiot and Alferi draw the following conclusion in the second *Revue de littérature générale*: 'L'opposition entre le langage unique, autarcique et linéaire de la poésie et le dialogisme relativisant et discontinu du roman n'a plus cours'.[116] To describe, for example, Cadiot's cut-up text *L'art poétic'* as monoglottic, or as a unified, singular language of the author's direct discourse, simply does not hold. Cadiot's text aligns much more readily to Bakhtin's description of the heteroglottic novel, with its system of representations of language depicted *from the outside*. It demands a distance

[113] Michael Eskin, 'Bakhtin on Poetry', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2000), p. 379.
[114] Bakhtin does himself address certain counterexamples to his analysis, although in keeping with his earlier comments about poetry ceasing to be poetry and becoming prose, he describes these examples as the 'drastic "prosification" of the lyric' in twentieth-century poetry. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 200.
[115] Rabaté, 'Énonciation poétique, énonciation lyrique' in *Figures du sujet lyrique*, p. 77. Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, p. 280.
[116] Alferi and Cadiot, *Revue 96/2.*

between the author and his language; represents language as *object* of representation; and in turn places emphasis on the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the languages represented.

If we do take Bakhtin's analysis as a valid account of an earlier form of poetry, then applying Bakhtin's own literary-historical approach, it could be argued that the last century and a half of literary production has changed the shape of poetry, so much so that his analysis no longer holds true. As outlined above, modern French poetry has developed through a series of experiments that have radically revised the key characteristics of poetic discourse. Consequently, modern poetry is often determined precisely by its break with traditional forms, and has often worked against a previous conception of poetry, akin to the one Bakhtin describes in *The Dialogic Imagination*.[117] Following Bakhtin's own account, we might therefore see modern poetry, with its self-reflexive dismantling of the inherited generic conventions of a pre-existing mode, as a parodic-travestying or minor counterpart to a major poetic genre. The question that follows is, how should modern poetic discourse be construed, if not as monologic? On the one hand, experiments with voice that draw on ready-made language, cut-ups and distancing techniques offer heteroglottic, dialogic texts that resemble, in many respects, Bakhtin's account of novelistic discourse. This would then invite questions about the generic status of the subsequent poems – questions that are posed not only by Bakhtin's analysis, but by broader discussions around generic boundaries in the contemporary field. Chapter Three will explore this issue by investigating the paradox in Cadiot's work: Cadiot simultaneously sustains Bakhtin's own analysis of poetry as intrinsically monologic (ultimately resulting in his self-proclaimed abandonment of poetry, and his movement into prose), yet produces, under the title of a 'livre de poésie', a polyphonous collage of cut-ups that experiment with indirect language

[117] Hocquard's description of the poetry of 'modernité négative' as 'cette poésie sans accent poétique' typifies this. Hocquard, 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste' in *ma haie*, p. 26.

in the poem. On the other hand, Chapter Four explores Tarkos's poetry which sustains a direct, authorial poetic voice, but experiments with conventions of representation or meaning, presenting linguistic variants to normative discourses. His poetry disrupts the myth of monoglossia, yet not in the way that Bakhtin would suggest novelistic discourse does.

While for the large part, Bakhtin's account of poetic discourse does not apply to modern French poetry, it nonetheless poses a number of questions that are pertinent to the current discussion. In addition to the multiple parallels between his and Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, Bakhtin introduces questions of voice, discourse, and genre, all of which are key considerations for contemporary poetry. In the following chapters, these aspects of Bakhtin's discussion will be relevant in various ways to Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's work. Using his analysis as a supplementary framework serves to flag up certain similarities and differences between their poetry; similarities and differences that often represent broader divisions in the contemporary field. While Cadiot is not a representative, in the strictest sense of the word, of 'littéralisme', his work has several affinities with, for example, Hocquard, Gleize, Prigent, or the American Objectivists before them. Likewise, what is true for Christophe Tarkos is also true for a number of poets working in the 1990s, Pennequin and Quintane, for instance. In this respect, the configuration of the three poets considered will give a sense of the variation within contemporary practice, and in turn, will engage in different ways with Deleuze and Guattari's and Bakhtin's analyses. The merit of both accounts is that they develop a conception of the language system as a whole, before situating different forms of literature within that wider system. By emphasising the social, historical or political dimensions of language, their analyses promise to contribute to the question of literature's, or indeed poetry's, significance today. Using their analyses as a

framework, a number of different motifs that are pertinent to contemporary poetry are configured together: foreign language, disordered language, grammar, heteroglossia or polyphony, style, syntax, and so on. Through close readings of their texts, I aim to trace how these aspects play out in Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's work. By exploring the forms of linguistic experimentation that take place, I will identify the techniques, devices and stylistic features that realise the becoming minor, or becoming-other of language that Deleuze and Guattari discuss. In so doing, the following chapters will pursue the idea of a 'poésie mineure', asking what form poetic language takes in these three poets' work, and how this then relates to Bakhtin and Deleuze and Guattari's discussions.

Chapter Two: Dominique Fourcade, 'l'expérience de la poésie'

In an article on 'littéralité' and 'lyrisme', Michel Collot presents Dominique Fourcade as a primary example of a poet whose work bridges the division of the contemporary field, integrating 'le travail de la lettre à une forme de lyrisme'.[1] As Jean-Claude Pinson suggests, even when Fourcade's work exemplifies a form of 'écriture blanche', with its intransitive, self-referential dimension and its 'effacement du sens', a lyric impulse persists, albeit in the form of a singular 'lyrisme désubjectivé'.[2] This duality lends Fourcade's poetry a breadth of scope; his work pursues literary questions of voice, meaning and subjecthood, and attends equally to metaphysical concerns of being and death. The latter dimension of Fourcade's work leads Pinson to situate him in a lineage of 'poésie pensante'.[3] While this ontological focus is very immediately present, Fourcade's writing embraces what the poet himself describes as the 'bas voltage' of the American Objectivists: it is often grounded in the contemporary and the everyday, which is sometimes also the trivial and the prosaic.[4] As a result, his poetry is characterised by a certain plasticity, reinforced by the formal properties of the texts, that resists easy definition. It explores the deterritorialising possibilities of the polyphonous, multilingual text, elaborating a heterogeneous form of poetry, that is stuttered or stammered in a destabilising, disordered mode of articulation. Through close reading of extracts from *Xbo*, *IL* and *Rose-déclic*, the following discussion will identify four separate yet interconnected aspects of Fourcade's work that render it, I would argue, 'poésie mineure'. The first part of the chapter will investigate the significance of foreign language in Fourcade's work, both as a conceptual category to describe the atypical experience of literary language, and as a textual technique, whereby actual foreign language is included within the poem. The

[1] Collot, 'Lyrisme et littéralité', p. 15.
[2] Pinson, *Habiter en poète*, p. 49. Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve*, p. 255.
[3] Pinson, *Habiter en poète*, p. 24.
[4] Dominique Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Hervé Bauer', *Java*, No. 17 (1998), p. 63.

second will explore the significance of the stutter, and the notion of disordered language as a further conceptual paradigm. The third section will elaborate on Jérôme Game's identification of the 'rhizome' as a key concept in Fourcade's work, and the fourth, closely connected to the third, will explore Fourcade's own self-proclaimed principle: 'tout arrive' (*EJPPM*, 57). This rhizomatic, 'toutarrivesque' (*EJPPM*, 61) poetics privileges variation, simultaneity, plurality and interconnection, offering clear resonances with Deleuze and Guattari's account of minor literature.

'Plusieurs langues étrangères'

In the opening pages of *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?* (2001), a generically hybrid collection comprised of poetry and essayistic prose, Fourcade makes the following remark:

> [J]e n'ai jamais eu de langue maternelle […].
> Tout ce qui touche à *Mütterlich*, à *Muttersprache*, à mütternel en somme, j'ignore.
> Zone interdite.
>
> Je poursuis, toujours avec votre permission : je n'ai donc pas de première langue, je n'ai que des secondes langues. Et la question est : mes secondes langues où les loger
> sinon non loin de l'absence de la première
> rien que des
> mots labo.
>
> Ainsi parle JE plusieurs langues étrangères, je ne parle que ça […], écrire (avec la permission du temps et de l'espace) est, dis-je, une affaire très absentuée. (9-10)

Aligning with Proust, Deleuze and Guattari, and the various other accounts outlined in the previous chapter, here Fourcade conceptualises his writing as a form of foreign language. Where the mother tongue is unavailable to him, it is a plural ('plusieurs') and experimental ('mots labo') form of foreign language that takes its place. As the capitalisation of the pronoun 'JE' suggests, the foreign nature of literary language is, at least in part, a product of the divorce between first-person pronoun and poet. The poet is estranged from his own language, which he does not possess or inhabit. Fourcade writes 'Le moi que je travaille

est le mot. Le mot n'est pas à moi' (88). We find here certain resonances with Derrida and Khatibi's discussion of monolingualism, despite the obvious difference of the latter writers' focus on Franco-Maghrebin linguistic identity.[5] Derrida's famous phrase, 'je n'ai qu'une langue, or ce n'est pas la mienne', or Khatibi's assertion 'Quand j'écris, je le fais dans la langue de l'autre. Cette langue n'est pas une propriété', both capture the uninhabitable, unassimilable nature of language, which cannot be appropriated or owned.[6] The feeling of being alienated from one's own language is what prompts Fourcade's reflections above; he goes on to elaborate a paradigm whereby the maternal and the foreign represent not descriptive terms for a first and second language, but two opposing experiences of one and the same language. Indeed, in 'Pas sans l'amitié', a later essay in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?,* Fourcade describes how his first experience of a 'langue maternelle' (76) was initiated by the experience of friendship. It involved a tender, amicable sensation of proximity, that contrasted with the intransitivity and distance provoked by writing and, paradoxically, by his relationship with his mother:

> L'expérience que je n'ai pu faire avec ma mère, et qui m'a été refusée plus tard par l'écriture (laquelle n'est vraiment pas faite pour ça), celle d'une langue orgiaque complice et tendre et qui vous comble, et par elle un contact avec le monde en tous points aussi stupéfiant qu'elle, cette expérience s'est ouverte à moi dès le premier ami et je n'en suis pas encore revenu. (76)

He summarises these two distinct linguistic experiences a few pages later:

> Je me résume : j'ai donc eu à ce jour l'expérience de deux langues: celle (de l'amitié) qui touche tout point du monde et se laisse toucher, et la langue de l'écriture, qui ne vient pas et dans laquelle, de toutes façons, on ne peut toucher à rien. (80)

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[5] For an account of Derrida and Khatibi's dialogue on the subject, see Dominique Combe, 'Derrida et Khatibi – Autour du *monolinguisme de l'autre*', *Carnets*, No. 7 (2016) <https://carnets.revues.org/897> [accessed 10 May 2017], pp. 1-6.

[6] Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l'autre,* p. 15. Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Essais* (Paris: La Différence, 2008), p. 119. Unlike Fourcade, Derrida does not structure his discussion around a mother tongue/foreign language paradigm. In *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre* he writes: 'En disant que la seule langue que je parle n'est pas *la mienne*, je n'ai pas dit qu'elle me fût étrangère' (18).

In contrast to the language of friendship, which is transitive and associated with tenderness and interiority, Fourcade depicts the language of writing as hostile and intransitive; it provokes 'une expérience particulièrement inamicale' (79). He describes, not without a good dose of literary exaggeration, the fear that writing provokes: 'J'ai peur, j'ai eu peur toute ma vie, c'est la trame de mon existence, fondamentalement je suis né pour la peur. Parmi toutes les peurs que j'éprouve c'est l'écriture la très grande peur' (79). Fourcade then draws a parallel between the experience of writing and his relationship with his mother: both fill the poet with an anxiety at the prospect of 'placer un mot'. The book's title captures this duality: on the one hand, it reflects on the literary challenge of writing with or against the intrinsic properties of the linguistic system (the 'écart énonciatif', as Dominique Rabaté puts it).[7] On the other, it evokes the poet's childhood struggle to get a word in edgeways, and forms part of a broader motif in the collection, where fragments of conversation between mother and child depict a domineering power relationship. While both embody a hostile linguistic experience, this is where the parallels end, as they represent two polar ends of the 'major' / 'minor' distinction in Fourcade's work. Where the mother becomes a figure of an imposing major language, poetry is the minor linguistic mode that might resist it.

It is clear then that for Fourcade there is a misalignment between the mother, 'ce détestable masculin mother / qui empêche d'en placer une' (12), and the mother tongue. Taking a psychoanalytic approach to Fourcade's writing, Daniel Leuwers suggests that, for Fourcade, the mother is:

> une mère normative et castratrice, celle qui le coupe abruptement avec cette phrase « Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot? » – celle qui empêche donc l'enfant de placer

[7] Rabaté, *Figures du sujet lyrique,* p. 77.

> son mot à lui et qui crée en lui un sentiment de panique quant à la vraie place d'un mot dans une phrase et bientôt dans un recueil.[8]

As the implementer of what Fourcade describes elsewhere as a childhood education that was 'stricte, faite de règles, de principes et de pensées cloisonnées', the poet's mother is a figure of the constrictive, authoritative force of language.[9] Her voice enters the text as a menacing presence: 'vous m'emmerdez / avec votre langue bébé / vous m'assénez qu'on ne parle pas la bouche pleine' (*EJPPM*, 8). She becomes the embodied symbol of a Deleuzo-Guattarian major language: she interrupts her son, forbidding him to speak, insisting that his words follow the norms and standards of the language she imposes. In this sense, the mother depicted in Fourcade's work is similar to the mother evoked in Louis Wolfson's *Le Schizo et les langues* (1970). As Deleuze suggests, Wolfson's schizophrenic linguistic processes, which involved the systematic translation of his mother tongue (English), into approximate foreign forms (French, German, Russian and Hebrew), expressed his desire to 'tuer la langue maternelle' (*CC*, 21). Following Deleuze's analysis, Wolfson's use of foreign language represents a visceral response to his hatred and fear of his mother and thus the language that she spoke. As with Wolfson, the polyphony and multilingualism of Fourcade's writing (both literal and conceptual), with its emphasis on subverting linguistic rules and multiplying variation rather than suppressing it, might also be conceptualised as a reaction to the normative, regulating monolingualism of the major language, embodied by the mother. For both Wolfson and Fourcade, a singular language is supplanted by multiple languages, which accords with the distinction that Deleuze and

[8] Daniel Leuwers, 'Dominique Fourcade: une question de cordes vocales' in Brophy and Gallagher (eds), *Sens et présence du sujet poétique*, p. 204.
[9] Dominique Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', *Le Matricule des Anges*, No. 22 (1998), p. 46.

Guattari make between the singular major language, and the multiple 'langues mineures' that minor literature will carve into it.[10]

While Fourcade complicates the mother tongue / foreign language distinction by introducing a conceptual 'langue maternelle' of friendship, and by equating a certain experience of language, related to the mother, with the experience of writing, the resonances between Fourcade's and Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of literature are manifold. The following section will elaborate on a series of distinctions set out by Fourcade and Deleuze and Guattari: the mother versus the foreign tongue, monophony versus polyphony, constant versus variant, and the major versus the minor. With Fourcade's assertion in mind, 'je n'ai jamais eu de langue maternelle […]. Ainsi parle JE plusieurs langue étrangères', through close readings of his poetry, I aim to identify the features that qualify it as foreign.

The following passage is from *Xbo*, an unpaginated poem:

> Le s passe dans bleu et le b rejoint sang
> […]
>
> Bang sleu beaux
> Corps linguistique corps chromatique de l'extraveineux
> Corps bleu inoubliable de la poche anonyme
> Corps phonique de tout sang
> Corps sleu insanglant
>
> Bleu boue des reines
> Sang alezan brûlé

[10] In *Mille plateaux* they write: 'C'est dans sa propre langue qu'on est bilingue ou multilingue. Conquérir la langue majeure pour y tracer des langues mineures encore inconnues. […] L'auteur mineur est l'étranger dans sa propre langue' (133).

On sait qu'en écrivant on fait défaut
On travaille un champ d'émail blanc sans dimension

Menstrues des reines d'Égypte
White enamel
Sensuel
Usuel
On défaille

Fourcade's focus on the materiality of language, 'la matière du mot' (*IL*, 21), is immediately apparent. The sounds of speech, its musicality and its phonology, are evoked by the anaphora that transforms 'corps linguistique' into 'corps chromatique' and then 'corps phonique'. The description of letters or phonemes moving about on the surface of the page ('le **s** passe dans bleu et le **b** rejoint sang') highlights the graphic and phonological units of language as their shapes change and the resulting meaning is transformed ('**s**ang' becomes '**b**ang' for instance). Phonemes and graphemes are further highlighted through patterns of repetition, so that the neologism 'sl**eu**', repeated twice in the first stanza, alternates with two instances of the adjective 'bl**eu**'. The initial /b/ of 'bleu' forms its own pattern of alliteration: '**b**leu inou**b**lia**b**le' in the first stanza transforms in the second stanza into '**b**leu **b**oue', and resonates with other /b/ alliterations in the passage, '**B**ang sleu **b**eaux'. Likewise, in the final stanza the suffix '-uel' might suggest that 'Sens**uel**' becomes 'Us**uel**' by dint of phonological generativity. Many of the words in the passage are repeated twice or more, sometimes translated between languages ('émail blanc' becomes 'White enamel'). Coupled with the use of polyptoton ('sang' and 'insanglant'), attention is drawn to the material quality of the repeated graphemes and morphemes. The metapoetic description in the third stanza, 'On travaille un champ d'émail blanc sans dimension', reinforced by its later translation in English, highlights the physicality of the white page, a dimensionless, indeed unpaginated text that the poet works upon. Fourcade talks in *Outrance utterance* about his desire to decompose language in

poetry, to segment its various components so as to fully explore its functioning.[11] While we see this to a certain extent in the passage above, elsewhere the isolation of discrete linguistic units is all the more explicit. In *Xbo*, for instance, words are frequently broken down into their component parts: consonants: 'Tmcl / Fst hrt / Ymbol', phonemes 'S / W / A / Y', and syllables 'Mot et / Mo e / Mu / Et / Motet'. In such a way, there is a greater equivalence of meaning and form in Fourcade's work, whereby the signifier is of equal prominence as the signified. This insistence on the material physicality of words is significant; in Fourcade's poetry words exist not as abstract concepts or transparent vehicles of meaning but as referents in themselves, 'mots-choses' equivalent to 'corps', 'sang' or 'émail'. Throughout Fourcade's writing, the materiality of language is seen as one form of materiality among others, and it joins a broader network of motifs that have a high coefficient of 'thingness': elements, metals, birds or flowers.[12] These motifs, and the language that evokes them, constitute what Fourcade calls 'notre substance', the building blocks of existence.[13] As Game suggests, 'In [Fourcade's] poetics, language and things form a unique materiality […] that constitutes the world as concrete body […]. Maintaining the opposition between reality and language is nothing but an empty abstraction'.[14]

Discussing Fourcade's focus on linguistic materiality, Frédéric Valabrègue observes:

> c'est dans la syllabe ou le phonème qu'il retrouve quelque chose d'irréductible. Il n'y a pas d'inanité sonore. Le son n'est jamais vain, il est corps. Il y a là une

[11] 'Donc, dans mon prochain livre, je voudrais tenter de décomposer des choses qui sont jusqu'ici restées composées. Quel poète il serait, celui qui écrivait le livre même d'une langue en décomposition!' (35).
[12] So extensive are these motifs that one researcher has created an inventory of the vast network of references to birds in Fourcade's work. Abigail Lang, 'What's in a bird?' in 'Dossier Dominique Fourcade', *Cahier Critique de Poésie*, No. 11 (Marseille: Centre International de Poésie, 2006), pp. 31-48.
[13] 'Cuivre, bleu étale, notre substance sans origine ni départ / Notre substance notre limite nos cendres' (*CPA,* 47).
[14] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, pp. 143-3.

> matière qui ne peut pas être niée. […] La poésie de Fourcade est largement post mallarméenne dans la mesure où elle ne porte plus le deuil du sens.[15]

Elsewhere, talking about Fourcade's 'désir de redonner de la chair et de la salive', Valabrègue writes:

> Le vers doit révéler une matière. On a toujours parlé de musique. Mais le son extrait des racines des mots, au-delà de toute harmonie imitative, abolit la frontière entre l'oral et l'écrit. C'est de l'écrit qui se donne à s'entendre et de l'oral qui se donne à voir. Ça ne parle pas dans la nuit de la tête. Ça vient de la gorge.[16]

As Valabrègue would have it, Fourcade's poetry marks a transition in focus from the negative to the positive, whereby poetry is no longer defined by lack or absence, but instead reclaims its affirmative value via an emphasis on the irreducible materiality of the 'corps-mot'.[17] For Valabrègue, this qualifies Fourcade's poetry as 'post-Mallarméan', a term we might consider with some caution, as it works with a potentially erroneous, and certainly oversimplified, conception of Mallarmé's own work. For Fourcade (and, it could be argued, for Mallarmé), the negative and positive exist in a state of tension, both being present in his work. This is immediately apparent in the passage from *Xbo* above, which simultaneously evokes, as we have just seen, the physical presence of language, but also an inescapable absence: 'On sait qu'en écrivant on fait défaut / On travaille un champ d'émail blanc […] / On défaille'. In *Xbo* Fourcade writes 'Très tôt bien avant ce poème mais confusément / […] J'ai su que je ne vérifiais que l'écart du mot d'avec le réel / Et que ma vie ne serait qu'une longue agonie'. This latter dimension of Fourcade's work leads Pinson to describe it as 'poésie blanche', and to link it to the 'écriture blanche' and 'modernité négative' described in the previous chapter.[18] Both Pinson and Valabrègue's analyses are justified, but for Fourcade, like Mallarmé before him, both dimensions

[15] Frédéric Valabrègue, 'Une chose fuitive', *Java*, No. 17 (1998), p. 24.
[16] Frédéric Valabrègue, 'Dominique Fourcade: "La page langue monde"', *Critique*, No. 8 (2008), p. 715.
[17] This transition in emphasis is visible in Tarkos's work, whose movement from 'poésie négative' to 'poésie positive' will be discussed in Chapter Four.
[18] Pinson, *Habiter en poète*, p. 50. Pinson's analysis refers specifically to *Son blanc du un*.

coexist, and need not be mutually exclusive (as, perhaps, Valabrègue's account would imply).

Fourcade's emphasis on the physicality of language is reinforced by his insistence on language understood as a function of the human body. In the passage above, the 'corps' anaphora in the first stanza, the repetition of 'sang' accompanied by the evocation of 'menstrues', the neologism 'extraveineux' and the adjective 'sensuel', all serve to root language firmly in its corporeal confines. Rather than taking language as an isolated, abstract or purely textual phenomenon, the materiality of the text itself is seen as intrinsic to and inseparable from the materiality of the body that produces it. This focus on the corporeal place of writing is seen elsewhere in Fourcade's poetry, for example in *IL* where he writes 'voici le poème il a été fait des deux mains' (85). In a sequence of poems in *IL,* 'XVI', 'XVII', and 'XVIII', the emphasis on articulation, singing at full volume and speaking aloud, also returns language to its bodily location. Words are produced in the 'poumons' (*IL*, 38), and must pass 'la glotte' (*Xbo*) in their physical exhalation, 'le souffle' (*IL*, 90), from the respiratory tract. A poem is now a 'lungoem' (*Xbo*), delivered through the human voice, 'ma voix étouffe ce mot' (*IL*, 122), and is, by extension, part of the flesh and blood of the body that produces it, a type of 'poème-sang' (*Xbo*), a 'langue corps efficace' (*Xbo*) or 'langue musculature' (*Xbo*).[19] We can detect in this focus on the human body a link with Artaud and the early Dadaist experiments discussed in the previous chapter. However, rather than experimenting with glossolalia or para- and non-linguistic sound to find a beyond or outside of ordinary communication, Fourcade is interested in precisely how the body is a constitutional, but often forgotten part of ordinary language.

[19] As will shortly be explored in further detail, the 'corporalisation' of words in Fourcade's poetry is particularly present in his comparison between choreography and writing, where he conceptualises words as bodies that are choreographed across the space of the page.

In keeping with this focus on 'la chair du texte' (*SBDU*, 91) is the importance of 'le présent immédiat' in Fourcade's writing, a subject explored by Peter Consenstein.[20] The passage above displays the two principal modes of writing in Fourcade's poetry: the first uses nominal and adjectival phrases which are static and verb-less, 'bleu boue des reines'. The second, typified by the third stanza, 'On sait qu'en écrivant on fait défaut / On travaille un champ d'émail blanc sans dimension', employs verbs exclusively in the present tense or as present participles. This serves to situate language and the writing process in an immediate present: it is experienced in the here and now, 'Maintenant je suis dans un mot' (*Xbo*), and its materiality takes effect on the body, 'J'observe le monde, la nasalisation de laper en lamper, l'autre sens de l'autre son, l'abîme' (*Xbo*). Thus, returning to our starting passage, language's effect is immediate and 'Sensuel'; it involves a simultaneous and multi-sensory experience, that is both acoustic ('corps phonique', 'corps chromatique', 'Bang'), and visual ('corps bleu', 'Sang alezan brûlé', 'un champ d'émail blanc').

The material dimension of the text is also foregrounded by Fourcade's frequent use of neologisms, such as 'sleu', 'insanglant' and 'extraveineux', which, like the interjection of phrases in English, serve to disrupt the reading process, drawing attention to the foreign or strange shapes of these unfamiliar words. Fourcade's neologisms are often compounded 'blend' terms such as 'lungoem' (*Xbo*), and derivations where a prefix or suffix is added to an easily identifiable root word: 'usinable' (*RD*, 131), 'véralité' (*Xbo*), 'moderneraie' (*IL,* 21), 'hirondinately' (*EJPPM,* 90). Elsewhere, Fourcade uses suffixes in isolation to draw attention to this frequent process of affixation and word creation: 'itude' (*IL,* 14), 'ilité' (*IL*, 39). Other neologisms are more obscure, such as 'sleu' in the passage above, or

[20] Peter Consenstein, 'Le présent immédiat dans la poésie de Dominique Fourcade', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, Vol. 10 (2006), pp. 447-62.

'xbéité' in *Xbo*, where the meaning, or at least the process of derivation, is clear from the context in which it is found. This feature of Fourcade's work, while no doubt part of his poetics of decomposition described above, expresses a jubilation or delight in wordplay that is found elsewhere in Francis Ponge's poetry. For both poets writing prompts a certain fear or 'angoisse', but in equal measure, it can be a place for 'l'amour des mots' and 'la jouissance des choses'.[21]

A further feature of Fourcade's poetry that subverts the normal reading process is his unusual use of syntax. In the passage above, meaning is not constructed across linear, complete sentences, but arises in the juxtaposition of grammatically incomplete phrases, and resonances between individual words. Discontinuous syntax, anacoluthon, truncated clauses, and paratactic adjectival or nominal phrases are pervasive in Fourcade's work; they create an overall sense of agrammaticality, and engender a 'staccato' pace to the text, which is rhythmically awkward and stunted. To demonstrate this, below is a further extract from the opening pages of *Xbo*, which draws heavily on English:

> A weight
> Inner
> This does not relate to an invisible wind
> This emanates from a being
> Life
> Sways away like a January rose
> But why
> Do they
>
> Sqd

[21] Francis Ponge, *Oeuvres complètes. Tome II* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), p. 432. The parallels between Fourcade's and Ponge's projects are manifold, particularly with regard to how they describe their relationship with language, the anguish of writing, and the compulsion to persist despite the inevitable failure of the task. As will shortly be explored, both animate this troublesome relationship by anthropomorphising language within the poem.

The the

Voix sans sang

The word ‘inner’ on the second line can be interpreted as either an ungrammatical, postponed adjective describing the noun ‘a weight’ in the first line, or as a dislocated phrase that does not qualify anything, but stands in isolation. The reference of ‘this’ in the third and fourth lines is not entirely clear; possibly it refers back to the ‘weight’ of the first line, but given the proximity of the sentences, the article is redundant and need not be expressed. The use of enjambment requires a double take for the reader, who might at first interpret ‘Life’ as an isolated nominal phrase (as is common in Fourcade’s writing), but will consequently interpret it as the subject of the following line ‘sways away like a January rose’. The following lines, ‘But why / Do they’ cannot exist as a stand-alone question (or questions) as ‘they’ cannot refer to anything in the previous lines (there are no plural nouns). As a result, they can only be analysed as one, or possibly two, truncated or interrupted questions. At this point in the passage, the text descends into isolated words: ‘sqd’ which is indecipherable, ‘the the’ which is ungrammatical in its repetition of the definite article (and equally is not a metapoetic reference to a preceding ‘the’ in the passage - there isn’t one!), and finally ‘voix sans sang’ which typifies Fourcade’s frequent use of grammatically isolated nominal phrases. The consequence of Fourcade’s agrammaticality is that the reader must work harder when reading, constantly revising their interpretation of the text, continuously doubling back on themselves to rescan the lines of the poem. This necessitates a more active engagement with the text, and a higher awareness of the syntactic properties of the words on the page. This in turn subverts the normal writing/reading process whereby the writer uses syntax to facilitate the transfer of meaning, and the reader as a result focuses predominantly on the meaning of the text, with

the syntax going largely unnoticed. As will be explored in further detail in the following section on the stutter, the passage above enacts a disordered mode of articulation, where communication disintegrates into meaningless phrases ('Sqd') and ungrammatical formulations ('The the'). Faced with the magnitude of his subject matter ('Life', 'Voix sans sang'), the poet stumbles over his words, advancing one approach ('But why'), before faltering and beginning another ('Do they').

In *Son blanc du un*, Fourcade writes that: 'La grammaire on l'apprend la vivre comme espace oui l'apprendre et simultanément l'espace on se prend à l'éprouver comme grammaire' (59). Where grammar is lived or experienced as a space, the consequence, as Fourcade would have it, is that the elaboration of a novel grammar activates novel modes of experience and perception. In an interview, he describes how conventional syntax, embedded with ideology and an impulse to 'hiérarchiser', does not reflect truthfully the simultaneity and multiplicity of the real. He writes: 'petit à petit il a fallu que je casse la syntaxe dont j'avais héritée, pour en créer une nouvelle, pour arriver à la simultanéité des plans du réel et à mettre tout ça sur le même plan'.[22] This spatial conceptualisation of grammar, coupled with an insistence on its significance above and beyond mere linguistic structure, resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of agrammaticality, where the marked syntax of an author's style induces deterritorialisation, that is the movement from a major territory to a novel, minor space beyond. In *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, we find this deterritorialisation enacted from the first pages; the text opens with two grammatically correct questions ('est-ce que je peux placer un mot? et à qui poser la question?' (7)), that are subsequently reworked ('il faudrait identifier la puissance qui autorise c'est qui c'est / qui / et qu'est-ce que / placer un mot' (7)). In such a way,

[22] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Hervé Bauer', p. 57. This reflection will be explored in further detail in the section 'Tout arrive'.

Fourcade depicts the acquired grammaticality of the mother tongue (notably the language of the mother, who insists on her son's correct use of French, and not the 'langue maternelle' of friendship evoked later on), disintegrating in the resistant, agrammatical language of literature.

Complementing the agrammaticality of Fourcade's poetry is the general absence of punctuation. His texts tend to exclude the use of full stops and commas, question and exclamation marks, although as can be seen in the extracts above, they often observe the beginning of a new line with a capitalised letter. This lack of punctuation reinforces the effects of the discontinuous syntax, impeding rather than aiding the reader in their navigation through the text. The reading process is slowed down, as the reader must constantly revise their comprehension of a phrase, rescanning it in light of a new clause introduced without the familiar marker of a comma to delineate it. The lack of punctuation creates an impression of interconnectedness: words and phrases are juxtaposed in comma-less lines creating, as we shall see later on in this chapter, a rhizomatic relationship between parts. Again, Fourcade's rejection of conventional punctuation represents a similar gesture to his rejection of conventional grammar rules; both involve an 'usage mineur' of the major language. It is as if the poet wishes to strip language of its grammatical and orthographical rules, and return to an idealised, infantile state, before 'le babil enfantin' has been subjected to the norms and standards of parental and pedagogical correction. 'Si vous arrêtez le babil vous arrêtez tout, il faut le savoir' (40) Fourcade proclaims in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, and to make his point, in the opening pages of the collection he writes:

> je suis l'enfant arriéré et sa mère
> aggeu aggeu dis aggeu mon chéri
> arreu il a dit arreu aggaggaguigui

je suis l'enfant
et la mère arriérée (8)

The glossolalic babbling that appears here and elsewhere in Fourcade's poetry is clearly linked to both his broader poetics of decomposition, as well as to the motif of the stutter. Significantly, it is acknowledged to be both childlike ('je suis l'enfant'), as well as a disordered form of ordinary, adult language ('et la mère arriérée'). In *Son blanc du un*, Fourcade writes 'I am the infant language' (17); the significance of this 'infant language' is that it represents a pre-verbal stage in a child's linguistic development, prior to word formation. Rather than focusing on meaning and communication, the child is instead focused on the production of sound, and on experimenting with their newly developed vocal tract. The emphasis is thus on the material quality of language – how it sounds and how it feels to produce. Babbling also represents an interim stage in language acquisition, where speech has not yet been subjected to the various regulating structures of the major language. As a result, Fourcade's recourse to 'babil enfantin' represents a heightened example of a minor language, freed from grammatical correction, from the codified rules of the written word, and from the meaning-orientated norms of ordinary communication.

It should be clear from the various features of Fourcade's poetry highlighted thus far why Fourcade describes his writing as foreign. As well as evoking the foreign experience of the writer, who feels alienated from the language he uses, it describes the strangeness of a form of poetic language that diverges from the normal, unmarked mother tongue. This strangeness renders the reader's experience of the text akin to that of a second language speaker. The stunted pace of reading, produced, as described above, by the discontinuous syntax and absence of punctuation contributes to this effect. Fourcade's accentuation of the material quality of language is also significant in this regard. In a first language, the emphasis is predominantly on meaning: semantics and pragmatics, content and

connotation. Here, language is an uncomplicated, transparent vessel for communication and it is the message not the medium that is foregrounded. Conversely, in a second language this situation is often inverted: the speaker has a heightened awareness of the unfamiliar shape of the target language, its sounds, phonemes, intonation, and morphosyntax (am I pronouncing this correctly? Are the words in the right order? Is that the right ending?) So too in Fourcade's poetry the medium is foregrounded, playing an equivalent and sometimes more prominent role than the message that is conveyed. The parallel is reinforced by Fourcade's insistence on resituating language in the body, and in the immediate present. As a foreign language speaker, one is often more aware of language as a product of the body: the sound of one's own voice, one's accent, the performing of unnatural, non-native sounds that require a renegotiation of the space of the mouth, tongue and lips. The deficiency in the speaker's linguistic competence, to use Saussure's distinction, has an immediate result on their linguistic performance, and delays the processing time for speech. The result is that the usual fluency of the mother tongue is no longer available, and the speaker is often more aware of the present moment, forever conscious of the other participants in a conversation, waiting for them to 'get the words out'. Kelly describes an 'aesthetic principle of writing *as if* one were writing in a foreign language', a remark that recalls also Prigent's description of 'modernist' poets as those who 'viv[ent] toute langue comme étrangère'.[23] These observations apply well to Fourcade's poetry which involves an experience of language akin to that of a foreign language, for both writer and reader.

This simulated experience of foreign language is reinforced by Fourcade's practice of using actual foreign language, predominantly English, although occasionally German, in

[23] Kelly, 'Poetry as a Foreign Language', p. 397. Prigent, *À quoi bon*, p. 10.

the body of the text. While Fourcade's English is more or less fluent, he cannot assume that the same is true for his French reader. As a result, the frequent presence of English in his texts involves a very literal experience of a foreign language for his reader, the degree of which will clearly vary from person to person. This in turn produces a deterritorialising effect of its own. English words and phrases operate as markers of linguistic otherness; they represent concrete instances of the conceptual notion of foreign language that is explored in Fourcade's work.[24] For the French reader, these unfamiliar English words often carry no signifieds but exist as pure signifiers. As if to accentuate the way in which foreign language can exist as empty signifiers, Fourcade frequently uses a Wolfsonian translation procedure where French words and phrases are translated in the text not semantically but phonologically into similar sounding English equivalents. Just as Deleuze observes how Louis Wolfson translated similar sounding words, rather than similar meaning words ('Don't trip over the wire' becomes 'Tu'nicht tréb über èth hé Zwirn', *CC*, 19), so too we find in Fourcade's work examples of these phonologically motivated translations. The most obvious of these is the bilingual wordplay of the title of *Outrance utterance*, but it is equally found elsewhere, for example in *Rose-déclic*: 'Rose T rose thé rose the rose thou not you I-beam rose abîme' (67).[25]

The use of English serves several other purposes within the text. As Fourcade suggests in an interview with Emmanuel Laugier, the use of French and English allows for the possibility of two different language systems with their prosodic and rhythmic differences, thus expanding the musical possibilities of the text.[26] Valabrègue sees Fourcade's use of

[24] As Chapter Three will explore, this is also true in Cadiot's work, as well as in the poetry of a number of contemporary French writers, such as Valérie Rouzeau and Pierre Alferi.
[25] Fourcade is not the only one to employ a Wolfsonian procedure of phonological translation. As we shall see in the following chapter, Cadiot does so too, as does Pierre Alferi in *Sentimentale journée* (Paris: P.O.L., 1997), where the title itself is a deliberate 'mistranslation' of Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*.
[26] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.

English in *Outrance utterance* as another form of constraint-breaking, a product of the poet's 'volonté de dépassement des limites imparties au poème'.[27] He writes: 'L'*Outrance utterance* ce serait d'abord outrepasser la frontière entre deux langues également pratiquées par Fourcade: le français et l'anglais. Le poème bilingue est un'.[28] Furthermore, code switching, particularly mid-sentence, often lends salience to a particular word or phrase: for example, in an otherwise French passage in *Xbo*, the English phrase 'did you say a hemless poem' is all the more prominent because of the switch to English. It marks a transition in subject matter, and interjects with a brief metapoetic reflection. A further significant effect of the bilingual text is that it lends itself readily to a plurality of poetic voices, and to a dialogic rather than monoglottic mode of discourse. Often the voices that are interjected in English appear to be citations from real conversations and exchanges. In *IL*, the address 'Susan, could you please tell me your last name' (61) evokes a fragment of conversation between Fourcade and his close friend, the American poet Susan Howe. In *Manque*, a compilation of eulogistic texts, the phrase 'my darling, now you're on oxygen' (15) suggests the poet's address to a dying friend, whose subsequent absence provides the focus of the collection. These instances of direct speech often generate an internal, bilingual dialogue within the poem. For example, in *Xbo* the phrase 'Louis m'écrit « I am pleased you are back to writing again and so under the sway and in the way of language »' is subsequently developed into a motif of 'the rose's sway', that appears in the passage given above ('Life / Sways away like a January rose'). In *Manque*, Fourcade extends this effect in an exploration of 'prosopopée' (84), that is the figure of speech in which an absent or deceased person is represented as speaking. Alongside the poet's own voice, the voices of his addressees (who are often English-speaking) proliferate in the text, as if to deliberately overpopulate the literary space or 'manque' left by their departure. In such a

[27] Valabrègue, 'Dominique Fourcade: "La page langue monde"', p. 714.
[28] Valabrègue, 'Dominique Fourcade: "La page langue monde"', p. 714.

way, Fourcade exploits the use of foreign language within his poetry in order to accentuate its polyphonous quality.[29]

The prevalence of foreign language intersects with a further significant dimension of Fourcade's work, whereby the poet anthropomorphises language, transforming it into a human 'other' with which a relationship can be played out. Bilingual code switching animates this relationship, so that one language represents the voice of the poet, and the other the voice of language itself. For example, the final line of *Xbo* reads: 'les mots se pelotonnent dans l'étendue et disent oh cuddle me, cuddle me'. In *IL*, the titular pronoun, whose identity is in constant flux, but which frequently comes to stand for language itself, is interpellated: 'oh IL please wave back to me' (37).[30] The use of the capitalised French pronoun within the English phrase contributes to its re-analysis as a proper name designating the anthropomorphised figure of language itself. This anthropomorphism of language ties into other aspects of Fourcade's work, such as the focus on words as 'corps'. It reinforces the idea that language exists independently of the poet, as a foreign, estranged 'other', with its own agency. We saw above how Fourcade evokes words moving around autonomously on the page ('Le s passe dans bleu et le b rejoint sang'). Likewise, in a direct address to language in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?,* Fourcade describes returning to a passage he'd written the previous day, only to find that the words had somehow changed: 'je ne te trouve jamais à la place où je t'ai laissé la veille […], si j'étais sûr que personne ne m'entende je dirais bien, en français dans le texte: « est-ce toi, mot aux volets bleu nuit? » – souhaitant trouver la question qui nous situe, toi, moi, l'existence' (87). In an observation that would apply equally well to Fourcade's work, Beckett

[29] I will return to the significance of polyphony in Fourcade's poetry in the final section of this chapter, where it will be explored in relation to the poet's 'tout arrivesque' principles of multiplicity and simultaneity.
[30] In the opening pages of the collection, Fourcade writes 'ce IL qui est la figure du poème, la figure de l'éloigné / la figure de la parole, celle qui par essence va trop loin / la forme même de l'autre, celui qui me manque le plus' (9).

famously described the agency of words that appears in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*: 'Here words are not the polite contortions of twentieth-century printer's ink. They are alive. They elbow their way on to the page, and glow and blaze and fade and disappear'.[31]

This device of anthropomorphising language is, of course, far from new. In 'Les mots sans rides', Breton describes words as having their 'vie propre'; the short text ends with the phrase 'Les mots font l'amour'.[32] In *La Fabrique du Pré*, Ponge describes the 'copulation' of words and things, writing '[c]'est leur copulation que réalise l'écriture (véritable, ou parfaite): c'est l'orgasme qui en résulte, qui provoque notre jubilation'.[33] In *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?* Fourcade employs this anthropomorphic expression of the romantic life of words to comic effect; in a scene that evokes the affectionate bickering of an elderly married couple he writes: 'Il y a des mots que j'appelle de loin et qui ne viendront pas je les appelle de trop loin les mots que j'appelle de trop près me disent je ne suis pas sourd' (17). Likewise, in *En laisse*, we read: '« au revoir mon chéri » disons-nous, « au revoir mon amour » répond le poème, des « tu vas me manquer horriblement » s'échangent, « tu me manques déjà », ainsi redoublons-nous sans fin dans l'effusion réciproque, et des deux c'est ma voix qui s'étrangle en descendant l'escalier' (56). Fourcade uses this technique to animate his own complex relationship with language. Thus, in *Outrance utterance*, we read that 'toute phrase' is 'so loving and companionable' (86), thus evoking the possibility of finding within writing an experience of language that is both tender and proximate, something akin to the 'langue de l'amitié' described in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?* as a 'langue orgiaque complice et tendre […] qui vous comble' (76). A summary on the P.O.L. website describes how the same is true in *Xbo*: 'il s'agit de l'amour des mots,

[31] Samuel Beckett, 'Dante… Bruno. Vico… Joyce' in Richard W. Seaver (ed.), *I Can't Go On, I'll Go On, A Selection from Samuel Beckett's Work* (New York: Grove Press, 1976), p. 117.
[32] Breton, 'Les mots sans rides', p. 14.
[33] Ponge, *Oeuvres complètes. Tome II*, p. 431.

considérés chacun comme un nom propre désignant une personne, des mots à sauver dans un acte d'amour et dans l'urgence.'[34] At the same time, the device also illustrates the hostile, estranged relationship between poet and his words: in *IL*, an extended polyptoton depicts language, embodied by the figure of the third person pronoun, as the 'corps de l'étranger', whose 'strangeness' or 'étrangement' prompts the poet's fear and mistrust (11-4). Discussing the 'étrangeté' of *IL*, Valabrègue writes the following:

> *IL* est l'expérience de l'altérité – presque celle de « la familiarité non familière » ou de « l'inquiétante étrangeté ». Sa propre voix peut être vécue comme méconnaissable (« ce matin j'ai reconnu dans ma voix la voix de quelqu'un n'ayant jamais parlé » […]). Etre poète, c'est être son propre étranger. Cette voix altérée, c'est-à-dire abîmée et désirante, est une outrance : elle est monstrueusement méconnaissable. Elle n'appartient plus à « l'auteur » ni à la soi-disant première personne.[35]

As Valabrègue suggests, for Fourcade, language prompts a feeling of the uncanny ('l'inquiétante étrangeté'), of something that is both familiar and unfamiliar.[36] Estranged from the poet at their conception, the poet's words are at once his own but also foreign and other, a duality that is captured by Derrida's phrase, cited above ('je n'ai qu'une langue, or ce n'est pas la mienne'). The complexity of the poet's relationship with language, I believe, is highlighted precisely through this device of anthropomorphisation, which figures the alterity of language, the dialogic and plural mode of discourse that such a divorce engenders, as well as the consequent hostility or complicity between poet and his words.

'je balbutie'

Fourcade forges what Thomas and Winspur would describe as a 'personal poetic dialect', characterised, as we have seen in the previous analysis, by discontinuous syntax and

[34] Dominique Fourcade, 'Xbo' on *P.O.L Website Catalogue* (2013) <http://www.pol-editeur.com/index.php?spec=livre&ISBN=2-86744-136-6> [accessed 29 May 2017].
[35] Valabrègue, 'Une chose fuitive', p. 24. The citation is from *IL*, p. 24.
[36] The phrase 'l'inquiétante étrangeté' is the standard French translation of 'das unheimliche'.

agrammaticality, by the decomposition of language and an emphasis on linguistic materiality, by the prevalent use of English, as well as by particular 'dispositifs' such as the anthropomorphism of words themselves.[37] Destabilising the norms and standards of ordinary language use, this poetic dialect constitutes a form of minor literature, which, following Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, lends it a political dimension. Fourcade himself describes the intrinsically political nature of poetry, writing: 'il n'y a pas de grande poétique sans politique'.[38] Certain of his texts engage with politically charged current affairs: *En laisse* takes as its starting point the photograph of an Iraqi prisoner at Abu Ghraib, held on a leash by an American soldier. The poem 'après les attentats' was written in response to the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015.[39] However, most of his work does not have an overtly political focus, and instead, as Fourcade himself suggests, it is a particular use of language that might render his poetry political.[40] Talking in an interview about the significance of Subcomandante Marcos in *Le Sujet monotype*, Fourcade draws a parallel between Marcos's non-dogmatic subversion of power, and the language of poetry. He states: 'J'ai voulu […] dire que *le* politique, dans sa façon d'être dans la langue, a extrêmement d'importance et qu'écrire c'est aussi habiter cette conscience politique'.[41] In the previous chapter, we saw how Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the politically subversive nature of language in minor literature is grounded in their analysis of the stutter. So too, in Fourcade's work, the stutter operates as a metonym for the systematic disordering of language, and thus the disruption of power-encrypted norms of representation.

[37] Thomas and Winspur, *Poeticized Language*, p. 5.
[38] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.
[39] The poem 'après les attentats' (2015) is one of several 'feuillets' published by Editions Chandeigne.
[40] In this respect, Fourcade aligns with Gleize's account of the 'langagement' of certain contemporary poets. See Chapter One for further discussion, as well as Gleize, 'La post-poésie: un travail d'investigation-élucidation', p. 126.
[41] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.

In 1990, Fourcade published two poems under the title 'Stutter' with Editions Chandeigne, subsequently including them in *IL*. His writing makes frequent reference to its own disordered mode of articulation: 'je balbutie' he proclaims in *IL* (67), 'les intervalles sont surtout bégayés' (70). In *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, he writes: 'Mes problèmes de zézaiement sont allés croissant. S'y sont ajoutées les difficultés du balbutiement' (49). In *Xbo*, Fourcade describes the bi-partite nature of his disordered writing, which is affected on both a systematic and a production level: 'b comme speech defect' captures the idea of a cognitive, semantic disorder; his metapoetic reference to 'un poème toussé / Par quintes' evokes the disrupted articulation of the text. Critics are quick to pick up on this aspect of Fourcade's work: Jean Khalfa describes Fourcade as 'lui qui a fait du bégaiement dans la langue, pour reprendre l'expression de Deleuze, une méthode'.[42] In a special edition of *Java* dedicated to Fourcade's work, Olivier Cadiot, whose poetry at times employs a similar stuttering effect, entitled his contribution 'Bé-bégayer'.[43] The analysis that follows will attempt to illustrate how Fourcade's disordered, stuttered language operates on a textual level. The following passage is from 'XXXVII' in *IL*, one of the two poems previously printed under the title 'Stutter':

> Susan, could you please tell me your last name
> is it mimosa – I mean acid green mmsa
> tangoed mimosa
> or is stuttered mimosa your last name Susan
> electric
> o please tll me
> you plus minus msmo ai
>
> […]
>
> the wowowoman man
> the wo
> manliness
> of the disphony of your breath

[42] Jean Khalfa, 'Ontologie et subjectivité chez Césaire' in Brophy and Gallagher (eds), *Sens et présence du sujet poétique*, p. 191.
[43] Olivier Cadiot, 'Bé-bégayer', *Java*, No. 17 (1998), pp. 39-40.

holds me
in explosive mimosaliness (61)

Juxtaposing the ordinary and the disordered, the poem opens with a seemingly straightforward question addressed to the poet Susan Howe, whose work also employs the stutter as a significant motif.[44] The normality of the opening line is soon disrupted, as the central 'mimosa' motif becomes 'stuttered mimosa', decomposed into its constituent letters and sounds: 'mmsa', 'o', 'msmo ai'. The omission of certain letters, 'tll', 'mmsa', and scrambling of others, 'msmo ai', is a notably visual illustration of the disordered language that characterises Fourcade's poetry. In the passage, the normal function of meaning is disturbed: rather than progressing in a linear fashion, a loose network of associations between words is created. Mimosa, for instance, is qualified by the following, often opaque adjectives: 'acid green' (mimosa is yellow), 'tangoed', 'stuttered', 'electric', 'crisp', 'stencilled', and 'explosive'. Some of the adjectives ('stuttered', 'stencilled') make sense when mimosa is analysed metapoetically as referring not to the flower but to the word 'mimosa' itself, others remain more cryptic. The second stanza opens with a literal stuttering, 'wowowoman man / the wo / manliness', that is accentuated by the enjambment, which reinforces the impression of suspension and hesitation. When Fourcade alludes to the 'dysphony' of the addressee's (Howe's) breath, we might read this metapoetically, as describing the disordered 'souffle' of the poem in hand.[45] The repetition of the key words of the poem ('mimosa', 'Susan', 'last name', 'woman') generate echolalic ritournelles that turn back on themselves, impeding the progression of the text. This is reinforced by the syntax of the passage, which is disrupted, for example, in the dislocated adjective 'electric', and the verb-less phrase 'you plus minus msmo ai'. The poem is typographically narrow, making frequent use of enjambment; longer lines

[44] For more on Howe and the stutter, see Elisabeth W. Joyce, *"The Small Space of a Pause": Susan Howe's Poetry and the Spaces Between* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010).
[45] Fourcade frequently uses 'souffle' as a metonym for the voice of the poem.

containing complete sentences (such as the first and fourth) are significantly outnumbered by shorter, truncated clauses ('the wo', 'holds me') and isolated nominal and adjectival phrases ('tangoed mimosa', 'electric'). Again, this contributes to the disordered, impeded delivery of the poem, creating hesitations and pauses between different syntactic segments of the sentence. The poem, published for a French readership, is written in English, and as a result elicits the same deterritorialising effects described in the previous section. The disordered features of the poem (the word scrambling, the discontinuous syntax, the opaque network of semantic associations) are exaggerated for the foreign reader, without the immediate reference points of a native speaker to decipher what is normal and what is abnormal.

For Fourcade, the stutter is a product of the 'angoisse' of writing, evoked in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*. In a poem from *IL*, we read:

> je balbutie parce que je n'ose pas prononcer les mots tout est à
> jamais si confus je ne sais pas qui IL est
> tu balbuties tu es une balbutieuse je sais qui tuée
> IL bégaie parce que IL sait la part d'ombre qui gagne chaque
> mot et que l'ensemble ombre-lumière ne peut pas se dire en
> une fois et parce que IL connaît la tragédie de l'énonciation
> nous balbutions
> vous balbutiez (67)

In this extract, the poet describes how he stutters, hesitating to 'prononcer les mots', paralysed by the fear, described above, to 'placer un mot'. This hesitation is compounded by his confusion at the elusive status of the third person pronoun ('je ne sais pas qui IL est'), and 'IL' being 'la figure du poème […], la figure de la parole' (9), by his uncertainty around language more broadly. The repetition of 'balbutier' reinforces the centrality of the stutter in his work, and the structuring of the poem according to the conjugation of the verb, beginning with 'je' and running through to 'nous' and 'vous', is significant. It serves

to populate the poem with a plurality of different voices, with the stuttering of all possible grammatical persons. The errant verb in the third person singular form ('bégayer' instead of 'balbutier') highlights the distinction between the poet's stammering and the poem's stuttering, thus foregrounding 'la tragédie de l'énonciation', the critical divorce between poet and his language. Structured around the pedagogical convention of organising language into conjugations, the poem foregrounds prescriptive grammar, that most tangible aspect of the major language. It then subverts the rules and conventions of this prescriptive, organisational framework: the deliberate misspelling of 'tu es' as 'tuée' misanalyses the grammatical category of the singular second person form a present tense verb as a past participle. This slight, but nonetheless tangible act of grammatical disobedience gestures towards the disorderly nature of poetic language more generally.

The stutter, in Fourcade's work, is both a stumbling against the material shapes and sounds of words, and a metaphorical encounter with the vertiginous and elusive functioning of meaning. To return to Perloff's formulation, it sees poetry bumping its head against the limits of language.[46] Just as, in psycholinguistics, researchers study disordered speech to gain a greater understanding of the non-disordered brain, Fourcade's poetry experiments with disordered language in order to explore the features of ordinary communication that usually go unnoticed. His writing engages in a self-reflexive language game that examines its own linguistic functioning: the operation of meaning (for example in relation to 'il'), word creation (in his frequent use of neologisms), syntax (in his flagrant disregard of grammatical rules) and phonology (in the unusual phonemic combinations that glossolalia and childlike babbling produces). For Deleuze and Guattari, the stutter destabilises the normal language system, and from this point: 'C'est là que le style fait langue. C'est là que

[46] Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder,* p. 20.

le langage devient intensif, pur continuum de valeurs et d'intensités' (*MP*, 125). Intensities are what Deleuze and Guattari describe as elements at the limit of perception, imperceptible in themselves, yet still felt or sensed, something akin, perhaps, to Fourcade's evocation of 'explosive mimosaliness' in the final lines of the poem 'Stutter'. Furthermore, for Deleuze and Guattari, the stutter 'met en variation tous les éléments linguistiques, et même les éléments non linguistiques, les variables d'expression et les variables de contenu' (MP, 124). Variation, a feature of Fourcade's work which I shall shortly explore in relation to his rhizomatic, 'tout arrive' poetics, is a constitutive component of the stutter. It is also a defining feature of minor language, which disrupts the otherwise variation-suppressing tendency of the major language.

The rhizome

In the chapter of *Poetic Becomings* entitled 'Dominique Fourcade, or a Poetics of the Rhizome', Jérôme Game investigates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome by exploring notions of the surface, the fold and the line in Fourcade's poetry.[47] In keeping with the overall focus of his book, Game centres his discussion on the poetic subject and on the Deleuzian notion of becoming. The following discussion will take up Game's idea of a 'poetics of the rhizome' to explore various properties of Fourcade's writing, before mapping it onto what Fourcade himself describes as his 'tout arrive' poetics.

In the introduction to *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of the rhizome, derived originally from the botanical term describing an 'elongated, usually horizontal, subterranean stem which sends out roots and leafy shoots along its length'.[48] Classic examples of these botanical rhizomes are grass, ginger and weeds; notably, when separated or cut into pieces, each piece of the plant will continue to expand and grow

[47] 'Dominique Fourcade, or a Poetics of the Rhizome' in Game, *Poetic Becomings,* pp. 107-50.
[48] Definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2010).

laterally. Deleuze and Guattari use the term more broadly to refer to systems defined by multiplicity, a lack of linear unity, and 'principes de connexion et d'hétérogénéité' (*MP*, 13). They describe how each point of a rhizome must be connected to any other, and how upon rupture the rhizome will start up again and proliferate. A rhizomatic system therefore has no beginning or end, no pivot or centre, and instead involves a horizontal, flat or non-hierarchical structure. They establish an opposition between the rhizome and arborescent (tree-root) structure, the second of which is organised vertically or hierarchically. Game summarises Deleuze and Guattari's appropriation of the term as follows:

> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari extract the notion of rhizome from its original context and use it to determine Being as becoming, non-individual and formless, locating the concept at the centre of their ontology and their aesthetics. The originally botanical concept now designates an open system of multiplicities that are not rooted in common history or teleology but related in non-arborescent ways on a plane without presupposing any centre or transcendence. A poetics of the rhizome can in turn be schematically explained as one in which the poem is the experience of a plane of composition […] on which subjectivity and corporeity are disseminated into a flux – writing itself.[49]

Where Game elaborates a 'poetics of the rhizome' that relates specifically to subjectivity in Fourcade's poetry, the following analysis will explore how the rhizome might apply to other dimensions of Fourcade's work. The metapoetic descriptions of Fourcade's texts themselves offer a starting point in this regard. In *Xbo*, the unpaginated, unpunctuated, book-length poem is described as a 'seamless' and 'hemless'. We read:

> Ne cherchez pas la fin dans ce poème
> Il ne peut y en avoir parce qu'il n'a pas commencé
> Dès la première ligne il a été cloué
> Le temps en a été éjecté
> Circulez dans ce poème (*Xbo*)

Fourcade elaborates the idea of the poem as a single page or plane, without a beginning or an end. The lack of punctuation reinforces this notion; the absence of full stops, question

[49] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 116.

and exclamation marks means that sentences quite literally have no end but instead make up a 'seamless', open and interconnected system. As Fourcade writes, the poem is a space where time is ejected, and where the reader is invited to circulate, rather than to progress in a linear fashion from beginning to end. In keeping with this, his poetry has little narrative progression, and, as discussed above, often uses present participles and static, verb-less clauses. His texts are not structured according to more conventional systems: they are not organised into structurally significant parts or sections, and do not employ established metric or verse forms (as Valabrègue writes '[Fourcade] ne met pas en forme').[50] Instead, they are structured horizontally, with collections reading as entire poems that develop interlacing networks of 'mots-clés' and motifs. These motifs are not centres that subordinate other components of the text, but rather are identifiable threads in a network of equivalences.[51] They generate loose association with further motifs that add to the rich, continuously connected texture of Fourcade's writing. Game captures this 'principe de connexion' well when he describes how Fourcade produces 'non-hierarchical links between beings, moments, signifieds and signifiers on the immanent surface that is the poem'.[52]

Elsewhere in *Xbo*, Fourcade suggests that the text proceeds through a continuous series of uprootings and self-rupturings: 'Vous vous rappelez la première ligne elle n'inaugure pas une durée / Elle se déracine comme elle s'énonce'. Just as the rhizome continues to grow when it is severed, we might expect the same to be true for the rupture Fourcade describes in his own work. In this sense, Fourcade's use of the stutter presents itself as an archetypal form of rupture – it segments the text, breaking the fluidity and onward momentum of

[50] Valabrègue, 'Dominique Fourcade: "La page langue monde"', p. 717.
[51] Valabrègue writes: 'Si Fourcade sort de Mallarmé, c'est parce qu'il remet en question la notion du centre. Il n'y a plus de centre. C'est en cela que sa poésie est devenir-chose, devenir-corps et devenir-monde.' 'Une chose fuitive', p. 25.
[52] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 115.

reading. Where the stutter appears, linguistic variation proliferates: phonological, semantic, and so on. Likewise, agrammaticality performs a similar form of rupture, by impeding the normal linear progression of ordinary syntactic structure. As we saw in the previous section, isolated nominal clauses, truncated phrases and anacoluthon require meaning to be constructed rhizomatically (as opposed to arborescently), through juxtaposition and parataxis. The self-rupturing characteristic of the rhizome can also be traced onto the generic plasticity of Fourcade's writing. In an interview, Fourcade describes how, as he sees it, the fundamental difference between poetry and prose is that 'le vers scande différemment les choses'.[53] His comment reflects the posture of many contemporary poets and critics, such as Agnès Disson who suggests that, for the writers collected in the *Revue de littérature générale*, poetry's difference from prose continues to be predicated on 'le découpage, la mise en rythme'.[54] We might then attempt to situate Fourcade's texts on a continuum, grounded in this rhythmic distinction. At the more conventionally 'poetic' end, texts such as *Xbo* and *IL* involve shorter verse lines, arranged into stanzas. On the prose end, texts such as *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?* and *Le Sujet monotype* resemble essays, written for the most part in complete sentences, arranged into paragraphs, with punctuation to denote the end of lines. However, such a taxonomy quickly disintegrates as Fourcade's most poetic texts frequently include passages of prose, and his more prosaic text are so poetic that they have very little bearing on a more prototypical notion of a prose text or essay. Instead of maintaining traditional generic distinctions, Fourcade's texts oscillate between prose and poetry, with one form continuously uprooting the previous. This happens on the level of the prose/poetic line

[53] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Frédéric Valabrègue', p. 15.
[54] Evoking the widespread 'brouillage des genres' in contemporary practice, Disson asks: 'Mais comment distinguer la poésie de la prose, si son matériau privilégié est désormais de "la prose découpée"? Simplement : par le découpage, la mise en rythme. Le vers devient mouvement, élan, flux, symétries de séquences, "puissance rythmique, velléité de fuite et de suspens, de répétition et de retournement."' Disson, 'Poésie années 90', pp. 14-15.

itself, as Game suggests: 'Dominique Fourcade has developed a line/fold that is a mutual deterritorialisation between verse and sentence whereby the verse *folds the sentence* and the sentence *continues (or stretches) the verse*'.[55] We saw in the passages from *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, cited above, how the text moves between essayistic prose (for example, the metapoetic reflections on the foreign language of literature), and poetic stanzas (the glossolalic babbling of the poet-child). In this folding and stretching of the line, the same themes, subject matters, and words themselves alternate continuously between two rhythmic patternings, with punctuation, line length, and the use or non-use of enjambment reinforcing the distinction. Discussing this dimension of his work, Fourcade states:

> En somme j'établis ou s'établit un réseau mobile vers-proses, un filet en apparence très lâche mais extrêmement dynamique, dont le maillage se recalibre sans cesse, système espace-temps qui m'autorise des combinaisons infinies – ce qui veut dire dont le nombre est infini et dont les possibilités opératoires sont infinies. Une organisation, une tensilité (élasticité ?), une multiplicité de détentes internes dont l'énergie déborde le texte, au moins je crois, et en tout cas ne se cale nulle part.[56]

The 'réseau mobile vers-proses' of Fourcade's writing thus involves a certain elasticity, where form is not superimposed upon a work, but rather is found organically in the writing process. It lends his texts a rhythmic and formal multiplicity, which involves the continuous deterritorialisation between one form and the next; as Fourcade says of *Le Sujet monotype*, '[le texte] procède par déplacements incessants'.[57] In this same interview on *Le Sujet monotype*, Fourcade states:

> Elaborant, à un degré que je n'avais jamais osé auparavant mais qui ne m'aurait pas été possible auparavant, des textures de proses et de vers mêlés, j'abolissais dans le même geste la distinction, dont j'ai par ailleurs la nausée, entre prose et poésie.[58]

[55] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 123.
[56] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Frédéric Valabrègue', pp. 15-6.
[57] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Hervé Bauer', p. 58.
[58] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Hervé Bauer', p. 58.

While Fourcade insists on this being a distinct feature of *Le Sujet monotype*, the mixing of prose and verse that he describes is clearly apparent in his earlier work too. What he conveys here is a rhizomatic approach to genre, where prose and poetry successively deterritorialise one another within the text, existing in a relationship of continuity. In turn, as Fourcade suggests, such a practice destabilises the distinction between poetry and prose altogether, resisting their discrete classification as genres. 'Une prose c'est un poème-bloc', he writes, 'Vers et prose? Dans les deux cas c'est pour moi un travail de poésie.'[59] His writing is thus 'un travail de poésie': not poetry understood in that first, narrower sense as a distinct rhythmic form, but something which transcends the formal properties of traditional generic classifications.

Linked to this collapsing of the distinction between prose and poetry is Fourcade's exploration of the boundaries between different art forms, specifically, poetry, art, music, film and dance. Rather than simply exploring how these different artistic domains can offer poetry conceptual models, or how, to use Valabrègue's term, a 'système de vision' can be passed from one domain into another, Fourcade demonstrates how they are all part of one and the same thing.[60] The poet is a choreographer, an artist, a film director and a musician, as once again the discrete system of classifications is collapsed:

> Je veux rendre le réel, et c'est une idée tout à fait infantile, et pour le rendre, il me faut être moi-même un chorégraphe, un ingénieur du son, un cadreur, un monteur, un peintre, etc… Ces façons d'habiter des gestes, j'essaye de ne pas oublier de m'en défaire à chaque fois.[61]

Thus, Fourcade alternates between these various roles, drawing on different artistic domains in his poetry. As an art critic as well as a writer, it is unsurprising that the visual

[59] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Frédéric Valabrègue', p. 15.
[60] Valabrègue, 'Une chose fuitive', p. 21.
[61] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.

arts play a significant role in Fourcade's poetry.[62] He describes the poem as a surface, a canvas rather than a page, where words relate to each other spatially, as objects within a composition. As Pinson suggests: 'la poésie, pour Dominique Fourcade, est devenu aussi un art de l'espace'.[63] *Xbo* extends this idea to its extreme by eliminating page numbers, describing instead the 'champ d'émail blanc sans dimension' (which might evoke, for example, Duchamp's 'Fountain'). *Le Ciel pas d'angle* is particularly concerned with the relationship between art and poetry, which is unsurprising given that it was the first book Fourcade published after his ten-year break from writing poetry, during which time he studied at length the artists that have continued to influence his work to this day: Manet, Cézanne, Matisse, Degas and Hantaï. The collection explores a number of dimensions of visual art: line, shape, composition, light and colour. It depicts a series of geometric shapes, from the more basic 'lignes' (33) and 'angles' (63), to the more obscure 'hélice' (33) and 'trapèze' (34). Traditional aspects of artistic composition are also evoked: 'cadre' (33), 'surface' (83), 'toile' (67). These evocations frequently appear in passages that refer directly to the visual arts, but they also appear in metapoetic descriptions of the text itself. References such as the following are pervasive: 'Mots / Leur sculpture / Aplat / O formidable bas-relief des mots' (81). Colour and light are equally prominent, with references throughout: 'un rouge magnifique' (67), 'lumière violette' (68). The poet explores not only the very composition of pigment, 'le bleu est fait du cuivre' (47), but also colour understood more metaphorically: 'La couleur accidentelle de Bouffon; la couleur sollicitée de Goethe; la couleur non exprimée de Matisse' (68). The most prominent colours of the collection are blue and white, evoking in turn Cézanne's skies, Matisse's cut outs and Simon Hantaï's 'pliage' compositions. These pivotal colours

[62] For a detailed study on this subject, see Irina Anelok, *Les écrits sur l'art de Dominique Fourcade : la naissance d'une poétique* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre, 2013).
[63] Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve*, p. 253.

acquire a further metapoetic significance when Fourcade qualifies the blue as 'bleu d'encre' (83), and the white as the whiteness of 'la page' (23).

Paul Cézanne, whom Fourcade describes as a 'poète' (65) as well as a painter, is omnipresent in *Le Ciel pas d'angle*; the oranges and blues of his Provençal landscapes form the basis of a key visual motif. Taking a quotation from Cézanne as his starting place, 'Quand la couleur est à sa richesse la forme est à sa plenitude' (65), Fourcade goes on to explore the relationship between form and content in poetry:

> Cézanne voulait dire que le contenu est à lui-même sa forme et simultanément que l'être du contenu, la substance du contenu (le contenu du contenu ?) réside dans sa forme. N'est pas un contenu ; la forme est un contenu – elle est le contenu – le seul visage et la seule âme et la seule vérité possible du contenu qu'elle a en propre de dire et d'intégralement produire. (65)

Fourcade deduces from Cézanne's reflection that form *is* content, which, in an immediate sense, resonates with a number of aspects of Fourcade's writing already discussed: its metapoetic dimension, where language is both medium and subject matter; its emphasis on language as referent, indistinguishable from other forms of materiality. In *Citizen Do*, Fourcade suggests that the focus on the materiality of language in his work expresses a continuistic, monistic conception of the relationship between language and world: 'Syllabe-être. A ce point, réel de la langue et réel du monde ne font qu'un' (15). The significance of colour in *Le Ciel pas d'angle* is an expression of this same idea: the motif of blue and white binds the material reality of the poet's ink and paper to Cézanne's brush strokes, to a Provençal summer sky, creating a continuum between language, art and world, where all are constituted from the same basic matter. The distinction between form and content is collapsed, a single substance remains: 'Cuivre, bleu étale, notre substance sans origine ni départ / Notre substance notre limite nos cendres' (*CPA*, 47). Without the semiotic structure of language to complicate the matter, it is in the visual arts that

Fourcade finds a very immediate example of this continuity between form and content. In this sense, we understand why Fourcade is keen to stress the significance of Cézanne, Matisse and Cubism, over and above literary figures such as Stéphane Mallarmé.[64]

In the citation above, Fourcade also describes himself as an 'ingénieur du son', and by extension the poem is as much a sound composition as a textual one. In an interview with Mathias Lavin, he reiterates this: 'je dirais aussi que je travaille à partir des sons, je fais de la façon la plus modeste possible de la musique, et sur ma page je fais des agencements de sons.'[65] These arrangements or compositions of sounds are heterogeneous and multiple. First and foremost, Fourcade draws attention to the phonemes and syllables of human language, 'un *pu* doux / un *tlu* clair et liquide […] un *tuh* un *puh* un *huih* un *pluih*' (*IL,* 79), to the various modes of articulation that modulate it (words are murmured, sung, coughed, stuttered and hummed). Alongside human language, various forms of animal communication appear: bird song, the calls of nightingales and larks, and the sonar 'cris' of porpoises in *Son blanc du un* (28). References to music proliferate: we find allusions to traditional musical notation, 'ré dièse, ré bécarre, do dièse, do bécarre, et la tonique pour conclure' (*M*, 33), to classical composers such as Bach and Shostakovich, as well as to jazz: 'saxophone' (*SBDU,* 90), 'riffs' (*RD,* 25) and 'effusion parkerienne' (*CPA,* 40). Pinson points out the significance of the 'berceuse' or 'système lullaby' in *Citizen Do*, and the prominence of the motif of the 'chant' is well-documented in criticism of Fourcade's work.[66] In such a way, Fourcade's poetry depicts the variegated soundscapes of modern life, right down to the most banal aspects of everyday existence: in *Le Ciel pas d'angle* the poet describes 'la rythmique d'une machine à écrire' joined by 'cinquante sonneries de

[64] Claude Royet-Journoud, 'Entretien avec Dominique Fourcade', *Banana Split*, No. 11 (1983), pp. 18-29.
[65] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Mathias Lavin', *Action Restreinte*, No. 7 (2006), pp. 90-1.
[66] Jean-Claude Pinson, 'Citizen Do de Dominique Fourcade' (2008) <http://www.sitaudis.fr/Parutions/citizen-do-de-dominique-fourcade.php> [accessed 29 May 2017].

téléphone' and 'du riz sur le zinc on a craqué une allumette quelque part / O diesel de musiques rue de n'importe quelle ville' (35). Like a sound engineer or score composer, the poet constructs 'des agencements de sons' that are simultaneous and multiple, not simply in the eclectic range of sounds that are assembled, but also in the nature of those sounds themselves. The motif of jazz riffs, classical music chords, and a cappella vocal ensembles all involve multiple voices or sounds that are synchronised in polyphonous compositions. In this way, the heterogeneity and polyphony of the lyric 'je', discussed in the first section, is matched by the heterogeneity and polyphony of the auditory collages that Fourcade's poetry presents.

As Fourcade suggests when he describes himself above as 'un chorégraphe', dance forms a prominent motif in his work, from classic ballet (*IL,* 60), to the contemporary dance of choreographers such as Merce Cunningham and Pina Bausch (*M*, 72). 'A partir de Balancine', the poet states, 'j'ai appris notamment comment chorégraphier différents éléments sur un plan donné.'[67] In an extension of the anthropomorphism device discussed earlier in the chapter, words are conceived as bodies that are choreographed in grammatical patternings across the space of the page: 'Le mot est le corps chorégraphié du poème' (*OU,* 24). Evoking the influence of dance on his work, Fourcade remarks:

> On pourrait voir comment le placement d'un geste puis sa répétition simultanée, mais à peine décalée dans l'ampleur, dans les chorégraphies de Pina Bausch, m'a conduit à penser des déplacements similaires dans l'intensité et le rythme de la langue […].[68]

Fourcade draws a parallel between choreography and poetic composition, describing how poetry involves the manipulation of language's rhythms into patterns of repetition and movement. Extending this parallel further, Fourcade presents language and dance as

[67] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Mathias Lavin', p. 90.
[68] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.

constituted of the same basis elements – material presence, movement, rhythm – and the frequent choreographic metaphors he employs emphasise this continuity by fusing signifier and signified. For example, in a passage discussed earlier, we read 'acid green mmsa / tangoed mimosa / or is stuttered mimosa' (*IL*, 61). The repetition of the word 'mimosa' in a poem characterised by abrupt pauses and discontinuous syntax, means that 'tangoed mimosa' has a dual reference, evoking not only the dancing flower, but also the movements of the word 'mimosa' itself. Likewise, when we read in *Rose-déclic*, 'cheek to cheek dans la roseraie elles dansent un slow mortel' (165), the slow dance of flowers in a rose garden is also that of the words on the page. In *Manque*, Fourcade evokes *Shards*, a piece of contemporary dance choreographed by Cunningham, in which the choreographer plays on the contrast between stillness and movement. The piece involves short phrases where one dancer moves and the rest of the dance corps are immobile. The significance of this evocation is apparent in *Manque*, a collection of eulogistic texts, where Fourcade describes a sensation of being the 'last one standing', having watched many of his friends pass away before him. This idea is reworked later in the text when Fourcade likens the text to a tango ('ce livre n'est qu'un tango' (100)), but a tango where despite there being two people involved (the poet and the eulogised friend), the dance is now a solitary one.

In *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot*?, following a passage that evokes the spatiotemporal dimensions of writing, Fourcade intertwines the composition of the poem with the movements of a dance:

> je place un mot […]
> je place, je fais un pas rien de plus (deux je n'ai pas demandé on verra bien)
> mon premier souci est de ne pas saboter la gestuelle mon deuxième souci est de saboter la gestuelle
> je mets un pas (un pas se lance un mot se met dans tous ses états)

un pas, nice toe-work, lovely, dans le temps (à la renverse)
je
mets mot mets pas mets pas
j'espace (à la renverse, une seconde fois)
mot pas mot (son instep, ses assoiements)
pas un (14)

The dance/poem progresses across the space of the page ('j'espace'), taking place 'dans le temps', configured in movements or 'pas'. The initial reference to the tentative words of the writer 'je place un mot' is subsequently abstracted to more generalised verbs of movement 'je place', 'je fais un pas', 'je mets un pas'. When the English voice interjects ('nice toe-work, lovely'), the comparison to dance is made explicit, and is then sustained in the references to 'instep' and 'assoiement', as well as in the parathentical instructions '(à la renverse)', '(à la renverse, une seconde fois)', that might then be read as choreographic directions. Following the English interjection, the syntactic uncertainty of the phrases 'je / mets mot mets pas mets pas', 'mot pas mot', and 'pas un' activates the two lexical fields that have been developed thus far in the poem (that of writing and of dance). By playing on the polysemy of the word 'pas' which means not only a step in the chorographical sense, but also a step forward, and the particle of negation, the poem elaborates various planes of meaning, suspending them simultaneously throughout the passage. The parallel between dance and language highlights their similarities, as scripted patterns of movement and rhythm, and as two different forms of semiotic systems. The gestures of dance have a dual status, whereby they can exist as both pure signifier or sheer movement, but also enclose the possibility of meaningful interpretation and signification. Language also maintains this duality: it is both material sound and printed ink, but also a system of signs with the capacity to signify and be meaningful.

The fourth and final art that Fourcade evokes in the citation above is film. Cinematic terminology is prevalent in his work, from 'dubbing', 'lip-sync' and 'play-back' (65) in

Citizen Do (the title of which is a play on Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*), to 'la bande des sous-titres' in *Rose-déclic* (141). The significance of cinema for Fourcade is found not so much in the centrality of the image, poetic or cinematographic, but rather in the way it offers a parallel to the spatial composition of poetry. As we have just seen with regard to choreography, the poet, like the film director, is involved in the staging of words as bodies. In this sense, Christophe Wall-Romana's observation in *Cinepoetry* applies well to Fourcade: 'the cinematic (and precinematic) imaginary […] brought a new focus to the scene and materiality of writing, and to the spatial and visual dimension of the page.'[69] For Fourcade, as for many other contemporary poets, cinema offers new modes of perception, and invites a return to the question of 'le réel' in artistic representation. It presents poetry with novel ways of seeing: in *Rose-déclic*, for example, the poet uses cinematographic language to describe how the text focuses in on the motif of the rose: 'Rose en zoom sur la chose zeroing in on', referencing in turn 'le gros plan' (27), whereby the camera isolates a single object to focus on in detail. In *Outrance utterance*, the Barthesian 'death of the author' or Mallarméan 'disparition élocutoire du poète' is figured in cinematographic terms: the poet describes 'le champ de la caméra' where 'Le principal personnage joue hors du champ. Off off.' (29). The poem itself becomes a type of screen, 'un poème l'écran' (*SBDU*, 78), or a word-film, 'Le poème mon film à syllabes' (*Xbo*). Writing becomes synonymous with filming, a notion that Fourcade explores at length in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*: 'Je ne vois maintenant qu'à travers cet écran portable dont je ne peux plus me défaire […] j'expérimente le grain de l'image, et des rapports d'ombres (en cassettes immédiates). […] Je filme tout ce qui m'arrive' (78). The image of the poem as a camera, set up in the midst of day-to-day life, filming everything that comes into shot ('Jour ordinaire / Je filme', *Xbo*), is closely linked, as we shall shortly see, to Fourcade's

[69] Christophe Wall-Romana, *Cinepoetry: Imaginary Cinemas in French Poetry* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 30. *Cinepoetry* includes a brief consideration of Fourcade's *Citizen Do*, p. 373.

'tout arrive' poetics. He describes how, as a writer, he has taught himself to resist the desire to 'trier', so that the simultaneity of real experience can be better represented in the poem.[70] When Fourcade writes 'Le poème un vide le seul réel mon film' (*Xbo*), we see how Fourcade is equating cinema with a particular mode of representing the real. Indeed, in the initial citation where Fourcade suggests that the poet must become 'un cadreur, un monteur', it is precisely because it facilitates his desire to 'rendre le réel'.[71] This mode of representation is, for Fourcade, necessarily intransitive or 'surfaciste'; the task for the poet is to 'filmer des corps ininterprétables' (*Xbo*).[72] Here, we are reminded of Hocquard's description of the poet's role, inspired by American Objectivism, which is to:

> se contenter de donner à voir, à la manière d'un témoin devant un tribunal, sans chercher à influencer le jugement ou l'émotion du lecteur. Pour cela il met en place un espace neutre, il ménage une distance sans laquelle aucune tentative d'élucidation ne saurait être possible. Cette distance, cet écart, est le (théâtre du) travail poétique, un théâtre de mots […].[73]

In this instance Hocquard evokes theatre, but the parallel to cinema, to the poem as film, is clear. Whether a 'théâtre de mots' or a 'film à syllables', in both instances the poet sets about the 'mise en scène' of language, which, as direct embodiment of the real, involves a point of contact, an 'être au contact du réel' (*CD*, 15), not mediated by literary conventions of representation.

Fourcade incorporates cinema, art, music and dance in his poetry, tracing the transferable dimensions of each domain: from art, his poetry derives an exploration of colour and line, and the collapsing distinction between form and content; from cinema, a return to the

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[70] 'Il a fallu que je me rééduque pour ne plus trier, puisque trier c'était remplacer la venue simultanée des événements et des choses par des méthodes de perception rigides et sclérosées.' Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.
[71] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.
[72] Jean-Marie Gleize, using Fourcade's description of Degas as a 'surfaciste', writes that this term applies equally well to the poet himself. Jean-Marie Gleize, 'Le poème est l'afflux de cela', *Java*, No. 17 (1998), pp. 47-51.
[73] Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 28.

notion of representation and the real; from dance, the importance of movement and gesture, configured across a given space; and from music, the irreducible presence of sound, and a principle of simultaneity and multiplicity. In Fourcade's poetry, these different artistic domains form a rhizome: they are not isolated, individual domains, separated off from each other, but rather are interconnected, part of the same overall structure, with shared concerns of form, representation, signification, and so on. Just as Deleuze and Guattari discuss the 'principe de connexion' which connects each point of a rhizome to any other, the various artistic domains in Fourcade's poetry create a similar interconnected network. They exist in a horizontal, flat relationship of equivalence and reciprocity, with each domain relating to every other. In turn, this constitutes an expression of Fourcade's 'tout arrive' poetics, which, as we shall see, foregrounds the principles of multiplicity, simultaneity and heterogeneity.

'Tout arrive'

In a text entitled 'Tout arrive' in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, Fourcade recounts meeting Olivier Cadiot at an exhibition on Stéphane Mallarmé. Amongst the various exhibits the two poets find a letter addressed to Mallarmé from Édouard Manet, and both are struck by the letterhead with its simple yet arresting maxim, 'tout arrive'. For Fourcade, the phrase encapsulates the central principles of multiplicity, simultaneity and heterogeneity in his own work. His reflections in an interview with Emmanuel Laugier provide further insight into the significance of Manet's expression:

> Pour moi, utiliser tous les degrés de perception d'une langue, toutes les façons qu'elle a d'agir, jusqu'à ses propres inconnues, me conduit à prendre les choses comme un tout, et dans le temps où elles arrivent. Il a fallu que je me rééduque pour ne plus trier, puisque trier c'était remplacer la venue simultanée des événements et des choses par des méthodes de perception rigides et sclérosées. Il

> faut un effort suprême pour sortir d'une pensée de l'épure qui est un seul et grand mensonge sur le monde.[74]

A key constituent of Fourcade's 'tout arrive' poetics is a resistance to 'trier': in an interview in *Action Restreinte*, he discusses how his education reinforced the idea that 'il faut faire une seule chose à la fois', and that in his poetry he has attempted to free himself from this mode of thought: 'je me suis concentré sur le multiple et non pas sur le un'.[75] Rejecting the implicitly selective, hierarchical value structure of categorising and sorting, Fourcade insists that his poetry must draw on various modes of perception, must be receptive to all possibility, and heterogeneous in its subject matter, lexis, register, form and rhythm. The poetics that Fourcade elaborates thus aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of minor literature, in so far as both envisage a resistance to variation-suppressing modes of discourse through an emphasis on multiplicity.

For Peter Consenstein, Fourcade's adoption of Manet's phrase involves the implementation of a 'système de vision des peintres modernes'. He writes:

> Tout arrive en même temps. Tous les cinq sens, dont le cerveau se compose, capturent le monde entourant l'interprétation de ces sensations et enlisent l'individu, le sujet pensant, dans une synesthésie totale. Fourcade ne cherche pas l'ordre de cette synesthésie, il préfère en déduire une poésie ou ce que j'appelle un forme-rythme langagier.[76]

Using all modes of perception at the same time, without attempting to separate off one from another or to 'mettre en ordre', Fourcade's poetry has a synaesthesic, 'kaleidoscopic' quality.[77] Crediting 'la peinture du début de notre siècle, et […] la sculpture un peu plus tard', Fourcade suggests that this system of vision, which captures, on the single surface of the poem, 'la simultanéité des plans du réel', requires a break with the implicit hierarchy

[74] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.
[75] Dominique Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Mathias Lavin', p. 87.
[76] Consenstein, 'Le présent immédiat dans la poésie de Dominique Fourcade', p. 448.
[77] In the essay 'Tout arrive', Fourcade links the 'toutarrivesque' with 'le kaleidoscope lampe à pétrole de l'enfance Marcel Proust' (*EJPPM*, 61).

and ideology of traditional syntax, and the elaboration of a new form of syntax in its place.[78] Fourcade's novel syntax, with its agrammatical phrases and its emphasis on juxtaposition and parataxis, complements the collapsing of the implicitly hierarchical structure of traditional representations of perception. Significantly, Agnès Disson identifies experimentation with perspective as a defining feature of the 'mécanique lyrique' generation. In her discussion of Alferi and Cadiot's *Revue de littérature générale*, she identifies 'le téléscopage des points de vue, des perspectives, des dispositifs' as a unifying characteristic of the poets gathered in the review (Fourcade included).[79] She writes: 'tout est question de regard, de focalisation, de jeux d'angle et de perspectives', and offering the poet Yannick Liron as an example, she examines how 'le regard bouge, change, tourne autour de l'objet, le saisit au ralenti, sous toutes ses facettes, tous ses angles, toutes ses couleurs'.[80] As will shortly be explored, this analysis might equally well apply to Fourcade, whose poetry rotates through multiple perspectives, hinging on a 'mot-pivot' such as the rose of *Rose-déclic* or the titular pronoun of *IL*.

Fourcade's 'tout arrive' poetics engenders what he calls a 'multipiste' quality to his work: 'Ma page d'écriture est un débat permanent entre le successif et le simultané. Il n'y a pas qu'une piste sur la machine à enregistrer, mais des enregistrements multipistes'.[81] This image sustains the metaphor of the poet as a sound-engineer, producing recordings that are characterised by multiplicity and simultaneity. On this subject, Valabrègue writes:

> L'écriture de Fourcade se met au service d'une multiplicité de voix qui en constitue une seule, résultante parfois atone d'une polyphonie. L'enjeu est d'accueillir cette

[78] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Hervé Bauer', p. 57.
[79] Disson, 'Poésie années 90', p. 15.
[80] Disson, 'Poésie années 90', p. 15.
[81] Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46. Immediately after this comment, Fourcade comments on the multilingual dimension of his work, thus insisting on the link between multilingualism and polyphony in his poetry.

> multiplicité et faire en sorte que les éléments qui la constituent jouent le plus librement possible. C'est une affaire de vitesse et de mobilité.[82]

The same multiplicity that pervades every other aspect of Fourcade's work necessarily applies to poetic voice. His poetry is characterised by polyphony, by a 'voix d'une plasticité remarquable' (*IL*, 79), which is doubtless a corollary of a post-Mallarméan 'disparition élocutoire du poète'. Fourcade describes how the poet is 'asleep at the wheel', leaving in his place a lyric 'je' that operates as an open space of possibility, in which a multitude of voices proliferate.[83] On the topic of the lyric subject in Fourcade's poetry, a number of studies exist: Michael G. Kelly's analysis is of particular interest as it emphasises Fourcade's focus on the 'experience of a disappearing linguistic security', and the consequent 'unhousedness' of the subject.[84] Kelly reads Fourcade's mother tongue/foreign language paradigm, discussed above, as an expression of the poet's desire to get closer to the perceived subjective ease of a mother tongue.[85] As we saw, the absence of a singular mother tongue provokes a plural, foreign language in its place; monologic voice is replaced by heteroglossia. Kelly's evocation of the 'unhoused writing subject' accords with Jean-Claude Pinson's description of Fourcade's 'lyrisme désubjectivé'.[86] Returning to the same metaphor of poet as sound-engineer, Pinson describes the poet as a 'compositeur', constructing poems out of 'unités de son-sens'.[87] In this conception, lyric voice is a product of the linguistic assemblages of the poem. Language is already endowed with a certain lyricism, and the poet is effectively spoken *through*. His compositions and assemblages will, to return to Hocquard's formulation, 'donner à voir', 'mettre en place

[82] Valabrègue, 'Une chose fuitive', p. 25.
[83] In *Citizen Do* Fourcade writes: 'je m'endors au volant. Mais sans créer d'accident' (14).
[84] Kelly, 'Poetry as a Foreign Language', p. 395.
[85] Kelly, 'Poetry as a Foreign Language', p. 398. Fourcade writes: 'la question est : mes secondes langues où les loger / sinon non loin de l'absence de la première' (*EJPPM*, 9).
[86] Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve*, pp. 255.
[87] Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve*, pp. 254.

[…] un théâtre de mots'.[88] Again, the singularity of the poet's voice is thus displaced by the multiplicity of voices that this 'théâtre de mots' will bestow. A single writing subject becomes, as Game suggests, a 'proliferation of subjective positions', or, as Leuwers would have it, 'une affirmation de toutes les virtualités du « je ».'[89]

The principles of multiplicity and heterogeneity that render Fourcade's writing a form of 'poésie mineure' are found not only in relation to voice and subjecthood, but also in the systematic variation of registers and tonalities, influences and inspirations, and subject matter and lexis. On this last point, Fourcade employs multiple lexical fields simultaneously so that, in their juxtaposition, one emphasises the difference of the other. References to the natural world, to the Provençal landscapes of Char or Cézanne, are intertwined with evocations of a developed, post-industrial society, where referential markers, such as 'le Chrysler Building' (*RD,* 35), join broader evocations of the spaces of modern life: 'Quel délice quel délice au troisième sous-sol du parking tout béton / Sous les néons' (*RD,* 21). The markers of material existence that have permeated poetry since its very origins – constellations, skies and meteorological phenomena – appear alongside descriptions of the physical world, derived from modern science: 'antiquarks et quarks' (*IL*, 111), 'neutrons' (*RD*, 9), 'uranium' (*CD*, 81), 'berylium' (*Xbo*). Lexis associated with more traditional poetic vocabularies, the Ronsardian 'rose' of *Rose-déclic*, the Mallarméan 'blancheur' and 'voix interstellaire' of *Le Ciel pas d'angle*, juxtapose vocabulary not traditionally associated with a poetic lexicon: 'SLAM DUNK' (*IL*, 115) 'tailgaiting' (*IL*, 159), 'frisbee' (*SBDU,* 65), 'boite de Q-tips' (*SBDU*, 11). Indeed, we can trace the

[88] There are clear resonances between Pinson's analysis here and the notion of 'la mécanique lyrique', discussed in the introduction.
[89] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 139. Daniel Leuwers reads this as a movement from an absented, Mallarméan impersonalisation of poetry to a reaffirmed poetry of plurality: 'Quand Fourcade célèbre la pluralité du IL, il s'écarte de tout désir d'impersonnalisation mallarméen et s'oriente plutôt vers une affirmation de toutes les virtualités du « je ».' Leuwers, 'Dominique Fourcade: une question de cordes vocales', p. 205.

technological developments and trends of modern life across Fourcade's oeuvre. In *Le Ciel pas d'angle* (1983), we find pagers (85) and 'telex' (30); in *Xbo* (1988), 'Pan Am 747' and 'steadycam'; in the more recent *Citizen Do* (2008), 'faux cils' (64) and 'monokini' (76), as well as ludic reworkings of email address formatting: 'aube.récidive@talc', 'claquedecalme@gomina.socquettes', 'merleoblong@wanadooprune' (79).

This lexical variation reflects a heterogeneity of subject matter, both of which are a product of Fourcade's desire to mobilise all aspects of reality within the poem. He states:

> Le poème se fait en objectivant toute réalité, sans exclusion, qu'elle soit d'ordre psychologique, sexuel, métaphysique, matériel, et en étalant tout cela sur la page, à plat, en travaillant la langue qui est la seule façon dont toutes ces notions peuvent exister.[90]

Fourcade's comment recalls a passage from the introductory chapter on the rhizome in *Mille plateaux*: 'L'idéal d'un livre serait d'étaler toute chose sur un tel plan d'extériorité, sur une seule page, sur une même plage : événements vécus, déterminations historiques, concepts pensés, individus, groupes et formations sociales' (16). Like Deleuze and Guattari, Fourcade envisages a rhizomatic representation of reality, where all dimensions are laid out horizontally upon the page. Thus, while *Manque* proposes an exploration of death and grief and its relationship to literature, *Le Ciel pas d'angle* finds itself engaged in the most prosaic of 'remerciements': 'Merci Ville de Paris d'avoir doté ma rue d'une benne à ordures' (34). *IL* circumnavigates the abyssal experience of language and referentiality, interwoven with references to the most fleeting, commercial aspects of modern life, such as brand names: 'rimmel' (110). In *Rose-déclic*, Fourcade juxtaposes an exploration of poetic inspiration with pervasive sexual imagery: 'rose de tout en scène nue sous ta jupe' (37), 'j'avais tes fesses dans mes mains' (85). These references oscillate

[90] Marguerite Haladjian and Jean-Baptiste Para, 'Une partie qu'on ne gagne jamais. Entretien avec Dominique Fourcade', *Europe*, No. 744 (1991), p. 136.

between what might have traditionally been divided into 'high' and 'low' culture, producing a destabilising, often comic, effect. Thus, in a passage in *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?* that explores the relative influence of Mallarmé and Manet, Fourcade treats his poetic predecessor with a good dose of healthy irreverence: 'pendant que Mallarmé rajuste son porte-jarretelles E.D. appelle une ligne de coke. Sur un miroir pour ne pas en perdre ou tout dans le noir. Ecrase les cristaux avec une carte de crédit' (72). Discussing this amalgamation of forms and flattening of hierarchies, Fourcade suggests:

> Je me suis entraîné pendant quarante ans à transcrire simultanément la totalité des perceptions : regarder une peinture de Cézanne dans une exposition est *inséparé* et inséparable du fait qu'une personne mâche du chewing-gum en regardant le même tableau à côté de moi, qu'il émane d'elle un certain parfum, ou que le téléphone sonne [*à ce moment-là, le téléphone sonne dans la pièce*], et si le téléphone sonne et bien il sonnera également dans mon poème. Je ne lis pas Heidegger séparément du bruit du téléphone. J'ai essayé de mettre au point une écriture qui permette de transcrire le fait que « tout arrive » simultanément – ce que j'ai essayé de faire précisément dans le texte *Tout arrive,* qui était le cœur de mon précédent livre. Et je me suis beaucoup entraîné pour tendre vers un mode d'écriture qui rende possible cette transcription de différents plans en même temps.[91]

Here, Fourcade observes how the more prosaic aspects of everyday life shape his poetry as much as literary, philosophical and artistic influences such as Heidegger and Cézanne. His eclectic 'points de repère' eschew traditional French writers in favour of American poets (Dickinson, Stein, Howe, Palmer), and visual artists (Degas, Hantaï, Matisse). Fourcade reiterates that Mallarmé and La Fontaine, Proust and Baudelaire, have equal sway as 'une chanson de Bashung ou de Gainsbourg', or 'la trivialité du bruit d'une voiture qui passe dans la rue'.[92]

This variation in influence, subject matter and lexis is matched by a variation in tone and register. Fourcade's writing oscillates between different tonalities – the grandiloquent and the trivial, the serious and the comic – that in turn often present themselves as different

[91] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Mathias Lavin', pp. 86-7.
[92] Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Mathias Lavin', p. 86.

voices in the text. In the following passage, Pinson analyses the contrastive registers of *Citizen Do*:

> les superlatifs ne manquent pas dans la langue de Fourcade (« Dans la vie, l'ordre de l'art est une charge immense »). Mais toujours l'audace du plus trivial (« je m'excuse c'est l'heure de ma Suze ») vient déjouer la menace de l'enflure ; toujours le « reportage » du réel le plus immédiat (le beau nom par exemple de « Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama ») vient rappeler dans quel monde effectif nous sommes.[93]

As Valabrègue puts it elsewhere, Fourcade juxtaposes major and minor modes, so that one complements the other: 'Il sait doser et mêler le majeur et le mineur, éclairer l'un par l'autre.'[94] This oscillation between contrastive registers and tones is often accentuated by the intrusion of an otherwise 'out of place' phrase, written in English, which creates the impression of a plurality of voice. In a passage cited above, the English phrase 'nice toe-work' disrupts the altogether more reflective tone of the surrounding passage, with its metapoetic reflections on writing and dance. Likewise, in a poem in *IL* that explores 'l'expérience de l'oubli' and the notion of a 'monde sans mot', the single line 'what's the rumpus' interjects with a bathetic effect (93). In *Xbo*, a self-reflexive passage that describes the decomposition of words ('Des terminaisons en d en eb en id en b', 'Des combinaisons azotées') is interrupted by the English phrase 'Type you stupid deb'. In each instance, the alternation of voice serves, as Pinson writes, to 'déjouer la menace de l'enflure', operating as a corrective to the introspective impulse of modern poetry.

Alongside identifying the sheer variation that characterises Fourcade's work, one way to explore how the poet attempts to 'transcrire simultanément la totalité des perceptions', is to demonstrate how he treats just one given subject. Many of his books take a primary motif, for example the titular pronoun in *IL* or the 'murmure' in *Son blanc du un*, and then

[93] Pinson, 'Citizen Do de Dominique Fourcade'.
[94] Valabrègue, 'Dominique Fourcade: "La page langue monde"', p. 717.

elaborate a multiplicity of perspectives around this pivotal word or phrase. The following analysis will explore how this 'transcription de différents plans en même temps' operates on a textual level, taking the rose of *Rose-déclic* as an example. As the hyphenated title suggests, the rose is first and foremost a catalyst or trigger for the text: an 'appareil propulseur' (*OU*, 10), an 'engin' or 'moteur' (*OU*, 15). In the text itself, the rose is described as a powerful and transformative 'catapulte' (35): 'rose cyclonique œil de la source puissance de l'o de cyclone' (37). It is the source of the poem's imagery, a point of origin from which the poem is generated: 'rose des comme et des comme et des ainsi que rose-déclic des comparaisons' (9). It brings with it a network of associations: auditory – 'bourdonnement de roseraie' (11), visual – 'rose blanche' (143), and haptic – 'rose velvet' (43), that are often interwoven into synaesthesic images: 'Rose / Blancheur au chant de rossignol' (11). The long history of the poetic symbolism of the flower, and the rose in particular, is evoked in the numerous references in *Rose-délic* to writers such as Ronsard, Stein, Rilke, and indeed Mallarmé ('[rose], tu es maintenant loin du bouquet', 91). Fourcade depicts the rose as a traditional trope in love poetry, in his use of sensual and sexual imagery, 'rose nuque' (81), 'rose […] nue sous ta jupe' (37), and by frequently apostrophising the rose as a female addressee. Elements of courtly love are evoked, from the rose garden setting (11), to the suggestion of unconsummated desire: 'rose tes lèvres ne doivent jamais venir sur les miennes' (37). Wordplay transforms 'rose' into the anagram 'éros' (163), which again maintains its traditional romantic symbolism, as well as evoking Desnos and Duchamp and the wordplay of 'Rrose Selavy' / 'Éros, c'est la vie'. No sooner are the more conventional aspects of the rose evoked, than they are quickly supplanted by more unusual images, 'rose blanche' becomes 'rose ligne noire' (143), and 'rose velvet' transforms into 'rose béton' (23). The motif of the rose mutates from one clashing, violent image to the next: 'Rose éclabousse d'urine' (9), 'Rose bombe à neutrons' (9), 'off-shore

rose' (153), 'Rose o yellow cab and whalesque' (177). The rose becomes a 'rose poumon' (49), breathing air and life into the poem: ''Rose ô colonne d'air structure du poème' (63). The sheer 'thingness' of the rose, as both a referent-object and a word-object, provides the poet with the delight in the irreducible materiality of the poem that Valabrègue describes above. This quiddity or 'thingness' is drawn out in the text through bilingual wordplay, 'Rosities rose it is rosités / Rose de la chosité' (17), which seems to illustrate its point as it describes it, evoking the 'thingness' of the rose while it highlights, through their decomposition in the poem, the material components of the words themselves.

As is true for all of Fourcade's texts with their various motifs and 'mots-pivots', Fourcade describes how the different permutations of the rose in *Rose-déclic* operate as 'des courants intérieurs au poème', producing a kind of 'flux' (71). The polysemy of the word 'courant' amalgamates four significant dimensions of Fourcade's work: firstly, taken in its broadest sense, it describes the varying speeds and rhythms of the movement of language within the poem, recalling again the parallel Fourcade draws between poetry and dance. Secondly, it evokes currents of water and resonates with Fourcade's description elsewhere of his own 'écriture alluvionnaire', whereby the poem, comprised of multiple textual currents, leaves behind a verbal, alluvial sediment.[95] Thirdly, it evokes 'électricité (*RD*, 73), where words are charged particles circulating in the flux of electrical currents in the 'moteur'-poem. And finally, it describes the 'courants d'air' that comprise not only the 'cyclone' of the text, but also the humble 'souffle' of language, that is punctuated, both in

[95] 'Je travaille à une écriture à la hauteur de mes perceptions: je perçois un corps d'alluvions et je pratique une écriture alluvionnaire…qui fait place à des mouvements et des densités multiples…' Fourcade, '"La langue en crue": Entretien avec Emmanuel Laugier', p. 46.

speaking out loud and reading or writing in silence, by the inhalation and exhalation of air.[96]

The rose therefore operates, as Game suggests, as 'a poetic rhizome'.[97] It is multidimensional – a material object, a word, an imagined addressee and a literary trope. A 'brutale rose de toutes les simultanéités' (*RD*, 9), it appeals to the different senses, provoking various visual, auditory, olfactory and haptic responses. In these rotations or gyrations around the pivot of the rose, we see how Fourcade's poetry involves, to return to Consenstein's phrase, a 'système de vision des peintres modernes'.[98] The desire to capture simultaneous and multiple perspectives, as well as different responses and reactions to an object, clearly resonates with the Cubist practices that Fourcade describes as having an important influence on his work.[99] In this respect, there are unsurprising parallels between Fourcade's poetry and that of Francis Ponge, the latter also being an art critic, who translated into a written medium the visual practices of artists such as Georges Braque.[100] Like Ponge's 'textes ouverts', with their rhizomatic, draft-like reworkings of a subject, Fourcade's poetry takes a pivotal word or object, exploring a series of possible ways to approach it, generating endless possible unfoldings and expansions in the text. Even where the poem must necessarily reach its end, within the practical constraints of the published 'livre de poésie', the generativity of the text means that the poem's end is but an artificial closure. Like the rhizome when it is severed, the text will continue to proliferate, if not in the poet's ongoing poetic project, then in the reading process that follows. As if to illustrate this ongoing generativity, the motif of the rose from *Rose-déclic* continues to

[96] In *Son blanc du un* Fourcade uses this metaphor again: '*Rose-déclic* est un livre techniquement sans murmure écrit avec douze sons j'ai seulement mis à plat la polyphonie il n'y avait pas à combattre l'éruptivité de ce poème mais à la faire venir sur un plan vertical d'air et le verso de l'air est blanc' (19).
[97] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 130.
[98] Consenstein, 'Le présent immédiat dans la poésie de Dominique Fourcade', p. 448.
[99] Royet-Journoud, 'Entretien avec Dominique Fourcade', pp. 18-29.
[100] See Shirley Ann Jordan, *The Art Criticism of Francis Ponge* (London: W.S. Maney, 1994) for a detailed study on this subject.

permeate the texts that follow; references to 'drumming' roses in *Son blanc du un*, to a 'rose of great sway' or a 'rose never idle' in *Xbo*, create a network that transcends the individual text.

By accentuating multiplicity, simultaneity, interconnectivity and heterogeneity, Fourcade's 'tout arrive' poetics align in several ways with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the rhizomatic nature of minor literature. Returning to the initial starting point of this chapter, we recall how Fourcade conceptualises his writing in terms of the different 'expériences', foreign and maternal, involved in literary and non-literary uses of language (*EJPPM*, 80). The minor quality of Fourcade's poetry rests, it appears to me, in the dual interpretation of this term 'expérience', which captures two principal and interrelated dimensions of his project. On the one hand, his poetry presents a series of *experiments*: foregrounding the essentially heterogeneous nature of language, favouring multiplicity and difference over the suppression of variation. A number of tensors serve to simultaneously highlight the norms of the major language that usually pass unnoticed, and to signal the divergence of his own poetic language from such norms. Polyphony, dialogic multilingual play, and the anthropomorphic voicing of language, disrupt a monologic mode of poetic discourse. The decomposition of language within the text, alongside the use of foreign words and neologisms, accentuates the materiality and musicality of words as bodies, subverting in turn the unmarked referential mode of normal communication. Agrammaticality and stuttered syntax rupture the underlying structuring principles of normative grammar. In each instance, Fourcade's use of language is deterritorialising, creating lines of flight by outlining the possibility of different linguistic modes, and with that, a different *experience* of language within the text. Throughout his writing, Fourcade foregrounds the various ways we experience language as a sensorial, psychological or affective phenomenon: he

describes the oppressive sensation of the rule-governed language of his education and upbringing, the 'angoisse' of writing, the comforting physicality of language reinstated within the human body. Set against this emphasis on linguistic experience, the reader is all the more aware of their own experience of the text. The experimental, minor quality of Fourcade's language means that this experience, however it manifests itself, is a marked one. Where writing may be intransitive in other ways, may face the eternal problem of the 'écart' between word and world, the fact that the text will prompt a novel experience of language for the reader enables a form of transitivity, a contact with the real, that Fourcade describes as so compelling:

> Une obsession majeure commande ce travail : être au contact du réel – une obsession, et toute l'angoisse d'un grand amour. Le réel, l'époque, le monde. Un désir fou un besoin fou de le toucher. […] Seule l'écriture. Le contact donc, la vérité de ce contact, et l'expérience de la connaissance qui est indissociable de l'écriture-contact – aspiration d'une vie d'écrivain.
>
> (*CD*, 15-6)

Chapter Three: Olivier Cadiot, 'la poésie par d'autres moyens'

Olivier Cadiot is often heralded as an important figure in contemporary poetry, which is perhaps surprising given that he only published one book under the straightforward designation of a 'livre de poésie'. This book, his first, is entitled *L'art poétic'* (1988) and is composed of cut-ups from grammar manuals. Its experimental redefinition of poetic genre has attracted much attention from critics and other poets. His second book, *Futur, ancien, fugitif* (1993), Cadiot calls a 'roman par poèmes'.[1] It marks the transition from his early poetry towards his later prose work: *Le Colonel des Zouaves* (1997), *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé* (2002), *Fairy queen* (2002), *Un nid pour quoi faire* (2007), *Un mage en été* (2010), and *Providence* (2014). Alongside his prose writing, characterised by its idiosyncratic, fast-paced and humorous style, Cadiot has written an opera, translated Gertrude Stein, and adapted his own texts for the stage. He has also collaborated with the French musician Rodolphe Burger, producing three albums with Dernière bande: *Welche; On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage* (2000), *Hôtel Robinson* (2002), and *Psychopharmaka* (2013). With Pierre Alferi, he co-founded and edited the *Revue de littérature générale* (1995, 1996), and in 2016 he published the first volume of his *Histoire de la littérature récente*. Given that Cadiot's prose writing forms the majority of his more recent literary output, it is understandable that this is what has attracted the most critical attention. However, in the chapter that follows, I will leave this aspect of Cadiot's work to one side in order to focus on his poetry. I aim to trace the development of his poetic project across three key moments: *L'art poétic'*, *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, and then his recent collaborations with Burger, *Welche*, *Hôtel Robinson*, and *Psychopharmaka*, which I argue see the extension of his earlier written poetry into a performed, auditory medium.

[1] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 3.

Of all three poets considered here, Cadiot's work is the most explicitly engaged with Deleuze's philosophy. As a young writer he attended Deleuze's lectures at Vincennes, and he frequently alludes to the influence of the philosopher on his own writing. This has led to a number of Deleuzian readings of Cadiot's work: in 'Le Monologue extérieur d'Olivier Cadiot', Jean Renaud traces the rhizome in Cadiot's prose writing; Jérôme Game's chapter in *Poetic Becomings*, 'Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self', and his article on 'La Répétition différenciante dans la poétique deleuzienne', explore the stutter and the ritournelle in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*.[2] The protagonist introduced in this latter text, who then reappears throughout Cadiot's subsequent novels, is the polymorphous, schizophrenic writing subject Robinson. Robinson in particular has attracted a number of Deleuzian readings, from Game, but also Alain Farah and Eric Lynch, who see him as an illustration of Deleuze's notion of the 'personnage conceptuel'.[3] Nathalie Wourm traces how Cadiot's Robinson owes more to Deleuze's reading of Robinson in 'Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui', than to Michel Tournier's or Daniel Defoe's original texts.[4] In the following chapter, I will draw on various aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of 'littérature mineure' to explore four key elements of Cadiot's poetic project: i) his use of cut-ups, sampling, and the ready-made; ii) the polyphonous, heteroglottic quality of his work; iii) the significance of dictionaries, grammar books and other reference works; and iv) the

[2] Jean Renaud, 'Le Monologue extérieur d'Olivier Cadiot', *Critique*, No. 677 (2003), pp. 763-75. Game, 'Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self' in *Poetic Becomings*, pp. 151 – 88. Game, 'La Répétition différenciante dans la poétique deleuzienne : bégaiement et ritournelle' in Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet (eds), *Deleuze et les écrivains*, pp. 401-20.
[3] Game, 'Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self', p. 187. Lynch, *Unidentified Verbal Objects,* pp. 149-58. Alain Farah, *La possibilité du choc: invention littéraire et résistance politique dans les oeuvres d'Olivier Cadiot et de Nathalie Quintane* (doctoral thesis, Ecole Normale Supérieure; Université du Québec à Montréal, 2009), pp. 207-8.
[4] Gilles Deleuze, 'Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui' in *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), Appendix 4. Nathalie Wourm, 'Non-readings, Misreadings, Unreadings: Deleuze and Cadiot on Robinson Crusoe and Capitalism' in James, T. Day (ed.) *Stealing the Fire: Adaptation, Appropriation, Plagiarism, Hoax in French and Francophone Literature and Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 177 -90.

parodic dimension of his poetry. Having used these four prominent features to outline some of the key issues at play, in the fifth and final section I explore broader questions that arise with regard to genre and the intersection of poetry, prose, theatre and music in Cadiot's work.

Cut-up, sampling and the ready-made

The ready-made plays a key role in Cadiot's poetic practice. His first book, *L'art poétic'*, presents a collage of cut-ups from grammar books, dictionaries, and other reference works, interspersed with citations from canonical writers. In *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, the protagonist Robinson is shipwrecked on an island, compelled to reconstruct himself out of the linguistic fragments of his previous existence that have washed up ashore with him: letters, etiquette manuals, and dinner party invitations. In Cadiot's later musical compositions, cut-ups are transposed into a phonic medium as pre-recorded samples. His albums present heteroglottic collages of music, the spoken word, ambient noise, sound effects, and samples from a whole range of sources: Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza, Kurt Schwitters at the Cabaret Voltaire, interviews with minority language speakers in Alsace.

Despite the long history of the ready-made in modern literature, outlined briefly in the first chapter, Cadiot describes how his initial use of cut-up in *L'art poétic'* was more an accidental discovery than a considered literary choice:

> [U]n jour, je tombe sur la *Grammaire générative* de Dubois. « Pierre est fatigué », « Pierre est malade », « Pierre a mal à la tête ». Je pleure, c'est cela que je veux faire, je veux avoir cette frappe-là. Tout à coup, je passe de l'autre côté du miroir. Je me retrouve tout petit face à la langue française. Et je me mets à faire des cut up sans le savoir. Je ne fais pas un geste néo-Burroughs, néo-Stein, néo-surréaliste. Je suis devenu moderne par erreur, par accident industriel. Et voilà que je passe quatre ou cinq ans à découper des milliers de livres au cutter. J'ai lacéré des Pléiade, j'ai saccagé des bibliothèques entières.[5]

[5] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 10.

In a recent interview with Nathalie Wourm, Cadiot repeats these reflections, emphasising how he felt *L'art poétic'* was misread by his critics:

> Je fais *L'Art poétic'* […]. Mais je le fais par des moyens lyrico-mécaniques, sans avoir l'impression d'être moderniste, comme un artisan. Le but n'était pas de faire du William Burroughs. C'est la grande différence avec les générations qui suivent : je n'étais pas préparé au moderne. Quand j'ai fait cela, je n'ai pas fait du cut up. J'ai accompli cela comme un enfant fait du collage. C'est pourquoi ce travail est très émotionnel. J'ai cherché des ritournelles, j'ai cherché le poétique collectif dans des phrases, et je l'ai fait plutôt avec les larmes aux yeux qu'avec un sourire vengeur.[6]

As Cadiot suggests, the use of grammar book cut-ups in *L'art poétic'* was not a defiant or ludic gesture inscribed in a lineage of modernist literature experimenting with the ready-made. His interest in the ready-made lay not in the dimension of chance or randomness involved in aleatory writing techniques, but rather in the discovery of a surprising and intrinsic lyricism embedded within existing language, and, subsequently, in the potential effects of displacing these fragments into poetry. In this respect, Cadiot's practices in *L'art poétic'* are more akin to Reznikoff's in *Testimony* and *Holocaust*, than to Dadaist collages or Burroughs and Gysin's cut-ups.[7] As Cadiot writes, having found emotion where he might least expect it, he then acted as an archaeologist, extracting it from its unlikely location: 'il ne s'agissait pas de coller ou réunir de force ou par le hasard des bouts de choses, je me comportais plus comme un archéologue qui enlève le sable autour des ossements avec un petit pinceau, le plus délicatement possible'.[8]

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[6] Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 28. The principal motivation behind the distinction Cadiot makes here between cut-up and collage appears to be his desire to distance himself from Burroughs's particular ready-made practices. Elsewhere, he uses the term 'cut-up' to describe his own practices. For a detailed study of the history of the ready-made, and the difference between different practices within this broader appellation, see Théval's *Poésies ready-made* (2015).

[7] See Chapter One for a more detailed discussion of the significance of these various experiments with the ready-made.

[8] Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.* Hocquard makes a similar remark in his introduction to *Tout le monde se ressemble.* He describes how the poets collected in the anthology (Cadiot included) manipulate linguistic fragments or 'énoncés', which are handled like 'un fragment de vase ou de fresque' on an archaeological dig (12). Cadiot and Hocquard had a mutual influence on each other,

As an 'archéologue' or an 'artisan', the poet sets about the construction of the poem 'par des moyens lyrico-mécaniques'. The cut-up lends itself particularly well to the pursuit of a 'mécanique lyrique', in so far as it captures the same duality of the latter term, generating texts that oscillate continuously between the personal and the impersonal, proximity and distance, depth and surface, meaninglessness and signification.[9] On the one hand, the cut-up permits an exaggerated distance between poet and the language of the poem, creating an impersonality or objectivity that traditional lyric poetry does not. It emphasises the surface, producing what Prigent calls 'poésie « faciale », sans rêve de profondeur ni bouclage sur du « secret »'.[10] This 'poésie faciale' is primarily concerned with its own linguistic materiality, and is typically resistant to deeper meaning or signification. On the other hand, it offers the possibility of a renewed proximity; Cadiot writes that the cut-up is 'd'abord une opération de « neutralisation » de la langue, de remise à plat. […] Une distance devient possible, et une nouvelle proximité'. [11] Elsewhere he states that in *L'art poétic'*: 'L'enjeu était finalement de **produire du lyrisme par d'autres moyens,** de dépasser les oppositions traditionnelles entre forme et fond, émotion et concept… J'avais besoin de me recréer un territoire de poésie neuf.'[12] Echoing his earlier essay with Alferi in the *Revue*, Cadiot describes here the quest to replace a traditional conception of lyricism with a novel one, constructed as an artisanal object comprised from 'des boules de sensations-pensées-formes' inherent in language.[13] This 'mécanique lyrique' constructs a

particularly with regard to their use of ready-made, as Eric Lynch discusses in *Unidentified Verbal Objects* (2016). The section 'Anacoluthe' in *L'art poétic'* is dedicated to Hocquard.

[9] Théval considers the relationship between the ready-made and the 'mécanique lyrique' in depth in Part III of *Poésies ready-made*, pp. 199-223.

[10] Prigent, *Salut les anciens*, p. 53.

[11] Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 14.

[12] Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.*

[13] Alferi and Cadiot, 'La Mécanique lyrique', p. 4. Although producing a significantly different form of poetry, we note the similarity here to Fourcade's emphasis on the poem as film or theatre, where the poet's voice is replaced by the voices of language itself. While arriving at the same idea via different means, it is

platform in the poem whereupon the nascent energy in words can produce resonant, affective responses in the encounter between reader and text.

To explore how such an idea might work in practice, the following analysis will consider an extract from the beginning of *L'art poétic'*:

> Je vois Pierre – Je vois qu'il est là
> Ta robe bleue. C'est ta robe bleue. Ta robe est bleue
> Leur amour grandit face à : Il grandit les difficultés
> admirablement belle
> bien trop peu, bien peu, trop peu, bien trop
> ah ! oh !
> brrr !
> Viens là à côté de moi
> Songe, / songe, / Céphi // se à cette nuit / cruelle
> (dire, raconter, penser, croire…)
> Viens que je te parle
> Aussi est-il venu
> Je l'ai vu depuis le balcon (du balcon)
> en hiver, en été, en automne
> (16-7)

The reader is made aware that the passage is composed of a number of cut-ups; some from grammar books, others presumably from textbooks on poetic versification ('Songe, /

this meeting point that sees poets like Fourcade assembled together with the likes of Cadiot, Alferi, Hocquard and Reznikoff in the *Revue*.

songe, / Céphi // se').[14] Certain phrases recall the most conventional textbook examples ('Ta robe bleue. C'est ta robe bleue.'), and the appearance of 'Pierre', the archetypical grammar book protagonist, reinforces the reader's awareness of the origins of these linguistic fragments. As a result, we read the passage with a heightened consciousness of the formal properties of the words in front of us – their grammatical categories, their syllabic structure, and so on. We subsequently engage in an unconventional mode of reading: we are prompted to focus on the signifiers not the signifieds, and so resist the desire to make sense of the passage. The extract begins with a number of declarative, descriptive sentences which reinforce the apparent objectivity and neutrality of the language it presents. However, if there is an initial attempt to depict a form of language that is neutral or flat, something akin to what we might expect to find in dictionaries and grammar books, this attempt soon performs its own failure. Declarative phrases are intercut with exclamations, 'ah! oh!', which resist this 'neutralisation', by alluding to some form of affective response. Furthermore, the possibility of a neutral linguistic mode is quickly dismantled by the encounter between the reader and the text; language is embedded with traces of residual meaning, and any given reader approaches the poem carrying the baggage of all their previous linguistic and literary experiences, so the passage cannot help but prompt the possibility of further, deeper signification. Thus, we find ourselves constructing a rudimentary narrative, trying to piece together an ensemble of characters (a 'je', a 'toi', a 'Pierre'), tracing the motif of a developing romance, growing difficulties and a 'nuit cruelle', set against the passing seasons. The 'balcon' of the penultimate line, which conjures, perhaps, a distant allusion to Baudelaire and his mistress, might offer a number of possible metaphorical readings – the balcony as a liminal place, suspended between the domestic interior and the outside world, the balcony as a place of

[14] This line is from Racine's *Andromaque*, although the notation suggests it is an example given in a versification textbook.

observation, and so on. Likewise, the line '(dire, raconter, penser, croire…)', while very likely a cut-up from a grammar exercise book, might now be read as a metapoetic comment on the processes at work in the writing or reading of the text. The very fact that the cut-ups are relocated to the literary space of the poem amplifies the possible resonances of the words in the passage; the reader brings to the text their expectations about the operation of poetic language, with its propensity for metaphor, self-reflexivity or semantic density. A whole range of possible literary and non-literary resonances arise, with different, idiosyncratic configurations for each reader, but, significantly, where possible resonances arise, they never evolve into anything more than a hint or glimmer of possible signification. No authoritative, comprehensive meaning is sustained over more than a handful of phrases. The text continuously resists interpretation just as quickly as it invites it, no sooner is one meaning conjured up than another takes its place. This constant oscillation produces in turn a distinctive, vacillating movement or rhythm in the reading process. Given the cut-ups in the poem are short, single-clause sentences or phrases, semantically unrelated to one another, and not combining to form one complete, comprehensive narrative, meaning is therefore constructed in isolated sentential or phrasal units, rather than across larger chunks of text. Heightened by the juxtaposition of different tones, styles and registers, Cadiot creates a fast-paced reading experience, where the reader moves quickly from one fragment to the next, resisting the attempt to read meaningful connections between lines.[15]

[15] The speed of Cadiot's texts has been discussed at length by a number of scholars, particularly in relation to his subsequent prose writing. Michel Gauthier, *Olivier Cadiot, le facteur vitesse* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2004), section 2.1. 'Mouvement' in Anne Woelfel, *Le Système Cadiot: l'hétérogène dans le champ de l'expérience* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, 2014). Game, *Poetic Becomings*, pp. 168-70. In their various analyses, the speed of Cadiot's prose is often seen as the importing of something 'poetic' into a novelistic genre. See, for example, Farah, *Le Gala des incomparables*, p. 97. The relevance of speed, particularly rhythm and movement, will be discussed in due course.

One of the dominant motifs in *L'art poétic'*, apparent in the passage above, is the tension between the individual and collective, and the personal and impersonal dimensions of language. Reinforcing the impersonal nature of isolated phrases such as 'Viens que je te parle', and 'Aussi est-il venu', throughout the text Cadiot makes use of the most semantically empty lexical fields. Discussing this dimension of Cadiot's work, Lia Kurts writes:

> Dans les exercices grammaticaux tirés de manuels scolaires que l'auteur cite […], le fort degré de banalité sémantique des phrases les rend « transparentes » d'un point de vue dénotatif et référentiel : dans les énoncés d'origine, le lexique est peu polysémique, non connoté, le niveau de langue est non marqué et peu subjectif. […] Ce qui est « neutre » dans ce cas, c'est donc le niveau locutoire de l'énoncé premier, qui permet de mettre spécifiquement l'accent sur le niveau illocutoire, c'est-à-dire sur l'acte d'enseignement, l'acte de transmission de compétences grammaticales, de focalisation et d'insistance sur une difficulté grammaticale dont la visibilité est justement garantie par l'absence de toute originalité sémantique. Le champ lexical de la météorologie, largement présent, constitue à cet égard un signal de la banalité, une forme d'emblème du lieu commun, au sens courant du terme : « Il pleut. Il fait beau »[16]

Kurts develops a convincing argument that the theme of 'transparence' reappears throughout *L'art poétic'* – from the X-ray on the back cover, to the motif of water, and the purposefully mundane quotations from canonical authors. Through the frequent use of clichés and banalities, Cadiot is stressing the impersonal, communal origins of the cut-ups, which come from linguistic reference works that explicitly resist subjectivity and attempt to occupy an objective space in language. However, this impersonality constitutes just one half of Cadiot's enterprise, as Alain Bideau observes:

> Olivier Cadiot travaille une langue minimale, l'état moindre du langage commun dans sa circulation courante, la platitude, la banalité, le cliché, le poncif. Tout est dans la mise en rapport de cet extrême. La juxtaposition, l'accumulation du banal sur le banal créent un double effet. Une impersonnalisation, un manque du sujet

[16] Lia Kurts, 'Olivier Cadiot ou La Poétique des objets trouvés', in Laurence Bougault and Judith Wulf (eds), *Formes et normes en poésie moderne et contemporaine* (2011) <http://www.styl-m.org/pdf/Bougault_WulfFORMESETNORMES.pdf> [accessed 22 June 2017], pp. 35-6. I would add to this that meteorological expressions often involve impersonal verbs ('il fait beau', 'il pleut', 'il y a du vent'), which represent heightened examples of a form of subjectless, impersonal language.

> écrivant, un reste de rudiments primitifs du lexique et de la syntaxe, laissant comme une matière brute, un réduit, un résidu, originels et premiers. Dans le même temps, le travail est tel qu'il produit un lyrisme total, absolument nouveau, singulièrement clair et fascinant.[17]

Bideau describes here how even the most impersonal language can be inflected with a highly personal, lyrical intonation. As Prigent suggests: 'la grammaire de Cadiot fait du personnel avec de l'impersonnel'.[18] Cadiot himself describes this enterprise, outlining how his interest in the cut-up lay in the possibility of 'trouver des choses personnelles au fond de la langue morte'.[19] He states:

> Dans *L'art poétic'*, j'expérimentais d'une certaine manière le « je ». Paradoxe : j'y étais dans un « on » complètement usé, celui des exemples de grammaire, des vieux proverbes, de ces bouts du bout de la langue, saisie au moment où elle est tellement collective qu'elle en est morte. Or cette langue devenue morte est à tout le monde. C'est *l'autobiographie de tout le monde*. Quand on est dans ce « on »-là, à un moment donné, on est très proche du « je ». *L'art poétic'* a donc l'air aussi impersonnel que possible, mais au fond, j'y fais une autobiographie déguisée.[20]

Here Cadiot evokes the significance of pronouns, their dual status as both an impersonal or universal space, and the locus onto which the personal is projected, where, in ordinary language, our affective lives are anchored. He nuances the idea of a monodirectional process whereby the impersonal is reanimated and made personal, and instead describes the sustained duality of *L'art poétic'*, where every instance of language use, every 'je' or 'on', oscillates continuously between the personal and the impersonal. The paradox of describing *L'art poétic'* as 'l'autobiographie de tout le monde' captures this dualistic quality, not simply of the text itself, but of the language system as a whole, which is simultaneously collective and individual, impersonal and personal.[21]

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[17] Alain Bideau, 'Cadiot : une aventure extraordinaire / une extraordinaire aventure', *TXT*, No. 24 (1989), p. 66.
[18] Christian Prigent, *Ceux qui merdRent* (Paris: P.O.L., 1991), p. 252.
[19] Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 21.
[20] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 13.
[21] Cadiot's phrase echoes both Roubaud ('La poésie est autobiographie de tout le monde. La poésie est autobiographie de personne'), and the French translation of Stein's *Everybody's autobiography*. Jacques Roubaud, *Poésie, etcetera : ménage* (Paris: Stock, 1995), pp. 106-7. Gertrude Stein, *Autobiographie de tout le monde*, trans. Marie-France de Paloméra (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

On a textual level, in any given phrase both poles of a neutral 'écriture plate' and a dynamic lyric mode are activated. For instance, the characters that appear in *L'art poétic'* – 'Pierre', 'Peter', 'Bill', 'Paul' – are all common male names that might be used as default examples in a grammar book, and thus represent a certain impersonality. In the phrase 'Pierre se tue' (58), 'Pierre' is both the empty, prototypical name from a grammar example, a monodimensional signifier or 'nobody' with no referent, but also the book's protagonist who gains depth over the course of the text, and an 'everyman', a blank space that the reader might project themselves into. Significantly, many of these names appear in the aptly-named section 'Invented Lives', which evokes the possibility of re-motivating the space of these otherwise empty signifiers, breathing new life into them. As with the entirety of *L'art poétic'*, 'Pierre se tue' can be read on two levels: firstly, it can be read with a focus on the signifier, on the grammatical functioning of the sentence itself, as an exercise book cut-up, an example of a reflexive verb where Pierre is both the subject and object of the action. Secondly, it can be read with a focus on the signified, as a dramatic turn of events for our protagonist, who, it would seem, leads a rather tragic life: 'Paul est malade et Pierre l'est aussi' (57), 'Paul accable Pierre / des ennuis accablent Pierre' (61), 'Pierre se tue dans un accident' (58).

Lyricism in *L'art poétic'* is therefore not the poet's subjective expression anchored in a 'je lyrique', but rather the possibility of lyricism constructed through the encounter between reader and textual object. This distinction is captured in the epigraph to the section 'The Tempest', which is composed of the grammar cut-up 'sujet –> objet' (177). As Anna Boschetti writes, this new lyric mode requires the complicity of the reader: '[*L'art poétic*'] ne peut prendre un sens que pour un lecteur complice, disposé à réactiver les connotations

que sa compétence linguistique et son expérience lui permettent d'associer à ces matériaux'.[22] Thus, as Prigent suggests, 'Une sorte de lyrisme en creux renaît alors sur l'impersonnalisation affectée de l'auteur, un lyrisme à la fois désabusé et allègre qui, comme l'a bien noté Alain Bideau, nous renvoie sans cesse, à force de faire dans l'archétype, « à nous-mêmes, à nos troubles et à nos manques, à nos amours ».'[23]

There is, of course, an editorial process behind the construction of an 'objet lyrico-mécanique'. The poet does not disappear entirely, and, as Cadiot suggests in interviews, the cut-ups he chooses are often selected precisely so as to prompt an affective response from the reader.[24] For example, in the following extract from the section 'futur, ancien, fugitif' of *L'art poétic'*, Cadiot's choice of passage is clearly motivated by its readiness to suggest greater signification or symbolism:

> tous les corps lumineux que l'on voit dans le ciel sont les astres que nous ne voyons que la nuit et qui nous paraissent très petits l'astre qui nous éclaire pendant le jour est
> (119)

Including a passage of such cosmic proportions is not accidental. The evocation of 'astres' and 'ciel', 'jour' and 'nuit', some of the most primal, universal symbols, gestures towards the long history of imagery of the natural world, celestial bodies and diurnal rhythms in poetry (particularly lyric poetry). In another example, 'venir au monde, c'est perdre la vie, c'est devenir *grand*, c'est devenir *vieux*, c'est ' (*AP*, 119), while we can read the passage as a further textbook example and fill in the blanks accordingly, these pregnant

[22] Anna Boschetti, 'Le formalisme réaliste d'Olivier Cadiot : une réponse à la question des possibles et du rôle de la recherche littéraire aujourd'hui' in Eveline Pinto (ed.), *L'écrivain, le savant et le philosophe* (Paris: Sorbonne, 2003), p. 241.
[23] Prigent, *Ceux qui merdRent,* p. 252.
[24] '[U]n jour, je tombe sur la *Grammaire générative* de Dubois. […] Je pleure, c'est cela que je veux faire, je veux avoir cette frappe-là' in Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 10. 'J'ai cherché des ritournelles, j'ai cherché le poétique collectif dans des phrases' in Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 28.

spaces also evoke the vast swathes of literary, philosophical and theological thought that have attempted to make sense of birth, death, and the passage of time, and to provide answers to these existential questions. There is a playful mocking of the overly simplistic way that textbooks might assume right or wrong answers to such boundless questions, which in turn ties back in to Deleuze's assertion that major structures, such as tyrannical regimes of thought or language, superimpose a lack of nuance that doesn't adequately reflect the inherent variation and complexity of reality.

In Cadiot's use of cut-ups, we find a significant reworking of poetic voice that challenges in turn Bakhtin's analysis of the monoglossia of poetry. Although there is an editorial process of selection and assemblage, the cut-ups in *L'art poétic'* nonetheless allow for the juxtaposition of multiple voices that are clearly distinct from that of the poet. When the compositional techniques of *L'art poétic'* are translated into the sampling procedures in *Welche*, *Hôtel Robinson* and *Psychopharmaka*, which collage recordings of other people speaking – Deleuze, Henry Miller, native Welche speakers, and so on – this idea is made all the more apparent. Instead of being the direct expression of the poet, in *L'art poétic'* we find the disembodied voice of language itself. In *Un privé à Tanger*, Hocquard points out that in Cadiot's work, we witness a kind of 'prosopopée' of language: '[la] vacance d'un sujet qui écrit produit, à partir de choses pourtant familières, l'impression très étrange que c'est quelque chose comme la langue qui parle'.[25] Cut-ups enable the poet to make objects out of the language(s) of the other, and consequently to create what Bakhtin describes as 'dialogized system[s] made up of the images of "languages", styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language' (*DI*, 49). In Cadiot's work, this heteroglottic, dialogic system of languages is embodied in the image of the poem as a

[25] Emmanuel Hocquard, *Un privé à Tanger* (Paris: P.O.L., 1987), p. 213.

composite form, a sort of linguistic Frankenstein's monster. This motif is a significant one in criticism on contemporary poetry, appearing, for example, in Prigent's recent book of critical essays, *La Langue et ses monstres*, and in Cadiot and Alferi's essay 'La Mécanique lyrique'.[26] In the following passage, Xavier Person examines the surgical procedure at work in Cadiot's writing:

> Le geste est précis, chirurgical. Un morceau de chair morte se verrait amoureusement découpée, puis recousue sur un organisme vivant, rajeuni dès lors (l'image est d'Olivier Cadiot). Redisposés sur la page, les énoncés prennent une nouvelle dimension, se font écho d'une manière inattendue, dégageant des nouvelles zones de significations, de sensations.[27]

The image of a clinical operation, of the transplanting or grafting of flesh, ties into a number of issues outlined in 'La Mécanique lyrique', such as the poem as a constructed artefact, and the emphasis on the poem's materiality, on its skin or surface. The Frankenstein image aptly captures how inanimate linguistic parts are assembled to create a living, breathing poetic organism, thus tying in with Hocquard's notion of the prosopopoeia of language in Cadiot's work, and with the notion at the heart of 'La Mécanique lyrique', where the lyric force of the poem lies not in the poet who speaks, but in language itself. Tantamount to Frankenstein's famous exclamation 'It's alive!', Cadiot describes how the grammar book cut-ups in *L'art poétic'* assemble a surprisingly animate text: 'C'est en utilisant des exemples de grammaire que ça a été le plus simple. Loin de la littérature, ces petits bouts de langue morte étaient de l'énergie pure.'[28]

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[26] The image is hardly a new one, and was significant for a number of writers who were instrumental in shaping Cadiot's generation of poets. Cendrars's *Kodak*, for example, used cut-ups from Gustave Le Rouge's *Le Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius,* a novel about a criminal cosmetic surgeon, nicknamed 'le sculpteur de chair humaine'. The thematic content of the source text resonates with the formal technique of the cut-up poem. See the chapter 'Blaise Cendrars' in Robert Sabatier, *La poésie du XXe siècle. Tome II* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982), pp. 69-95. More recently, in Bernard Heidsieck's *Biopsies*, scraps of everyday language are recorded and collected by the sound poet, just as samples of human tissue are procured by the clinician. Elsewhere, Christophe Wall-Romana discusses Jean-Marie Gleize's post-poetry, extending the Frankenstein image to explore Gleize's 'anti-poetic corpse/corpus'. Wall-Romana, 'Is "postpoetry" still poetry?', p. 443.
[27] Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 14.
[28] Jean-Michel Espitallier and Jacques Sivan (eds), 'Olivier Cadiot', *Java,* No. 13 (1995), p. 61.

L'art poétic' emphasises the monstrous, composite nature of its own creation; various linguistic scraps are sewn together – different styles, registers and forms. The result is a discordant whole where the different parts are animated by their dialogue with each other. On a stylistic level, this is reinforced by its non-systematic use of typography. Take, for example, the use of literary citation: quotations in English retain their quotation marks, and quotations in French their 'guillemets'. Some are capitalised, others italicised, and font sizes vary, all according to their original typography. There is no cohesive editorial process of formatting or editing, no removal of the stitches of these linguistic 'greffes', so the marked typography draws attention to the disparate parts. In *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, Cadiot extends many of the same features of *L'art poétic'* – linguistic heterogeneity, collage and 'greffes' – but the conception of the poem-monster is incarnated in the protagonist himself, Robinson. In the first two sections of *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* 'Le naufrage' and 'L'île', Robinson finds himself shipwrecked on an island, reconstructing himself from the linguistic fragments of his life before the wreckage. He composes himself out of these scraps of his prior existence, like a self-assembling Frankenstein's monster, a self-constructing machine or 'auto-usine' as Cadiot puts it.[29] Despite the obvious link to Defoe's Robinson, Cadiot is keen to stress that his interest lies in Robinson's 'méthode' and not his 'solitude ni son île'.[30] For Cadiot, what makes the Robinson figure so appealing, and one of the reasons why he reappears in so many of his subsequent novels, is that, as the poet writes, 'A chaque livre, je pars avec lui de zéro'.[31] To use the title to the fourth and final section of *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* Robinson represents a 'zero-sum', a blank

[29] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 3. For a detailed consideration of this subject see Eric Lynch, 'Olivier Cadiot's Robinson, or A Portrait of the Artist as "Auto-usine"', *L'Esprit Créateur*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2014), pp. 86-99, as well as the chapter on Cadiot in his thesis, *Unidentified Verbal Objects.*
[30] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 3.
[31] Ibid., p. 4.

space latent with possibility, and equipped with a 'caisse à outils' to self-construct. In such a way, Robinson is also a highly Deleuzian figure of potential becoming, as the repeated phrase 'QU'EST-CE QUE TU VAS DEVENIR' (*FAF,* 201) reminds us when it reappears throughout *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, often capitalised so as to highlight its significance. Indeed, we might read Robinson as a figure of the poet himself: a craftsman, starting from scratch, rebuilding in language. After the shipwreck of poetry prompted by writers like Stéphane Mallarmé or Denis Roche, the young poet is left assessing what remains after the wreckage, what can be salvaged, and what can be rebuilt.

Polyphony/heteroglossia

Building on these previous reflections, the following section will explore the proliferation of different languages, styles and linguistic forms in Cadiot's work, looking at how he assembles dialogic systems of different 'images of languages'. It will explore how polyphony and heteroglossia appear in each of the three stages of Cadiot's poetic project, before attempting to address some of the overarching issues that arise from it. Composed of literary citations, dictionary entries, grammar book examples, and extracts from encyclopaedias, *L'art poétic'* draws on a number of different national languages: French, English, Italian and Latin. This multilingual dimension of Cadiot's work extends into *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* with its frequent use of English and occasional Latin and German, and is particularly salient in *Welche, Hôtel Robinson* and *Psychopharmaka* which use French, English and German, alongside the regional dialect Welche and a Breton dialect from L'Île de Batz. As we saw in the previous chapter on Dominique Fourcade, multilingualism in contemporary poetry often forms part of a broader exploration of the conceptual notion of a 'foreign' mode of poetic language, with actual foreign language operating as a marker of radical linguistic 'otherness'. In Cadiot's work, the foreign and the minor (in the Deleuzian sense of the term), are connected in his exploration of minority

languages and 'langues en voie de disparition'. I discuss this in greater depth in relation to *Welche,* but in *L'art poétic'* we see the seeds of this later theme, namely in the epigraph to the section 'the West of England'. The 'exergue' contains a poem, written in English, composed out of cut-ups from the *Life of Kate Crozier,* a text originally written in Hualapai, an endangered Native American language, as an act of language conservation/preservation. The original text, dictated by a Hualapai elder Kate Crozier, recounts the arrival of white colonialists and the often violent imposition of their own language on the native Hualapai people. The symbolism of the text, now presented in 'the white man's language' (*AP,* 129) is self-explanatory. Just as Bakhtin and Deleuze develop their discussion of heteroglossia and minor literature via specific historical examples from distinct sociolinguistic situations, so too Cadiot announces a broader exploration of literature and language and their major and minor axes through these distinctly political instances of major national languages being imposed upon minority language speakers.

In *Futur, ancien, fugitif* Cadiot experiments with voice through his elaboration of the polyphonous figure of Robinson, which gives Dominique Rabaté the title of his essay 'Polyphonie de solitaire: le Robinson d'Olivier Cadiot'.[32] As Cadiot writes, 'rempli du langage des autres', Robinson is the 'porte-voix de plein de langues'; he functions as 'an empty site for the performance of the heterogeneous language of the contemporary world', as Lynch suggests.[33] Compared to *L'art poétic'*, in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* there is a greater focus on intra-linguistic heteroglossia: the internal variation of one particular national language. Thus, the text contains a multitude of different forms, what Game describes as a

[32] Dominique Rabaté, 'Polyphonie du solitaire: le Robinson d'Olivier Cadiot' in Matteo Majorano (ed.), *Nuove solitudini. Mutamenti delle relazioni nell'ultima narrativa francese* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), pp. 83-97.
[33] Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.* Lynch, *Unidentified Verbal Objects*, p. 35.

'pluralités de styles : lettres, journal, calendrier, listes, catalogues, rêves, traductions, résumés, exercices de lecture, élocutions poétiques, devinettes, cut-ups de livres d'écoles, imitations de romans réalistes'.[34] Written communication, in the form of extracts from letters and party invitations, is juxtaposed with spoken language, which is alluded to in both the play on phonetic transcription, '[inaudible]' (*FAF,* 9), '<ouf>' (11), and in the pervasive interjection of exclamations: 'ah!', 'eh!', 'oh!', 'Aïe!', and 'Ouf!'. These exclamations, gasps of delight and cries of disbelief, are prime examples of how the attempt to encode spoken language in written texts can lose much of the original, expressive effect, in turn appearing highly codified and contrived.[35] They operate as reminders of the moments in everyday speech when language is insufficient and the non-linguistic, or para-linguistic, takes over. Appearing throughout Cadiot's oeuvre, these exclamations form part of a broader exploration of a Deleuzian 'au-delà de la langue' or an Artaudian passage towards the 'cris'. A number of features of Cadiot's work draw attention to non-linguistic modes of expression and communication: for example, in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, we find theatrical and musical stage instructions, '[piano]' (106), '[chanté]' (206), which contribute towards an overall impression that this early volume anticipates the passage in Cadiot's work from the written to the performed. In the section 'La Dame du Lac' in *L'art poétic'*, hand-drawn staves and musical notation accompany choreographic directions. In the section 'the West of England', each page contains a large grey square composed of black dots, as if evoking a once present, now absent image. The anatomical diagram on the back cover announces the distorted, disfigured language of the text itself.

[34] Game, 'La Répétition différenciante', p. 409.
[35] For an expanded discussion of the codification of non-linguistic or non-verbal sound, see Steven Connor, *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters and Other Vocalizations* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014).

In *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, and later in *Hôtel Robinson* and *Psychopharmaka*, the theme of animal language and bird song represents a further exploration of an 'au-delà de la langue'.[36] As we saw with Fourcade, for Cadiot animal communication presents a counterpart to human language, a further form of minor language that an anthropocentric perspective relegates to an inferior form of communication or expression. Jérôme Game explores this same idea in his discussion of the 'devenir-oiseau' at work in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. He writes: 'Le devenir-oiseau est ici une déterritoralisation réciproque entre l'homme et l'oiseau'.[37] In *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* bird song is transcribed into roman alphabet:

> ff-fff-fff
> [soir]
>
> Les oiseaux en spirale le bord de les plaines de
> les oiseaux massés au bord de spirale ruisseaux etc.
> tonitruants piiii ⇒ liri-liii
> (réponse à tout au bord de)
>
> takatss-takatss
> [nuit]
>
> (*FAF,* 32)

The passage, with its poor approximations of bird song, 'ff-fff-fff', 'piii', 'takatss', appears to exaggerate its own failure to transcribe animal noises in order to highlight their resolute resistance to being translated into human language. In such a way, bird song is represented as impenetrable, incomprehensible to the human ear, an assemblage of sounds that elude linguistic representation. It exists for us as music without meaning, or pure signifier.

Cadiot also explores babbling and child language in his experiments with the limits of linguistic expression. In a passage that recalls the previous discussion of Fourcade and

[36] Evoking Dadaist experiments with para- and non-linguistic sound, samples of horses neighing and birds singing intercut the verbal collages in these albums.
[37] Game, 'La Répétition différenciante', p. 416.

'babil enfantin', Robinson describes a 'souvenir très ancien', made up of child-oriented, spoken language:

> Oh le bébé à sa maman
> Oh le bébé qu'il est gentil oh le bébé
> ça c'est un bébé ça c'est un bébé ça c'est un bébé
>
> […]
> c'est mon bébé
> c'est mon bébé
>
> [ad lib.]
>
> (*FAF,* 40-1)

This child-oriented speech, with its grammatical reworkings and repetitions, appears in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* but is also found in *Hôtel Robinson,* for example in 'Cheval-mouvement': 'What's in the box? Can you open it? Can you open it? The box? Well Mummy's gonna see what's in it'.[38] In recent linguistic research, a key theory of why adults talk to children in this way is that it enables the child's acquisition of grammatical constructions and word order.[39] This mode of communication parallels both experimental modernist literature, such as the grammatical ritournelles of Gertrude Stein, and the generation of 'poètes-grammairiens', to which Cadiot belongs, in so far as, in each instance, emphasis is placed on the structural functioning of language, the signifier and its grammatical category, rather than on the transfer of semantic information. In the section of *Futur, ancien, fugitif* entitled 'LES PREMIÈRES PAROLES DE ROBINSON' (20), the focus is on an earlier stage of language acquisition – babbling. Strings of letters, 'Vo ro jo botopolodo' (20), enact the reconstruction of Robinson from his linguistic past, with these

[38] Like many of the lyrics in the later albums, this 'what's in the box?' passage is actually found earlier on, in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. In the text it appears under the title 'souvenir très ancien II', as part of a longer passage that seems to be a cut-up from a linguistic transcript depicting a conversation between 'Mommy' and a young child 'S.' (*FAF*, 135-7). This transcript is akin to the transcripts syntacticians and child development specialists study in order to explore the acquisition of language, and how child-oriented speech facilitates its development.

[39] See, for example, Matthew Saxton, *Child Language: Acquisition and Development* (Los Angeles, California; London: SAGE, 2010).

'premières paroles' referring to both his first words as a child, and his first words uttered on the island. Babbling reappears in the song 'Da da da' in *Psychopharmaka* which, while clearly a reference to Dada, is also using the typical strings of consonant-vowel clusters that children start to produce in early infancy.[40] It is also present in the samples of Kurt Schwitters's glossolalic performances at the Cabaret Voltaire in 'Dadasophe'. Linguists suggest that child babbling represents a pre-verbal, pre-semantic developmental stage in speech production where children begin to exercise their vocal tracts and start to produce the physical shapes and sounds of speech. The emphasis is again on the material signifier, rather than on the meaning. When asked about 'le babil' Cadiot replied: 'Oui. C'est un motif, encore une fois, dans la mesure où cela me permet de faire les premières paroles de Robinson. De faire entrer le babil. Parce que la poésie a à voir avec cela'.[41] The reason why 'le babil' is so significant in Cadiot's work (as it is, in different ways, for both Fourcade and Tarkos) is because it occupies a double position. It is the point at which language stops being language and becomes something non-linguistic or non-verbal. Simultaneously, just as in childhood development it represents the point at which language begins to emerge and develop, so too in literature it has, at least historically, offered a departure from the 'régime de sens' in the development of an experimental, new mode of expression.[42] Babble understood as a pre-verbal developmental stage that consolidates the building blocks of a language to come, provides an apt metaphor for the development of Cadiot's own poetry. Like the infant, so too the poet tentatively explores the possibilities of the tools in his poetic 'caisse à outils'. He experiments with linguistic decomposition,

[40] It is also a reprise of the song 'Da da da' by the German synthpop band, Trio.
[41] Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 20.
[42] In his discussion of glossolalia, which considers infant babbling as well as other forms of glossolalic 'utopies vocales', Michel de Certeau also describes this dual status: 'En chaque glossolalie se combinent d'ailleurs quelque chose de pré-langagier, relatif à une origine silencieuse ou à l'« attaque » de la parole, et quelque chose de post-langagier, fait d'excès, de débordements ou de déchets de langue'. Michel de Certeau, 'Utopies vocales: Glossolalies', *Traverses*, Vol. 20 (1980), pp. 26-37 (p. 30).

the cut-up, heteroglossia, polyphony, assembling a number of procedures and techniques that constitute the foundation of an 'art poétic'' to come.[43]

Moving from the most elementary, innate forms of language to the most ritualised, *Futur, ancien, fugitif* also explores the highly codified practices of phatic language and social convention. In the first section of the book, 'Le naufrage', phatic speech is pervasive, often pushed to its extreme in parodic passages such as the following:

> Ah mon cher
> Cher Monsieur
> C'est avec plaisir que
> Eh bien recevez acceptez croyez cher Monsieur,
> à mon meilleur souvenir […]
> Votre si dévoué fidèle entièrement à vous
> votre ami –
>
> (*FAF*, 10-11)

This passage, which recalls Heidsieck's 'Biopsie 6 : Stratimelo' (with its repetitions of the 'formules de politesse' used at the beginnings and ends of letters), pokes fun at phatic language.[44] The excessive accumulation of pleasantries undermines the sincerity of what is being expressed, rendering the expressions themselves semantically null. This semantic emptying takes place throughout *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* and is perhaps best exemplified in the following passage, which forms the opening lines of the book:

> *Mr. et Mrs. ****
> *auraient la joie de recevoir*
> ----------
> *pour le dîner*
> *du* ……..
>
> (*FAF,* 9)

[43] An interesting figure in this regard is Giorgio Agamben, who connects the transition from the non-linguistic state of infancy (etymologically 'in-fans', 'unable to speak') to the acquisition of language in childhood, with the development of subjectivity and coming into being, that can only happen within language. Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993). The relationship between child language or babble and poetry has been explored by a number of writers, among which Agamben, Kristeva, Herder and more recently Steven Connor. See Nowell Smith, *On Voice in Poetry*, pp. 23-34 for a good account of these approaches.

[44] Heidsieck, *Biopsies,* [CD].

This extract constitutes one of the many linguistic fragments that Robinson has salvaged from the shipwreck. By leaving the blanks incomplete, Cadiot accentuates the phatic quality of ritualised language use; the overt sentimentality of the fixed expression 'avoir la joie de recevoir' is undermined by its depersonalisation – it has no expressed subject and no expressed object. In these passages, we might read a broader comment on the iterative nature of the linguistic system, and on the tension between the communal, impersonal nature of language and the highly individual nature of each given instance of speech. In the context of *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* where Robinson has washed up ashore on an island on his own, the emphasis on phatic language is all the more poignant. In the absence of society, language is stripped of its social function, and phatic speech, which is already semantically null, loses its pragmatic force too. In such a way Robinson's 'formules de politesse', like the bird call and glossolalia above, are also reduced to the status of pure signifier.

The frequent use of phatic language makes Robinson's absent interlocutor all the more salient, and reinforces the themes of madness and schizophrenia which are pervasive in the text. Following the shipwreck in the first half of the book, in the second half the action is transplanted to the doctor's office. Here Robinson is being treated for schizophrenia, and his previous island existence is declared to be a figment of his imagination. Robinson's illness is introduced from the off; in the first section he enumerates a list of symptoms:

> 1. Impossibilité de marcher et de se tenir debout.
> 2. Perte de la voix haute.
> 3. Paralysie locale et rêveries diurnes.
> 4. Amnésie lacunaire.
> 5. Mutisme de type lucide.
> […]
>
> (*FAF,* 20-1)

This list, with its enumeration of linguistic and cognitive symptoms, invites a metalinguistic reading, encouraging the reader to assess the language of the text itself as

disordered. Symptoms such as 'le style télégraphique' and 'le dédoublement vocal' (*FAF*, 22) offer self-reflexive comments on the stylistic properties of *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. A brief glance at some of the characteristics of schizophrenic speech show clear parallels with the text: i) non-sequiturs, fragmentation and difficulty maintaining a train of thought; ii) repetition of words and phrases; iii) use of neologisms and nonsensical words; iv) clanging, where sentences are composed according to similarity of sound rather than according to a target meaning. In *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, manic ritournelles and clanging ('grune greil grace grob gran grette gri gro', 20) reappear throughout the text, which jumps from one subject to another, switching from one voice to the next. This polyphonous quality creates an impression of a schizophrenic monologue, a multitude of voices rooted in the single figure of Robinson. In the second half of the book, particular emphasis is given to this schizophrenic monologue, with Robinson observing: 'Depuis longtemps déjà je me surprenais à parler tout seul' (82), a notion which is reinforced by the 'stage directions': '[seul]' (205).

One particularly salient aspect of Robinson's schizophrenic speech is the frequent oscillation between French and English, often intrasententially. In the passage 'LETTRES RETROUVÉES ET TRADUITES DE MA LANGUE MATERNELLE' (23), the reading process is disrupted by the constant intrusion of the French translated into English:

> Cher Jack,
> Pourquoi ne viendriez-vous pas chez nous pour le thé
> sur le pré (lawn) vendredi le quinze? Les fraises
> (strawberries & roses) et les roses
> sont mûres tout de suite
> les fraises et les roses sont prêtes
> in their prime now
> (*FAF,* 24-5)

This continuous translation process creates a dialogic effect, and the two voices, one French and one English, reinforce the impression of a schizophrenic writing subject. As Jérôme Game points out in 'Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self', Cadiot's Robinson demonstrates striking similarities with Louis Wolfson.[45] Like Wolfson or Fourcade revolting against the mother figure, Robinson's disordered speech resists the phatic formulations of 'Mr and Mrs ***', the enigmatic characters evoked in the extract above, as well as the normative, medicalising discourse of Dr Lawrence, the psychotherapist who treats Robinson in the latter half of the book. As Game writes, 'the stutter [in *FAF*] is the de-territorialization called for by the tyrannical attempts at re-territorialization perpetrated on Robinson'.[46] As we saw in the last chapter, Wolfson's schizophrenic translation procedure exemplifies, for Deleuze, a form of 'becoming-minor', whereby the major language of the mother tongue is rendered foreign and minor in a broken, often agrammatical, French. In the passage above Cadiot's translation procedure has a similar effect. It makes the text stutter, for example in the mistranslation of 'pré' as 'lawn', or in the disruption of the original French clause 'les fraises et les roses' with the translated phrase '(strawberries & roses)'. As the passage continues, the translation process is abandoned, and the text decomposes into strings of sounds, where English and French morph into one another: '*dipli dipli dipli hi / oui wou no ha chairin yourloss*' (26). As was the case for Fourcade, in these multilingual passages, we see how Cadiot initially takes the notion of the 'langue étrangère' in the shape of actual foreign language, before transforming it into a conceptual form of foreignness, characterised, in this instance, by agrammaticality, discontinuity, and nonsense. In this respect, as Game suggests, Cadiot's use of the stutter is Deleuzian in so far as it affects not only the level of production (discrete units of words and phonemes), but also the systematic level, which Game

[45] Game, 'Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self', p. 181.
[46] Ibid., p. 171.

understands as 'whole syntagms, coordinating conjunctions, syntactic operators'.[47] Using close readings of *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, and drawing on Deleuze's account in *Critique et clinique*, Game suggests that the stutter exists on both the level of combination and coordination.[48] Game concludes his account of *Futur, ancien, fugitif* with the following suggestion: '[S]tructured around the cyclical uttering of a delirium, the book becomes the story of a border-line language. The true locutor of *FAF* is generic and subjectless, purely processual yet not schizophrenic: it is poetic language itself'.[49] That Robinson becomes a figure for poetic language is a convincing argument in so far as his unstable and shifting identity clearly aligns with the properties of a 'poésie mineure' that we have seen outlined thus far in both Cadiot's work, and in Fourcade's in the last chapter: the destabilisation of voice in polyphonous and heteroglottic discourse, a literal and conceptual foreignness, an uprooting agrammaticality, and so on.

As *Futur, ancien, fugitif* progresses, Robinson's schizophrenic monologue often builds into manic, hysterical speech, with excessive exclamations, 'ricanements hystériques soupirs' (30) and 'hurlements de joie et rires sauvages' (30). Extreme repetition amplifies this, contributing to the pervasive effect of 'vitesse' in Cadiot's work: '*oh le / chien le petit oh le petit chien il est à qui le petit chien? / Oooh c'est un chien oui vraiment / mais oui c'est mon chien à moi ça / c'est mon chien à moi ça ce chien / c'est mon chien'* (35).[50] This manic excess in his speech creates the impression that Robinson is attempting to fend off silence by filling the void with noise. Silence looms in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* as an

[47] Ibid., p. 171.
[48] Ibid., pp. 171-4.
[49] Ibid., p. 187.
[50] Here the comic image of someone fussing over a dog restages the notion of schizophrenic repetition, drawing parallels between madness and social silliness, which clearly links into the discussion above of phatic language and social ritual. We might detect here an implicit commentary on the political dimension of mental illness and power structures that decide that, say, Louis Wolfson's behaviour is 'disordered', but abiding by set formulae at the bottom of letters is 'normal'.

omnipresent threat: ‘D’un coup: rien. Silence.’ (33), ‘Compact aéré silence. Noir.’ (89), ‘Silence. Rien. Et après silence silence’ (202). The word itself appears with increasing frequency as the book progresses, culminating in the final passage of the third section, ‘Le retour’. Again, this can be read as a metapoetic comment on the impending threat of silence in modern poetry, discussed in the introduction, and summarised in Roche’s formulation (that Cadiot will later re-use): ‘La poésie est inadmissible, d’ailleurs elle n’existe pas’.[51] Silence becomes a metonym for the non-existence or non-continuation of poetry, for its irrelevance, its contentious ethical status, and its potential death as a genre. The presence of this theme in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* is significant as the text marks a threshold between Cadiot’s first book, a book of poetry, and his later written work, which has been exclusively prose. I return to this question in the section ‘L’incertitude générique’, but for the time being it is important to note how inscribed in the text itself is a comment on the endangered status and uncertain future of poetry.

Where poetry is presented as constructing itself against the threat of silence, this is then mirrored in the instability of Robinson as poetic subject. This offers a further way in which *Futur, ancien, fugitif* interweaves, and at times conflates, the character Robinson and the metapoetic abstraction of Robinson as figure for poetry itself. As Game writes: ‘*Futur, ancien, fugitif* […] operates a powerful destructuring of the narrative, the locator and his language, from which the subject emerges as incessant self-production rather than representation of an ideal and stable formation’.[52] The polyphonous collage of voices in the text produces a constant construction and deconstruction of the subject, which oscillates continuously between its own becoming and its undoing, as Jean Renaud suggests, citing Deleuze:

[51] Roche, *La Poésie est inadmissible*, p. 511.
[52] Game, ‘Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self’, p. 153.

> *Je* se constitue et se déconstitue sans cesse, se déterritorialise et reterritorialise, sans que jamais prenne forme une totalité (aussi secrète, enfouie, qu'on voudra). « On parlera donc d'un *plan de consistance* des multiplicités. » Ce plan ne connaît pas de « sujets », mais seulement « des rapports de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, entre éléments non formés, molécules ou particules emportées par des flux ».[53]

This oscillation between self-construction and self-deconstruction is exemplified first and foremost in the overarching narrative framework: Robinson has, prior to the start of the novel, been decomposed by the shipwreck. He subsequently rebuilds himself out of linguistic fragments washed ashore, and is then undone again by the revelation in the second half of the book that his island escapades were schizophrenic delusions. We are left wondering what of the previous episodes was true and what was delusion, which is undermined again by the recognition that Robinson is a fictional character, and therefore, in any case, a subject constructed exclusively through language. The polyphonous fragments of the first section result in a 'RECONSTITUTION' (41), but by the end of the book Robinson is 'Décomposé' (202), and it has all been 'Beaucoup de bruit pour rien' (202). These constructions and deconstructions, expansions and contractions, structure the entire text. For example, the 'Zero-sum' of the final section title appears at intervals throughout the book: 'Résultat nul : Zero-sum.' (86), '*Zero-Sum.* Somme zéro. Résultat final de toute opération. Somme de toutes choses.' (149). Robinson, as a post-modern experiment in poetic subjecthood, is presented as an unstable locus of continual self-construction and effacement, on the level of the narrative, his functioning as a fictional character, and as a poetic voice, constructed necessarily within language.

Cadiot and Burger's album *Welche* returns to many of the same themes of *L'art poétic'* and *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, translating the same formal features of these earlier texts into an

[53] Renaud, 'Le Monologue extérieur d'Olivier Cadiot', p. 770.

acoustic medium. Its lyrics, sound effects and stuttered samples constitute a similar heteroglottic collage and demonstrate the same incongruous juxtaposition of linguistic fragments, images and voices. Bob Dylan lyrics are juxtaposed with a passage from *Billy the Kid*, read by the American poet Jack Spicer; the sound of running water is juxtaposed with the voices of native Welche speakers. The context in which the album was recorded is significant in so far as it engages directly with questions of the intersection between language and power, evoking relationships between different linguistic forms in a socio-political setting. As we have seen, these questions are at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of minor literature, and, consequently, at the heart of the form of 'poésie mineure' that I argue Cadiot's work constitutes. The album was recorded in the 'Val de Lièpvre' in Alsace, where Burger and Cadiot interviewed members of the local community who spoke Welche, an endangered minority dialect with only 1000 or so speakers left. Given its geographical situation, Alsace of all places witnessed the struggle between different major national languages, principally German and French, as well as the resistance of local dialects and regional languages to superimposed national ones.[54] Instances of minority dialects such as Welche being ousted by major national languages, represent clear examples of how a 'langue de pouvoir' suppresses regional variation in a political campaign of standardisation, often linked to nationalism. Cadiot and Burger's album formed part of a broader language conservation project that attempted to record and promote awareness of a 'langue en voie de disparition'. In the promotional material for the album, Welche is described as being, historically, a language of resistance:

> La langue welche, qui est en réalité un patois, est une survivance unique. Enclave romane en territoire germanique (le mot welche signifie 'non allemand' en langue allemande...), elle n'est plus parlée que par un millier de personnes réparties sur un petit nombre de vallées des Vosges alsaciennes. Elle aura probablement disparu dans quelques années. La survivance du parler welche jusqu'en l'an 2000 s'explique

[54] For further detail on the sociolinguistic history of Alsace, see Dennis Ernest Ager, *Sociolinguistics and Contemporary French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 50.

> en partie par la succession des occupations allemandes. Durant la dernière guerre, le welche a survécu comme une résistance à la dictature linguistique allemande.[55]

In this analysis of the historical status of Welche, there are clear resonances with Deleuze's notion of a 'langue majeure' and a 'langue mineure', taken in their most literal senses. While, as we saw in Chapter One, Deleuze and Guattari's analysis extends beyond this literal understanding, we also saw how such heightened sociolinguistic settings were significant for the majority of the authors they considered. Similarly, I would argue, the particular context of Cadiot and Burger's project frames the centrality of the broader issues around language, variation and power at play in their work.

The interviews Burger and Cadiot conducted with the Welche speakers Monsieur Humbert, Madame Rosa, Madame Bauman and Monsieur Baradal are reworked into the five tracks of the album. The phonological variants of their regional accents represent a very tangible component of the variation that Deleuze and Guattari suggest a minor use of language will carve into the major language. The motif of the accent, and the wider theme of the foreign, were already present in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, where Cadiot transcribed English spoken with a foreign accent in French orthography, for example: 'Maï dieur frennd, aï challe nevveur forguette youre kaïnnd-ness and djènérosité' (119). Here, it appears not only in the Welche accents, but also in the track 'Try to understand', which overlays Jack Spicer reading in his native English accent, and Burger, repeating the same text with a French accent, in such a way as to draw attention to their difference, and to Burger's foreign pronunciation and intonation. Translation, in and out of different languages and dialects, is central to the project Cadiot and Burger pursued in *Welche*. In the track 'Tante Elisabeth', Welche is translated into standard French; in 'Zo Love',

[55] 'Biographie', *Ici d'ailleurs* <http://www.icidailleurs.com/index.php?route=product/category&path=68> [accessed 26 June 2017].

standard French is translated into Welche.[56] The phrase that forms the second part of the album's title, *Welche; On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage*, and which reappears in the tracks themselves, comes from a Welche speaker at a translation workshop held at Orbey in July 1999, that formed part of the project, and which focused on the translation of Navajo songs into French and Welche. In an interview for France Culture, Cadiot and Burger evoke the importance of the workshops and interviews they conducted, stressing the centrality of the 'rencontre' in the production of *Welche*.[57] The significance of the 'rencontre' can be traced in the album's themes: translation sees the interaction of two different languages, and the foreign accent sees the expression, in voice, of the intersection between a native language and the target foreign one. In this respect, the heteroglossia or polyphony of *Welche* is not merely the juxtaposition of different linguistic forms, but precisely the interaction and the meeting point between them.

The recordings of Welche speakers, while sometimes presenting entire phrases, are often cut short, segmented into phonemes and syllables, beginnings of words and ends of phrases. These segmented samples are then superimposed on one another and transformed into auditory collages with a musical accompaniment (guitar, drumming, voice, and so on). This feature culminates in the final track of the album, 'On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage', which presents a number of samples from the Welche speakers, radically reworked so that what were once recordings of their complete, meaningful phrases are now decomposed into an auditory assemblage of verbal segments and para- or non-linguistic

[56] The track 'Tante Elisabeth' was made into a 'cinépoème', produced by Pierre Alferi. In the video, the lyrics of the Welche song, translated by Cadiot into standard French, run along the bottom of the screen as subtitles. Pierre Alferi, *Cinépoèmes & films parlants* (Aubervilliers: Les laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, 2003). In 'Zo Love', Cadiot's poems were translated from standard French by a Welche speaker.
[57] 'Olivier Cadiot et Rodolphe Burger: nouvelle géographie sonore', *L'Atelier du son*, France Culture (2012) <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/latelier-du-son/olivier-cadiot-et-rodolphe-burger-nouvelle-geographie-sonore> [accessed 26 June 2017]. 26:00.

sound (laughter, exclamations, the inhalation of breath). This final track provides a prototypical example of the Deleuzian stutter which is found in Cadiot's earlier writing, but is rendered all the more salient in an acoustic medium. In *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, Deleuze and Guattari write that the 'auteur mineur' will 'faire bégayer la langue, […] tendre des tenseurs dans toute la langue, même écrite, et en tirer des cris, des clamés, des hauteurs, durées, timbres, accents, intensités' (131). The stuttering, cacophonous collage of 'On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage' extracts from language its constitutional rhythms, tones and timbres, so that, as the linguistic becomes non-linguistic, language extends to its limits, is deterritorialised and transformed into pure music. In the transition from the preserved, full-length recordings of Welche that appear in the initial tracks 'C'est dans la vallée' and 'Tante Elisabeth', to the barely recognisable stuttered samples of the final track, we might read a gesture towards the fate of Welche itself, as it gradually disappears, and the remaining speakers of the dialect pass away. In this respect, there is an ambiguity in the cutting up and splicing of the Welche recordings – on the one hand, it is clearly an experimental, poetic gesture, aesthetically and formally motivated. On the other hand, there is a certain violence behind the act of deforming the recordings, rendering them incomprehensible; in a project concerned with a language in danger of extinction, we might expect the focus to be conversely on the preservation of such recordings.

Alongside recordings of interviews with Welche speakers, a number of features of traditional Welche culture are woven into the musical fabric of the album. The sampling of running water found throughout *Welche* is a recording of 'La Lièpvrette', the river that outlines the boundary of the Welche territory, and that has provided a life source for generations of Welche inhabitants. In the track 'Tante Elisabeth', Madame Rosa, a local of Labroche, sings a traditional Welche song, a ritournelle with an accumulative refrain that

acquires additional clauses with each repetition. The 'cinépoème' of this track, produced by Alferi in conjunction with Burger and Cadiot, features a montage of video clips: Madame Rosa singing, footage from old films, the running waters of the Lièpvrette. The ritournelle of the Welche song, with its repeated grammatical refrain, is reinforced by the visual images: the rotating steps of a waltz, a model bed spinning on a trapeze, a mechanism being wound up, and a dancer twirling fabrics into circles. In *Mille plateaux*, the ritournelle forms a key part of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of territorialisation and deterritorialisation.[58] Taking bird song as their point of departure, they demonstrate how the refrain is used to stake out the perimeters of a territory. The refrain can have a reassuring, stabilising effect; it creates order out of chaos; to use Deleuze and Guattari's examples, it is the tune hummed under one's breath as one potters around one's home, or the nursery rhyme a child sings to herself in the dark. However, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, the ritournelle contains within it the potential for deterritorialisation; it has no beginning or end but is rather involved in a constant production of variations, and with that, the possibility of coding those variations differently. It offers, therefore, new lines of flight that move outside of the familiar, repeating, but repeating differently with each variation.

The oscillation between the territorialising and deterritorialising dimensions of the ritournelle can be traced in 'Tante Elisabeth'. In the central refrain, the repetition of the phrase 'Tante Elisabeth' returns us continuously to a familiar starting point, but the repetitions are not complete repetitions; they are thrown off-centre, acquiring additional clauses with each rotation. The clip wavers continuously between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the recognisable and the strange. The montage of images has a disorientating

[58] Deleuze and Guattari, 'De la ritournelle' in *Mille plateaux*, pp. 381-433.

effect: we are left trying to configure sense from their juxtaposition, and to establish their relationship with the words of the song. For the non-Welche speaker, the foreign, unfamiliar sounds of Madame Rosa's voice are alienating and opaque, but the standard French subtitles, running along the bottom of the screen, serve to ground us. There is, nonetheless, a temporal lapse between the Welche recording, and the appearance of the subtitles on screen; this 'décalage' is matched by the syncopated rhythm of the musical accompaniment. A similar slippage appears between the apparent slightness of the song's lyrics, and its broader significance in a language conservation project, where it represents the vestiges of a language and a culture under threat. One of the prominent visual images of the 'cinépoème', the clip of a model bed spinning on a miniature film set, reinforces these opposing centrifugal and centripetal forces. The image is territorialising in its presentation of a familiar, household object, and in the hypnotic gyrations of the bed spinning on an invisible string. However, this familiarity is quickly subverted by the fact that the bed is a model, a miniature variation, markedly different from the original. A number of questions are left unanswered: 'what are we watching?', 'Why is the bed spinning?'; the entire scene produces an unsettling and strange effect. In a very visual representation of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the ritournelle and its subsequent 'lignes de fuite', the bed's rotations grow ever faster until it breaks out of its established path and flies off the set and out of shot entirely. This is just one example of the Deleuzo-Guattarian refrain in Cadiot's work, where bird song, child and child-oriented language, and nursery rhymes are all significant motifs.[59] The most pervasive form of refrain is undoubtedly the grammatical refrain; we read above how, in the construction of *L'art poétic'*, the poet set about finding 'ritournelles' in grammar books.[60] 'Pierre se tue / (1)

[59] On the subject, see Game, 'La Répétition différenciante'.
[60] 'J'ai cherché des ritournelles, j'ai cherché le poétique collectif dans des phrases' in Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 28.

Pierre se tue lui-même / (2) Pierre se tue dans un accident' (*AP,* 58), these grammatical repetitions reappear throughout Cadiot's oeuvre, and as we shall see shortly, oscillate between a major and minor axis in their vacillation between grammaticality and agrammaticality. Significantly, the focus on refrains and repetition in Deleuze and subsequently Cadiot's work returns us again to questions of poetry and its constitutive generic properties. For as long as it has existed, repetition has been a primary feature of poetic form: in its verse forms, its prosodic effects (assonance, alliteration, end rhyme, etc.), and in its stylistic devices (anaphora, epistrophe etc.). As Théval points out in her discussion of repetition in *L'art poétic'*, the consequence of Cadiot's grammatical refrains has the opposite effect of the usual function of stylistic figures of repetition in poetry: instead of 'adding value', they have a 'fonction « littéralisante »', and 'un effet appauvrissant'.[61] In this respect, we see a further instance of deterritorialisation, where the same features of a major poetic genre are repeated, but used to a different effect.

Like *Welche, Hôtel Robinson* also involves an eclectic assemblage of voices and sounds: Gilles Deleuze talking about Spinoza, Henry Miller speaking in broken French, Burger's grammatical ritournelles in 'B à Batz'. These voices are offset by techno music, guitar, drumming, and samples of horses braying, bells ringing, and machines rattling. Like *Welche,* the album involved a similar sociolinguistic excursion: Cadiot and Burger recorded residents of the Île de Batz in the Finistère *département* in Brittany in 2002. As in *Welche*, the recordings are reworked on the album, so that, for example in 'Totem & Tabou', Mamie Dirou's voice, with its strong Breton accent, is made to stutter. One of the central motifs of the album is the island identity of L'Île de Batz: the title, *Hôtel Robinson,* evokes the shipwrecked Robinson of *Futur, ancien, fugitif* (and reinforces the idea that

[61] Gaëlle Théval, *Poésies ready-made, XXe-XXIe siècles* (doctoral thesis, Université Paris-Diderot – Paris VII, 2011), p. 206.

Cadiot's albums present an extension of his written poetry). Through a process of 'association libre', the theme of water generates the inclusion of Deleuze's voice in the track 'je nage', which opens with the following words of the philosopher: 'Je plonge au bon moment, je ressort au bon moment, j'évite la vague qui approche ou au contraire je m'en sers'.[62] The track assembles fragments of recordings of Deleuze's lecture on Spinoza, given in Vincennes in 1981 (which Cadiot attended), where he illustrated Spinoza's theory of knowledge through the example of swimming. Talking about the encounter of the human body with the approaching waves, Deleuze argues that, instead of 'une connaissance mathématique ou physique, scientifique du mouvement de la vague', the swimmer possesses a 'savoir faire':

> Un savoir faire étonnant, c'est-à-dire que j'ai une espèce de sens du rythme. La rythmicité. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, le rythme ? Ça veut dire que mes rapports caractéristiques je sais les composer directement avec les rapports de la vague. Ça ne se passe plus entre la vague et moi, c'est-à-dire que ça ne se passe plus entre les parties extensives, les parties mouillées de la vague, et les parties de mon corps, ça se passe entre les rapports.[63]

Deleuze's theory of 'le rythme', 'la rhythmicité', his questions 'qu'est-ce que ça veut dire le rythme?', 'qu'est-ce que ça veut dire tout ça?, form the pivot of 'Je nage' in *Hôtel Robinson*, which returns to the same themes of rhythm and movement introduced in *L'art poétic'* and *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. The track's samples, with their unanswered questions, suspend the notion of rhythm in the mind of the listener, both highlighting it as a thematic concern of the album, and drawing attention to the album's formal composition, the rhythmic quality of the music in hand. The rhythm of the track itself is distinctly

[62] Burger and Cadiot suggest as much in their interview on France Culture. 'Olivier Cadiot et Rodolphe Burger: nouvelle géographie sonore', 30:00. 'Cours 12 du 17/03/1981', *La voix de Gilles Deleuze en ligne* <http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/deleuze/article.php3?id_article=151> [accessed 27 June 2017].
[63] 'Cours 12 du 17/03/1981'. For a simple outline of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of rhythm, see Eugene B. Young, with Gary Genosko and Janell Watson, *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 266. The subject will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter on Tarkos.

syncopated or arrhythmic, which paradoxically draws the listener's attention to precisely the regular, steady rhythm that is absent. The samples of Deleuze's lecture run throughout the track, but the musical accompaniment (guitar, samples of swilling water) builds in momentum, and then quickly dissolves. The track's gradual crescendo and subsequent diminuendo takes the form of the rising and falling wave that Deleuze describes in the recordings ('Ah, maman, la vague m'a battu', 'j'évite la vague qui approche'). The samples centre around a number of verbs of motion – 'plonger', 'nager', 'voler', 'se lancer', and evoke the movements of the wave, and of the philosopher swimming. Elsewhere in *Hôtel Robinson* this focus on movement takes the form of the gallop, for example in 'Cheval-mouvement', where words found originally in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* evoke the movements of the horse. The motif reappears in *Psychopharmaka,* notably in the track 'Dada-Bewegung', 'Bewegung' being the German word for motion/movement. The track features a variation on the guitar chords from 'Cheval-mouvement', like the previous track it also samples horses neighing, and now includes recordings of Deleuze talking about 'le galop' ('le galop c'est la cavalcade du présent qui passe', 'la musique aurait pour éléments principaux le cheval et l'oiseau').[64] Deleuze's phrase then generates a motif of 'le cheval et l'oiseau', which is found throughout the album in the frequent sampling of bird song and horses whinnying.

Psychopharmaka, recorded in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland, is Cadiot and Burger's third musical excursion, this time into German. The first track of the album announces the artistic endeavour in hand: 'Sing mir ein neues Lied' ('sing me a new song'), a request that is then reiterated as the sample is repeated at intervals throughout

[64] These samples are taken from Deleuze's lecture on the ritournelle and the gallop. 'Cours 58 du 20/03/1984', *La voix de Gilles Deleuze en ligne* <http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/deleuze/article.php3?id_article=337> [accessed 27 June 2017].

Psychopharmaka. The parallels here with Cadiot's earlier aspiration to find a new form of poetry, to **'**produire du lyrisme par d'autres moyens', are clear, and are reinforced by Cadiot and Burger's own reflections in interviews.[65] Evoking the transfer of the 'cut-up' and 'découpage' from a literary medium to an auditory one, they describe how, behind their use of sampling, of assembling other people's voices in their recordings, lay a desire to 'fabriquer des chansons par d'autres moyens'.[66] More broadly, this practice also responds to the desire to house poetry within music, as Cadiot suggests: 'Comment une chanson peut-elle devenir accueillante pour la poésie ? L'idée est alors venue, pour aller très vite, de sampler'.[67] In such a way, Cadiot and Burger set about their quest for a 'neues Lied' by elaborating a rich and hybrid network of interconnected linguistic and musical images, dialogising the old and new, the classical and the modern, 'high' and pop culture. Renowned figures of German and Austrian Romanticism, Brahms, Schubert and Goethe, are interwoven with philosophers, Deleuze and Nietzsche, literary figures, such as Paul Celan, and chart-topping pop musicians, such as the German synthpop band Trio. A primary reference point in *Psychopharmaka* is Dada: three of the album's track titles contain explicit references, 'Dadasophe', 'Dada-Bewegung' and 'Da da da'; Kurt Schwitters is sampled extensively in 'Dadasophe', which uses recordings from his poetic performances at the Cabaret Voltaire. The sampled performances have all the characteristic glossolalia, vocal tics, trills and protolinguistic babbling that we might expect of a Schwitters poem. *Psychopharmaka* itself experiments with para- and non-linguistic sound: laughter, babbling, animal noises, as well as frequent samples of ambient noise (a busy restaurant, the sound of a car door, and so on). In featuring Dada so heavily, there is a clear acknowledgment of its influence, and a confirmation of *Psychopharmaka*'s

[65] Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.*
[66] 'Olivier Cadiot et Rodolphe Burger: nouvelle géographie sonore', 24:00.
[67] Rodolphe Burger and Olivier Cadiot, 'Une petite guérilla intérieure', *Vacarme*, No. 52 (2010), pp. 54-8 (p. 55).

situation in a lineage of experimental, performance poetry. The significance of Dada experiments, which radically redefined the parameters of poetic form and language, is apparent in the uncertain generic status of Cadiot and Burger's albums. A second key 'point de repère' in *Psychopharmaka* is the German electronic band, Kraftwerk. In the third track 'Eisbär', a sample from a 1975 BBC documentary announces: 'Kraftwerk have a name for this, it's machine music. Sounds are created at their laboratory in Düsseldorf, programmed, and then recreated on stage'. Kraftwerk were instrumental in the development of electronic music, and, as their album titles would suggest, *Die Mensch-Maschine* ('The Man-Machine'), *Computerwelt* ('Computer World'), at the centre of their enterprise was the importance of the machine. Working in a 'sound laboratory', the band pioneered new uses of technology in their songs, experimenting with computer-programmed speech generators and custom-built instruments. In this respect, Kraftwerk sought to produce music by other means; their relevance for Cadiot and Burger, who supplant the traditional French 'chanson' with a heteroglottic, hybrid form, composed through machinic processes of sampling and arrangement, is apparent. The centrality of the machine in *Psychopharmaka*, which appears in the allusions to Kraftwerk, and in the very techniques of the album's composition, sees a continuation, in an acoustic medium, of the 'mécanique lyrique' of Cadiot's earlier poetry.

In the final paragraphs of this section I want to consider the heteroglossia of Cadiot's work more generally, particularly as it relates to Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari, and discussions of language, discourse and genre. As we saw in Chapter One, when Bakhtin sets up the opposition between poetic and novelistic discourse, the type of poetry he is evoking is implicitly lyric poetry. Other forms of poetry are largely absent from his discussion, and when they do appear, they are considered to be 'novelistic', and therefore no longer

poetry. Bakhtin's analysis of poetic monoglossia, and his underlying assumption that poetry = lyric poetry, are still widely preserved, in popular opinion, and among certain critics and poets. Frustratingly, given the argument I want to make, Cadiot himself discusses poetry in a way that perpetuates Bakhtin's distinction. He states: 'C'est pour ça que j'ai abandonné la poésie, parce que je n'y ai pas trouvé, comme dans le roman, le moyen de **faire entendre des voix multiples**, de plonger dans des logiques sociales, de m'y « engager » techniquement'.[68] In a turn of phrase that echoes Bakhtin's, Cadiot writes: 'La poésie est parole du poète, et même s'il n'y a pas un mot de lui dans le poème, reste l'acte conceptuel toujours en surplomb : la poésie ne permet pas une parole vraiment démultipliée ; c'est sa beauté et sa spécificité'.[69] Elsewhere, he states: 'Au fond, moi je préfère la poésie. Simplement, la part concrète de poésie que je peux m'autoriser diminue à chaque livre. J'ai de moins en moins le droit de faire de la poésie parce que la poésie comme chacun le sait est inadmissible. Je le pense vraiment'.[70] If nothing else, these assertions are confusing: it is not clear how *L'art poétic'* is more Cadiot's own 'parole', than *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, as a generically hybrid text, or *Un mage en été*, as a novel. As the preceding discussion of *L'art poétic'*, *Futur, ancien, fugitif* and Cadiot's musical compositions has suggested, the same forms, devices and themes reappear in various ways throughout these different genres and mediums. While certain distinctions might be made between *L'art poétic'* and *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, for example with regard to character, narrative, or mode of composition, it is hard to identify what separates them in terms of voice or discourse, despite Cadiot's insistence that they are generically distinct, and that poetic and novelistic discourse are markedly different.[71] Cadiot's claim prompts a number

[68] Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.*
[69] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 5.
[70] Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 21.
[71] As will be discussed later in the chapter, Cadiot describes how the compositional techniques of *L'art poétic'* rendered it a 'travail plastique', which he contrasts with the 'travail littéraire' of his subsequent novels. Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 12.

of further questions: given the poet's description of *Futur, ancien, fugitif* as 'un roman par poèmes', what are the implications for poetic voice in this liminal text? Would Cadiot envisage an interim form of discourse, poised between poetic and novelistic, some kind of hybrid of the two? Is monologic discourse something that can even exist in degrees? Or, following Bakhtin's analysis, is monologic/dialogic discourse a binary that separates texts into two distinct camps?

I choose ultimately to disregard Cadiot's own analysis of a prose-poetry distinction, as I do not believe the difference is borne out in his work itself. It appears that Cadiot, despite his nuanced exploration of poetry elsewhere, is using a narrow definition of poetry as, essentially, lyric poetry, which is staking out the boundaries in a more conservative way than I intend to here. I want to suggest that all of his poetic endeavours (*L'art poétic', Futur, ancien, fugitif* and the three albums discussed above) are examples of a Deleuzian 'littérature mineure', subverting an ideological mother tongue, in their heteroglottic linguistic assemblages. The use of cut-up and sampling, which facilitates a polyphonous quality to his work, is engaged in a subversive act of undoing and destabilising the domination of the major language, in all its various forms. Cadiot himself touches on this idea, describing the potential tyranny of certain types of language:

> J'ai envie de confronter plusieurs régimes de parole : style direct oppressé contre indirect oppresseur, style actif contre parlé inactif, protocole intérieur contre monologue extérieur agressif, etc. […] Le tyran, c'est la parole en excès, la parole ininterrompue, atrocement autonome (ça représente, si on veut que tout fasse sens, le mauvais côté de la littérature, le caractère monomaniaque, grenouille devenue bœuf, aussi tyrannique que son contraire poétique : l'aphorisme à prétention philosophique). En anglais, on dit un *close talker* : celui qui vous perfuse sa parole pendant un dîner, qui vous serre le bras en vous psalmodiant à l'oreille. […] J'écris pour traiter ce flux. Pas pour l'interrompre, mais pour l'inverser, pour le dé-tyranniser. Écrire des livres, c'est dé-tyranniser sa propre parole.[72]

[72] Ibid., p. 4. I'm not sure we do say this in English, but Cadiot's meaning is clear.

Any form of language that dominates or oppresses, that claims to be the only legitimate form, in turn suppressing other forms or variants, is dangerous, particularly when it passes unchallenged and starts to look like a 'natural', singular language. This tyrannical monologism of the 'langue majeure' will take various forms. The most immediate example is that of major national languages in periods of political change, for example in the imposition of 'standard' French in the period after the French Revolution, where regional languages were largely eradicated, either directly or indirectly, through a number of different power structures: national education, military conscription, etc. As we have seen, there are echoes of this very concrete example of major-minor language power struggles in Cadiot's work, particularly in his references to Welche, Breton and Hualapai. However, the various possible forms of a major language are multiple, constantly proliferating and forever in flux. The monoglottic voice of lyrical poetry becomes a form of 'langue majeure' to be dismantled into polyphonous, heteroglottic collages. The regime of meaning, of the signified, is destabilised by an emphasis on the signifier, on the materiality of language – its shapes and sounds and rhythms. Human language is undercut with animal communication, adult speech with child babbling, grammar with agrammaticality, and 'healthy' forms of linguistic communication are subverted by Robinson's disordered, schizophrenic speech. The major language of poetry, as a traditionally written, printed and published form, is challenged by the relocation of poetry from the written page to the recording studio.

Dictionaries and grammars

One of the most pervasive types of major language found in Cadiot's work appears in the form of linguistic reference works, dictionaries, phrase books and grammar manuals. As described above, Cadiot first began *L'art poétic'* after he stumbled across Dubois's *Grammaire générative* and witnessed the nascent energy of the semantically hollow

examples. The cut-ups in *L'art poétic'* are not just French grammars, but also Latin primers and English textbooks, dictionary entries and phrase books. Written under the influence of Georges Perec, *Futur, ancien, fugitif* is also concerned with glossaries, indexes, encyclopaedias and manuals. On the back cover, the book is described as a 'manuel de survie': 'Ce livre contient : la liste complète de ce qu'il faut faire en cas d'exil. Des conseils précis pour la fabrication d'objets simples à réaliser soi-même. […] Un manuel raisonné d'exercices poétiques. […] Une méthode de dialogue à une voix.'[73] Cadiot is, of course, not the first to utilise linguistic reference works in his writing. In *Eau sur eau* (1997), Christophe Lamiot explores the use of dictionaries in the works of Mallarmé, Flaubert, Bataille, Michaux, Leiris and Ponge.[74] More recent examples that we might add to this list are Georges Perec, Bernard Heidsieck, and a number of Oulipian texts that experiment with dictionary-based constraints.[75] I want to briefly consider just two of these examples, to highlight some of the similarities to Cadiot's project.

Bernard Heidsieck's *Derviche/Le Robert* (2004) uses a dictionary-based compositional constraint: it is a 'poème sonore' made up of 26 sections, one for each letter of the alphabet.[76] Each section uses the first ten unfamiliar or obscure words found in the given letter's corresponding section of *Le Robert*: for example, section 'K' begins with the words 'kacha', 'kadsura', 'kaempferie'. These rare and abstruse words are then incorporated into refrains of phatic language and empty exclamations, similar to those found in Cadiot's

[73] Cadiot describes the influence of Perec's *La Vie mode d'emploi* on his first draft of *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 19. Cadiot, *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, back cover.
[74] Christophe Lamiot, *Eau sur eau : Les dictionnaires de Mallarmé, Flaubert, Bataille, Michaux, Leiris et Ponge* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997).
[75] The Oulipo use various dictionary-based constraints, such as 'N+7', where texts, sometimes ready-made ones such as a famous Baudelaire poem or well-known passages from Balzac, are then reworked by replacing all the nouns with another noun, seven entries on in the dictionary from the current one. The idea is that the constraint generates random assemblages of words in unpredictable and novel texts that have bypassed the limits that normal patterns of language use impose upon the human imagination.
[76] Bernard Heidsieck, *Derviche/Le Robert* (Roumainville: Al Dante, 2004).

own work: 'OH! … Oh! là! là! […] OH NON! …. NON! … non! … Ce n'est pas possible! … Ça n'aurait pas pu être cela… ! … C'est évident!'. Through the juxtaposition of these two different but equivalent forms (dictionary words and phatic formulae), Heidsieck's intention was to construct an 'abécédaire' made out of 'matériau vide de sens', and in so doing, to explore the materiality and musicality of these linguistic signifiers freed from their usual referential function.[77] Heidsieck foregrounds the dictionary with its own implicit set of linguistic ideologies (e.g. words as principally referential, fixed and definable), and simultaneously undermines those ideologies with a set of opposing conceptions of language (e.g. language as a more fluid system of sound, sign and gesture, resistant to attempts to pin it down). A second example which resonates with Cadiot's work is Leiris's *Glossaire, j'y serre mes gloses* (1939), which subverts the usual function of the glossary, which is to provide definitions for rare and specialised terms. Leiris's 'glossaire' dismisses etymology and institutionalised meaning, and emphasises the idiolectal and personal, rather than the objective and universal. We note, for example, the first person pronoun in the title – the 'je' would not usually be present in a dictionary or glossary, except for in illustrative examples. Rather than attempting to pin it down, Leiris's glossary plays with language; this wordplay is frequently multilingual, thus not respecting the usual institutionalised boundaries between different national languages. Likewise, his glossary refuses the traditional boundary between the literary and the pictoral, including calligrams in amongst its definitions.

In *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, Cadiot also experiments with the glossary, elaborating a three-page alphabetical list of abbreviations used in the book, alongside expanded definitions of these terms. The very status of this list, which is part way between a glossary and a list of

[77] 'Notes a posteriori' in Heidiseck, *Derviche/Le Robert*, p. 10.

abbreviated terms, represents one initial way in which it serves to undermine the form. The position of the list in the middle of the book rather than at the end or the beginning is a further subversion of the formatting conventions of the glossary, and its function as an easily locatable reference tool. Like Leiris's, Cadiot's glossary is distinctly personal and full of idiosyncrasies: 'D.R.' stands for '*Dossier Robinson*', 'D.T.' for '*Disparition Totale'* (*FAF,* 147). Cadiot extends this to its extreme with protracted abbreviations such as 'L.B.V.D.M.E.': '*Le But Ultime De Mes Efforts*' or the quasi-acronymic 'M.S.R.': '*Members are requested to keep Silence in this Room'* (148). The inclusion on the list of 'H.' for '*Hapax*' might be read as a metapoetic comment on the singular, idiosyncratic words and phrases included in his glossary. The singularity of the hapax legomenon represents the opposite pole to the shared, universality of language embodied in a conventional glossary. Like Leiris's, this glossary of terms is also multilingual, fusing Latin, French and English. The list is entirely unsystematic: certain conventional abbreviations appear, '*Ante Meridiem'*, '*Ante Christum*', alongside conventional abbreviations with unexpected interpretations: 'B.D.' is not 'bande dessinée' as we might expect, but '*Bachelor of divinity.* Exilé.' (147). Likewise, phrases that are usually abbreviated in one way, e.g. '*Ibidem*' (148), are abbreviated in idiosyncratic ways 'Ib.' rather than the expect 'Ibid'. Many of the terms on the list are pivotal terms in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* ('disparition totale', 'zero-sum'), which might lead us to interpret the glossary as a unique 'key to reading', a tool kit for unpacking the various motifs at work in the book. The inclusion of the term 'X' could be read as a playful gesture towards an 'X marks the spot' on a treasure map that guides the reader in their navigation of Robinson's island. However, these key terms are interspersed with the most mundane and irrelevant ones too: 'P. S.' (*'Post-scriptum'*), 'D. Incert.' ('*Date Incertaine'*), which quickly undermines the possibility that this glossary is some comprehensive guide to unpack the

text. One by one the various conventions of the glossary are subverted; Cadiot's text is unsystematic, illogical, incomplete, idiosyncratic, and the glossary entries are often more confusing than they are enlightening. Like Leiris's *Glossaire,* Cadiot's list of abbreviations is a very clear example of a major mode dismantled from the inside, picked apart and put back together in a strange lopsided assemblage that at once resembles the original model, and yet is constituted precisely by its difference.

In *L'art poétic'*, Cadiot's use of linguistic reference works serves a number of purposes. Firstly, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, the grammar book cut-ups place emphasis on the surface of language, on the materiality of its signs, which are decomposed, broken down into phonemes, syllables, parts of speech, grammatical constructions, and so on. This systematic decomposition of language is announced in the epigraph to *L'art poétic'* where, in an allusion to Gutenberg and printing, a short passage describes how the letters of the alphabet would be engraved one by one onto a separate piece of metal or wood. From the outset, the normally invisible process of printing and publication is rendered visible; the reader is compelled to engage with the materiality of the book and of language itself. There is also in this image of language deconstructed into the 26 letters of the alphabet, a further significance for a text comprised of cut-ups. Just as all language is composed from a small number of basic orthographic or phonological building blocks, so too all literature is composed of a finite set of possible instances of language use, all of which will have been found before, in different combinations, in previous literary and non-literary texts. We are reminded of Barthes's evocation in 'La Mort de l'auteur' of an 'immense dictionnaire', with each individual literary text being 'un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture'.[78] The cut-up text represents an

[78] Roland Barthes, *Le Bruissement de la langue: Essais critiques IV* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), p. 65.

extreme extension of this idea, a very literal interpretation of the text as a 'tissu de citations', but it is also a reminder that all literature operates on the same basic principle of iteration, as Burroughs suggests when he observes: 'What is any writing but a cut-up?'[79] The cut-up, with its focus on assembling an original whole from a set of unoriginal composite parts, presents broader reflections on the iterative and finite nature of the language system as a whole. The significance of dictionaries in Cadiot's poetry might also be read as a gesture towards this Barthesian notion of the vast 'dictionnaire' of literature, or indeed of the linguistic system *in toto*. Elsewhere, in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Barthes makes a further reflection on the relationship between literature and linguistic reference works. In the essay entitled 'Y a-t-il une écriture poétique?', he draws a parallel between the operation of language in modern poetry and the operation of language in dictionaries:

> Ainsi sous chaque Mot de la poésie moderne gît une sorte de géologie existentielle, où se rassemble le contenu total du Nom, et non plus son contenu électif comme dans la prose et dans la poésie classiques. Le Mot n'est plus dirigé *à l'avance* par l'intention générale d'un discours socialisé ; le consommateur de poésie, privé du guide des rapports sélectifs, débouche sur le Mot, frontalement, et le reçoit comme une quantité absolue, accompagnée de tous ses possibles. Le Mot est ici encyclopédique, il contient simultanément toutes les acceptions parmi lesquelles un discours relationnel lui aurait imposé de choisir. Il accomplit donc un état qui n'est possible que dans le dictionnaire ou dans la poésie, là où le nom peut vivre privé de son article, amené à une sorte d'état zéro, gros à la fois de toutes les spécifications passées et futures.[80]

Despite the differences, shortly to be elaborated, between the 'major' and 'minor' dimensions of poetic language and language in dictionaries and encyclopaedias, here Barthes offers us a surprising parallel. In both instances, language is stripped of its usual pragmatic force; meaning is not selected or narrowed down by the context of the utterance, and thus, is freed from a certain social function. To use Barthes's terms, this form of discourse is: 'un discours […] sans prévision ni permanence d'intention et par là si opposé

[79] Burroughs and Gysin, *The Third Mind*, p. 8.
[80] Barthes, *Le Degré zéro,* p. 39.

à la fonction sociale du langage'.[81] In poetry, as in the dictionary, we might argue that language is in a paradoxically 'context-less' context, where each word thus activates and suspends the plurality of possible meanings and interpretations it contains. The parallel is an interesting one, and particularly apparent in Cadiot's *L'art poétic*'. Coupling the lack of a sustained narrative, character development or a singular lyric 'je', with the poetic 'mise en page' and the isolation of words and phrases into disjointed fragments, the effect of this suspension and plurality is exaggerated. The parallels between the two forms are nowhere more apparent than in the section 'Delenda est Carthargo', where cut-ups from Latin dictionary entries, retaining the conventional formatting of the original, resemble the typographical experiments of a post-Mallarméan lineage of modern poetry. While attention is drawn to certain typographical similarities, and to certain parallels in the semantic function of words, the comparison also invites us to explore their differences.

Indeed, throughout *L'art poétic'*, Cadiot draws attention to the rule-governed properties of linguistic reference works, not only in their own conventions (of formatting etc.), but also in the projection of those rules onto the classification and organisation of language itself. As Lia Kurts points out, Cadiot's selection of the most semantically hollow grammar book examples emphasises instead the 'acte de transmission de compétences grammaticales', foregrounding the conventions of grammatical instruction.[82] The elaborate metalanguage of linguistic reference works takes a prominent position, often disrupting the text that it describes: 'Les feuilles [no, dér. et verbe comp.] Les feuilles deviennent jaunes jaunes [adj. et verbe dér.] et rouges [nom, adj. et verbe dér.] rouges et tombent et tombent une à une' (*AP*, 220). By retaining the typography and formatting of their original sources, the cut-ups highlight the highly contrived formal conventions of reference works, such as the

[81] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[82] Kurts, 'Olivier Cadiot ou La Poétique des objets trouvés', pp. 35-6.

use of bold and italic fonts, square brackets and line arrangements in the dictionary entries in the section 'Delenda est Carthargo'. Throughout the text a number of different conventions of linguistic reference works are used: symbols marking metrical feet such as dactyls and spondees (*AP,* 85), syllabic counts marked by superscript numbers (*AP,* 138), phonetic transcription in square brackets, written in the IPA (*AP,* 59), arrows marking grammatical transformations or relationships between clausal constituents (*AP,* 98). Cadiot presents the language of dictionaries and grammars as the ultimate exemplars of what Deleuze and Guattari would analyse as the territorialising, norming axis of the major language. Indeed, Cadiot's foregrounding of the elaborate metalinguistic systems of grammatical description resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of linguistics as a discipline in 'Postulats de la linguistique' in *Mille plateaux*. For Deleuze and Guattari, the desire in linguistics to systematise and to find standards and universals (grammatical, phonological, semantic, etc.) makes it, ultimately, an 'institution majeure'. They write: 'La linguistique en général n'a pas encore quitté une espèce de mode majeur, une sorte d'échelle diatonique, un étrange goût pour les dominantes, les constantes et les universaux' (*MP*, 123). To illustrate this notion with one particular example, the development of the International Phonetic Alphabet, which is found in *L'art poétic'* and *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, and used in most mono- and bi-lingual dictionaries, is an attempt to create a universal system that encapsulates all possible phonologies of all world languages. At first glance this might seem like a useful, productive exercise; however, Deleuze and Guattari might argue that this is a necessarily reductive, 'territorialising' task which suppresses variation in order to impose a set of standards. Their analysis gains credibility when one considers two key aspects of the IPA: i) the symbols it uses are predominantly Western – based on the Roman and Greek alphabets, which in itself represents a form of dominance whereby the institutions that created the IPA (French and English linguists) superimposed their own

system on others (e.g. tribal languages with no written script, or languages that use syllabic or logographic writing systems). ii) The reality of inter-linguistic and inter-personal variation on a phonetic level is necessarily too complex and variable to fit neatly into a small number of discrete phonological units. An International Phonetic Alphabet will, by definition, be unable to account for the variation and complexity of communication in a system that is both concise and usable, without being overly reductive. Following Deleuze and Guattari's analysis in 'Postulats de la linguistique', the metalanguage of linguistic reference works found in Cadiot's writing might be read as both a tool and a symbol of the broader 'institutions majeures' (of prescriptive grammar, of linguistics, etc.) that they are elaborated by. In Cadiot's texts they operate as constant, concrete reminders of the 'langue majeure' in action.

Closely linked to this, a further pervasive marker of the major language in *L'art poétic'* is prescriptive grammar, remaining in its residual form in the reworked cut-ups from grammar books and manuals.[83] By using cut-ups from grammar books, by rendering them agrammatical in their novel arrangement in the text, Cadiot initiates a process of deterritorialisation. His reworkings of the cut-ups destabilise one of the most territorialising forms of language, thus highlighting both the centripetal force of grammar and centrifugal force of agrammaticality precisely through their polarisation. The following passage from the section of *L'art poétic'* entitled 'L'anacoluthe' demonstrates these oscillating processes. The section's title highlights the significance of

[83] We saw in Chapter One how prescriptive grammar might be understood as a heightened example of 'la langue majeure' in practice. We will recall Hocquard's comment in *Tout le monde se ressemble* that grammar is respected 'comme la Loi, […] comme un monopole d'Etat' (15), which echoes Deleuze and Guattari's reflection: 'Former des phrases grammaticalement correctes est, pour l'individu normal, le préalable de toute soumission aux lois sociales' (*MP*, 127).

agrammaticality, anacoluthon being the rhetorical term for a sentence that flouts normal syntactic word order.

> A *white-sailed* ship
>
> faire beau, venter un peu
>
> - Elles (maigrir) - Il (tomber)
> nuit… belle
> And [1]every[2]one did [3]swink [[4]silence]
> And [5]every[6]one did [7]sweat [[8]silence]
>
> (Dans la plaine), (les détonations)
> […]
>
> He passed his hand … his eyes
> L'œil … protégé par les paupières … par les cils
>
> many years (*to go*) by, since those days ; and he (*to forget*) how he (*to feel*) then […]
> … sirènes; … cabines; … canots
> (*AP,* 135-6)

The unconjugated, parenthetical verbs ('Elles (maigrir)') and 'fill in the blank' ellipses ('les paupières … par les cils') alert the reader to the grammar book origins of the cut-up phrases. In the transplanted fragments, language is broken down into its component parts; grammatical structure and syntactic categories are isolated in bracketed verbs '(maigrir)', '(tomber)', italicised adjectives '*white-sailed* ship', absent articles '… sirènes; …cabines; … canots', and missing prepositions 'He passed his hand … his eyes'. The reader's attention is drawn to the aspects of speech and writing that usually pass unnoticed: its orthography (the 'correct' spelling for the homophones 'est' and 'et'), its syllabic structure and rhythmic properties ('And [1]every[2]one did [3]swink [[4]silence]'), and its morphosyntax ('maigrir' giving 'maigrissent', 'to go' giving 'went'). The grammar book cut-ups evoke a particularly prescriptive approach to language, one that takes language as a fundamentally rule-governed system, and one that assumes that behind the given grammar exercise ('fill in the blanks', 'conjugate the verb'), is a right or wrong answer.

In the passage, and throughout *L'art poétic'*, Cadiot then exploits a tension between the major, territorialising dimension of the original grammatical cut-ups, and their deterritorialisation within the poem. We find both the residual 'grammaticalité' of the exercise book cut-ups, and the subsequent 'agrammaticalité' – the discontinuous syntax, anacoluthons, and grammatically 'incorrect' forms – produced by their assemblage. For example, when reanalysed in the poem, the phrase 'many years (*to go*) by, since those days' is simply 'wrong', the verb is left unconjugated and the normal reading process is disrupted. The overall effect of this passage (and of *L'art poétic*' as a whole) is one of dysfluency and rhythmic disruption. The reader is impeded by the discontinuous syntax of the transplanted cut-ups and the overriding sense of the text's 'expression atypique' (*MP*, 125): its lack of coherent narrative, the unclear relationship between one constituent of the passage and the next, its suspension of reference, and its subversion of traditional lyric voice.

The cut-up lends itself particularly well to Deleuze and Guattari's conception of deterritorialisation, as it involves a very literal displacement or relocation of language, from its original context, into the novel space of the poem. This displacement involves a re-examination of the source information, for example the ideologies and assumptions about language that lie behind the linguistic reference works (that grammar has absolute rules that are embodied in the standard variant, that words have fixed meanings or essences that are identical for all speakers of a given language, and so on). Alongside cut-ups from dictionaries and grammar books, a significant number of the cut-ups in Cadiot's work come from non-linguistic reference works: encyclopaedias, science manuals and educational textbooks. In these instances, there is a similar questioning of the implicit

assumptions that lie behind discourses of knowledge and pedagogical systems based on absolute truths, as well as an examination of the conventions of representation within sciences and other such disciplines. Thus, in *L'art poétic'* we find fragments of taxonomies and classification systems that might come from an encyclopaedia or an introductory zoological textbook: 'BIRDS / SNAKES / FISH / INSECTS' (133). In *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* many of the fragments washed up ashore with Robinson are from manuals and almanacs: one passage enumerates the three types of 'figures héraldiques' (31), another appears to be a description from an old science textbook about vegetation and water consumption (57). A particularly prevalent form of instruction manual in *Futur, ancien, fugitif* is the etiquette handbook:

> 1. Ne touchez pas vos couverts inutilement.
> 2. Laissez une main au moins posée sur vos genoux.
> 3. Ne vous balancez pas en avant en arrière.
> 4. Ne mangez pas tout ce que vous avez dans l'assiette.
> 5. Ne vous resservez jamais même si on vous le propose.
> 6. Ne parlez d'aucun sujet qui puisse provoquer des désaccords.
> 7. Ne pelez pas les poires sans fourchette.
>
> (*FAF*, 29)

The fact that Robinson is estranged from society, stranded on an island, permits a distance that highlights the arbitrariness and highly codified or constructed nature of social rituals. In this example, table manners appear as an illustration of a major institution at its most ridiculous. Throughout Cadiot's oeuvre, a wide range of established systems of codes are undermined, the most obvious being literary authority. As Alain Farah suggests, Cadiot's writing involves 'un pillage désinvolte de la tradition littéraire', where the conventions that support and reinforce the idea of a 'canon' are subtly subverted.[84] *L'art poétic'* makes reference to many canonical literary figures: Ovid, Shakespeare, Hugo and Proust, to name just a handful. However, following in the lineage of Lautréamont in *Poésies,* Cadiot

[84] Farah, *Le Gala des incomparables*, p. 79. Farah gives a good account of the role of these literary references in the section 'Ce que *L'art poétic'* fait à la notion d'intertextualité', pp. 69-75.

undermines these literary authorities, as well as the conventional use of citations and epigraphs, by choosing the most clichéd or banal quotations from their works. Thus Blake's '*Tiger! Tiger! burning bright'* (134) and Ovid's 'O lente, lente currite noctis equi' (142) appear in the text as isolated passages, without commentary or apparent function, gesturing towards the use of citation for the sake of citation, or the reference to a higher authority in order to lend weight to a given text. In the context of the pedagogical cut-ups in *L'art poétic'*, these citations recall the schoolchild trotting out the famous lines of canonical poets in a monotonous rhythm, not in an act of engagement with the words themselves, but as a form of memory exercise. Likewise, prosaic quotations, such as 'Serait-il trop tard pour que je revienne chez vous? (PROUST)' (95), are wrenched from their original contexts and incorporated into the text with no further expansion, left as seemingly banal and insignificant citations. Elsewhere in *L'art poétic'*, as the title of the collection would suggest, the literary greats offer nothing more than poetic clichés: 'La rivière était toute couverte de plis d'argent (V. HUGO)' (143), 'Grande pour tous les êtres est la tristesse du soir (MICHELET)' (211). This forms part of a broader, systemic practice throughout Cadiot's work, whereby authority, be it linguistic, scientific, social or literary, is called into question. This is, of course, a characteristic feature of a work of 'littérature mineure', as well as a constitutive aspect of what makes Cadiot's writing parodic.

Parody

Cadiot is often heralded as a funny writer. Emmanuel Hocquard, like many others, celebrates the comic aspect of Cadiot's oeuvre, describing how it constitutes a break from a dominant strain of contemporary French literature that is 'of a more serious kind, of a graver nature'.[85] The centrality of parody in Cadiot's work no doubt contributes to this. As

[85] Gavronsky, *Toward a New Poetics*, p. 237.

touched on above, the poet frequently ridicules social rituals and linguistic conventions: his texts repeat 'formules de politesse' in frenzied ritournelles, so much so that their excess morphs them into grotesque, absurd exaggerations. As Christian Prigent points out, the title itself of *L'art poétic'* is 'parodique', reworking the conventional literary formula of an 'ars poetica', evoking Horace, Boileau's *L'Art poétique* and Queneau's *Pour un art poétique*.[86] The title critiques some of the literary pretensions that lie behind the quest to outline a definitive 'ars poetica', while also foregrounding the notion of the literary or stylistic 'tic' – a compulsive and subconscious type of behaviour or language use, explored earlier by Lautréamont. As Prigent suggests, the title of the collection announces 'tout un programme', whereby literary tics and conventions are one by one subverted and parodied.[87] In the previous section, we saw how Cadiot exploits the redundant use of citation and epigraphs from certain literary greats; elsewhere a whole range of features of 'high literature' are gently mocked. The conventions of plot development, literary themes and poem titles are undermined in *L'art poétic'*: the headings 'Le départ' (33), 'La poursuite' (31), 'L'amour' (30), 'Le regret' (28) do not follow any conventional order, and do not correspond whatsoever to the content of the passages that they precede. The section 'Voyages anciens' introduces a pastiche of travel literature that *Futur, ancien, fugitif* later extends. In both texts, certain aspects of Romantic lyricism are subverted. For example, in *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* the slight variation on Lamartine's canonical line from 'Le Lac', 'O *tempssuspendtonvoletvousheurespropices* / [piano]' (106), transforms the original: the elision of the words, so that the whole phrase is no longer parsed into units of individual meaning, but rather comes to symbolise one single thing – a clichéd marker of Romantic poetry, is reinforced by the tongue-in-cheek stage instructions, the evocation of a muted musical accompaniment.

[86] Prigent, *Ceux qui merdRent*, p. 241.
[87] Ibid., p. 242.

In an essay on *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* Prigent evokes the pervasively parodic tone of Cadiot's writing, with its 'pastiches divers, rumination d'idiolectes insignifiants, gnomisme drolatiquement nul (un peu comme chez Beckett), refrains idiots, mime de la bêtise du parler convivial'.[88] Following this line of thought, he goes on to describe *Futur, ancien, fugitif* as 'moins un roman que la doublure d'un roman […] ; moins un récit pour de vrai qu'un récit « pour rire » ; […] moins un texte qu'un évitement du texte, un retrait au texte, un pas de texte, un texte zéro, un texte marqué, à la clausule, d'un « Zéro-sum »'.[89] The idea of the text as a negative or negating counterpart, defined by its deviation from a generically-exemplary hypotext, appears to me a useful way to conceptualise Cadiot's work as a whole. Following Prigent's analysis, it could be argued that the parodic dimension of Cadiot's writing exists not only in the narrower sense (intermittent pastiches of particular literary forms, mocking of specific codes, etc.) but also in the broader sense that it engages with and revises the wider conventions of pre-existing genres. In *L'art poétic'*, *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* and in his albums with Burger, Cadiot stages an internal and often implicit dialogue between the work itself – the song, the poem or the text – and the whole host of generic forms that it derives from: variously, lyric poetry, the 'Robinsonnade', the adventure novel, 'poésie sonore', the traditional French 'chanson', and so on. These genres or forms are multiple, but of particular interest for this chapter is how his work revises an established 'major' mode of poetry. This takes us back to a line of argument outlined in Chapter One, where I asked whether, following Bakhtin's analysis of genre, we might see certain forms of contemporary poetry as a parodic-travestying counterpart to a major genre. In each of Cadiot's poetic projects, I think we

[88] Christian Prigent, 'Le fugitif présent' in Jean-Michel Espitallier and Jacques Sivan (eds), 'Olivier Cadiot', *Java,* No. 13 (1995), p. 38.
[89] Ibid., p. 39.

find precisely this – an internally dialogistic form that parodies the conventions of the major genre.

Again, following Bakhtin's account, any parodic-travestying form will involve heteroglossia, which breaks the illusion of the direct word. As already discussed, heteroglossia is a defining feature of Cadiot's work. Various linguistic forms are not only juxtaposed, but parodied, as Anna Boschetti suggests in the following analysis of *Futur, ancien, fugitif*:

> Le récit de Robinson est une traversée de formes et de codes, évoqués par des échantillons parodiques : récit d'aventures et de voyage, roman de formation, roman épistolaire, roman d'espionnage, scène dialoguée, théâtre, cinéma, lettre, journal, calendrier, maxime, résumé, liste, […].
>
> Ce jeu avec les genres s'inscrit dans la même logique, fondée sur le choc des contraires. Ainsi, loin de confondre les codes, en brouillant les différences, le texte tend à accentuer les écarts, pour entretenir la tension, qui est une caractéristique fondamentale de la poésie. La modernité remplace la tension traditionnelle entre le mètre et la syntaxe par la tension entre les matériaux, entre les codes.[90]

Christian Prigent also analyses this feature of *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, evoking how it situates Cadiot's work in a particular literary tradition:

> En bref, rien n'est assignable (à un genre, à un style) : c'est un patchwork disparate, un dialogue de formes décousues qui décline, ravageur et moqueur, dans l'opacité narrative et se soustrait à toute prise cimentée des intentions (fables et morale). Si cela relève d'une tradition, c'est celle de la *satire* (le pot-pourri critique et burlesque de la littérature « carnivalesque » : Rabelais, Sterne, Gadda – mais blanchis – allégés par l'ironie et le ressassement rêveusement radoté façon Gertrude Stein).[91]

Prigent's image of 'un patchwork disparate' resonates with the key image in 'La Mécanique lyrique' of the poem as a monster composed from various linguistic 'greffes' and different literary forms and styles. It also evokes Barthes's analysis of the text as a

[90] Boschetti, 'Le formalisme réaliste d'Olivier Cadiot', p. 242.
[91] Prigent, 'Le fugitif présent', pp. 38-9.

'tissu de citations', 'un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées'.[92] Cadiot's poetry might be read as a grotesque or carnivalesque exaggeration of literature's pre-existing status as an immense fabric composed of proliferating, heterogeneous threads. Prigent describes here how the patchwork of disparate forms in Cadiot's work inscribes it in a lineage that draws on satire and the 'carnivalesque'. The terms 'pastiche' and 'parodique', and more specifically 'burlesque' and 'carnivalesque', are often used by critics discussing Cadiot's work.[93] While, as we saw in Chapter One, Bakhtin uses the term 'parodic-travestying forms' to capture the wide variety of parodic forms that co-exist with major genres, elsewhere he develops more specific analyses, for example of the carnivalesque.[94] As in his exploration of novelistic discourse, Bakhtin traces the development of the carnivalesque via its origins in particular historical events: street carnivals and public feast days in Medieval Europe. During these carnivals, laughter and subversion of the major institutions of the day (the Church, the State, etc.) were permitted, and even ritualised. This transgressive mode of the carnival soon found its way into literature, and although the events themselves petered out, the carnivalesque quality of certain forms of literature remained. Thus, carnivalesque literature uses humour, satire and the excess and exaggeration of the grotesque, to destabilise and undermine power structures. We see here a clear link to certain forms of minor literature, notably in their undoing or deterritorialising of major modes from within the major mode itself. Central to both concepts is the idea of repetition and difference: the repeating of the major refrain, but repeated or performed differently.

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[92] Barthes, *Le Bruissement de la langue,* p. 65.
[93] For example, Cusset uses the term 'burlesque' to describe Cadiot's prose work, and Kurts uses the same word in her analysis of *L'art poétic'*. François Cusset, 'politique de Cadiot', *Vacarme,* No. 40 (2007) <http://www.vacarme.org/article1341.html> [accessed 3 July 2017]. Kurts, 'Olivier Cadiot ou La Poétique des objets trouvés', p. 43.
[94] For a detailed consideration of these various terms, see the chapter 'Approaches to parody' in Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-38. Bakhtin elaborates the notion of the 'carnivalesque' in *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Significantly, in Bakhtin's analysis of both the carnivalesque and the parodic-travestying genres that precede and pave the way for the development of novelistic discourse, is the idea that the laughter they provoke is also a moment of revelation – an unveiling of the illusions behind monoglottic, single genres. Bakhtin writes:

> Parodic-travestying literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty direct word, the corrective of reality that is always richer, more fundamental and most importantly *too contradictory and heteroglot* to be fit into a high and straightforward genre. (*DI*, 55)

He suggests that 'All these diverse parodic-travestying forms constituted, as it were, a special extra-generic or inter-generic world' (*DI*, 59) and goes on to describe 'an immense novel, multi-generic, multi-styled, mercilessly critical, soberly mocking, reflecting in all its fullness, the heteroglossia and multiple voices of a given culture, people and epoch' (*DI,* 60). Although Bakhtin's own analysis is concerned ultimately with mapping the prehistory and defining the constitutive features of the novel, what is significant for the present discussion is that he envisages a form of inter- or extra-generic writing project, a heteroglottic, hybrid text that is more apt to represent the intrinsic variation of language and life.[95] These notions of 'parodic-travestying genres', the 'carnivalesque' and the 'multi-generic, multi-styled' text, map onto Deleuze and Guattari's reflections on minor and major forms of literature, and their relationships to variation and norms in language and reality. Indeed, there are certain parallels to be drawn between the 'permanent corrective of laughter' in Bakhtin's analysis, and the stutter in Deleuze and Guattari's: both repetitious, compulsive, paralinguistic gestures that disrupt the flow of language.

[95] Conversely, when any given genre becomes codified, its modes of representation are fossilised, and it runs the risk of promoting the usual literary and linguistic mythologies and illusions of a major genre.

Both are deterritorialising, breaking the illusions and destabilising the operation of a major mode or genre.

'L'incertitude générique'

In this final section, I aim to draw together some of the threads found throughout my analysis thus far, by exploring what Rabaté calls the 'incertitude générique' of Cadiot's writing, and looking at how this links into the discussion of minor literature set out hitherto.[96] The heteroglottic, hybrid and often parodic nature of Cadiot's work makes it unsurprisingly resistant to sitting within a single, major genre. The aspects of his oeuvre considered in this chapter all reside, in various ways, at the convergence of different mediums and traditional genres – poetry, the novel, text, performance, music, and so on. *L'art poétic'*, as already noted, is the only text that Cadiot himself designates as a straightforward work of poetry. However, from the off, the task was precisely to destabilise the conventions of the genre within which Cadiot so firmly locates the text. We read above how, in using cut-ups to disrupt the monoglossia of a traditional lyric mode, Cadiot set about finding a 'territoire de poésie neuf'.[97] As Nathalie Wourm suggests, Cadiot sought to 'déhiérarchiser les genres, […] déloger la poésie de ses quartiers traditionnels pour en réinterroger la definition, pour la décharger de cette définition'.[98] If he was ultimately successful in this task, which I think he was, Cadiot nonetheless evokes the impasse that *L'art poétic'* led him to. He describes how the cut-up renders the poet an

[96] Rabaté, 'Polyphonie du solitaire: le Robinson d'Olivier Cadiot', p. 86.
[97] Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.*
[98] Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 4. This revision of poetic genre performs precisely that self-interrogatory gesture that Gleize describes as the sole definition for poetry today: '« La poésie » n'existe pas, n'existe plus, ce qui ne signifie pas, bien sûr, le tarissement de la pratique poétique, mais simplement que la poésie vit son état de crise, sans doute *de* son état de crise, un état critique et autocritique permanent qui est certainement sa seule définition possible aujourd'hui' (Gleize, *A noir*, p. 102).

'artisan', and edges literature towards a 'travail plastique', 'presque un travail de plasticien'.[99] He remarks:

> À l'époque de *L'art poétic'* ce qui m'intéressait, c'était de faire de l'ultra-simple: du marbre, du conceptuel. La page de *L'art poétic'* est une cimaise. Si j'avais continué, je serais devenu peut-être plasticien — imitateur de Laurence Weiner ou de Joseph Kossuth [*sic*] : j'aurais fait des installations de mots. Ou je serais devenu poète sonore, ce qui n'est pas très différent : la musique et les arts plastiques sont dans la même zone, la zone matériologique. C'est merveilleux, mais je ne peux pas le faire ; ou bien je ne voudrais faire que ça. Il fallait abandonner le bateau. Pour arriver au roman, disons au livre, il a fallu faire à nouveau naufrage.[100]

Here Cadiot elaborates the dilemma he faced after writing his first book of poetry. He writes that 'au moment de *L'art poétic'* […] je sors du littéraire', and thus could either pursue an artistic or musical trajectory, or abandon the project and return afresh to the 'littéraire' in the shape of the novel.[101] Ultimately, it appears that he did both, pursuing the 'littéraire' in his novels, and extending the 'plastique', 'matériologique' dimension of *L'art poétic* in his subsequent work on *Welche, Hôtel Robinson* and *Psychopharmaka*. Unsurprisingly, by importing many of the same features of *L'art poétic'* into the later albums, the result is a similar hybrid and generically unclassifiable form. The compositional techniques – sampling and rearrangement – express clearly the 'plasticien' dimension; that the material he is working with is primarily linguistic means we find an 'installation de mots', set within a musical framework. The importance of music in Cadiot's oeuvre begins well before his collaborations with Burger. From the beginning of his literary career, Cadiot wrote lyrics and worked with musicians and composers such as Pascal Dusapin and Kat Onoma. Musical allusions are pervasive in his earlier writing, from the musical staves of 'la Dame du Lac' in *L'art poétic'*, to the annotations of *Futur,*

[99] Cadiot described this 'travail plastique' at the *Colloque Olivier Cadiot: Expérience morte, expérimentez* at the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in September 2015. Cadiot, Lagarde, Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.*
[100] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 12.
[101] Ibid., p. 13.

ancien, fugitif: '[chanté] … [parlé]' (210), '***Allélulia*** 1. (voix suraiguë)' (180). Tellingly, criticism of Cadiot's earlier work often conceptualises it with musical vocabulary: Alizart, for example, describes *L'art poétic'* as 'un livre fait de *samples*', and Prigent evokes its 'musicalité ironique et légère, un peu rêveuse, un peu cassée, un peu répétitive, alanguie et parfois discordante'.[102] In the background is, of course, the longstanding connection between music and poetry, with the latter often being distinguished from prose in the emphasis it places on language as a rhythmic, phonic material, rather than a naming, signifying entity. From the focus on linguistic materiality in *L'art poétic'*, via the manic repetitions and glossolalia of Robinson in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, to the reworked samples of Welche speakers in *Welche*, we see how Cadiot is interested in the point where language overlaps or transforms into music, where the rhythmic patternings of poetry 'déporte la langue littéraire vers une sorte de contiguïté avec la *musique*'.[103]

Also significant for these later albums is their status as performance. All three albums were performed live at various art festivals and concerts: *Welche* at the 'Babel' festival in Strasbourg, *Hôtel Robinson* at the 'Festival des Vieilles Charrues' in Brittany, and *Psychopharmaka* at the 'Festival d'Avignon' and the Centre Pompidou. Looking at the trajectory of Cadiot's work as a whole, we see an organic movement from *L'art poétic'*, via *Futur, ancien, fugitif,* with its dramatic monologues and 'didascalies', towards actual performance, both in his musical collaborations, but also his prose writing adapted for the stage (*Roméo & Juliette*, for example, was made into an opera, and *Fairy Queen* was performed as a play). Even Cadiot's public readings of his written poetry have the dramatic dynamism and comic interpretation of a one-man show. In the passage from text

[102] Mark Alizart, 'Les Trois âges du sample', *Critique*, No. 677 (2003), p. 776. Prigent, *Ceux qui merdRent*, pp. 250-1.
[103] Prigent, 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs', p. 435. Here Prigent is describing the four principal characteristics of poetry, according to Deleuze.

to performance, we find an interim stage in *L'art poétic'* and *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, that explores linguistic performativity. The focus on language as doing rather than saying manifests itself both in the emphasis on the '*acte* de transmission de compétences grammaticales' in *L'art poétic'*, and in the emphasis on phatic speech in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, where language operates primarily as a form of social gesture.[104] As discussed above, in the latter text Robinson is built, performatively, in language, and then subsequently dismantled in the same gesture. Between Robinson's dramatic monologue in the first half of *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, and the stage directions throughout, '[à part]' (10), '[prenant la parole]' (11), '[buvant]' (11), '[ad lib]' (178), Dominique Rabaté's assertion that the book represents a 'passage au théâtre, au *one man show*' rings true.[105]

Writing about *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, Rabaté describes Cadiot's 'manière d'écrire très singulière, entre roman et poésie et théâtre'.[106] Cadiot himself evokes how, in *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, 'L'idée était de faire un "roman par poèmes", comme on fait un "roman par lettres"'.[107] He expresses his desire to 'greffer' poetry onto prose, to house poetry within prose, using prose as a 'famille d'accueil' for poetry.[108] It might be tempting to pursue Cadiot's reflections here, and to explore how his texts fuse features of both genres in a hybrid form of contemporary prose poetry.[109] However, we might equally want to move away from this polarisation altogether, and to envisage instead the dismantling of the distinction, as Cadiot himself gestured towards in 'La Mécanique lyrique', where he and

[104] Kurts, 'Olivier Cadiot ou La Poétique des objets trouvés', pp. 35-6. My italics.
[105] Ibid., p. 86.
[106] Rabaté, 'Polyphonie du solitaire: le Robinson d'Olivier Cadiot', p. 86.
[107] Cadiot, Lagarde, and Poitrenaux, *Un mage en été : dossier pédagogique.*
[108] Cadiot elaborated these ideas at the *Colloque Olivier Cadiot: Expérience morte, expérimentez*.
[109] Game does so in his chapter on Cadiot in *Poetic Becomings.* He writes: 'Neither novel nor poem *FAF* is a generic de-territorialization taking place between the all-encompassing continuity of a *récit* and the conspicuous self-consciousness specific to the poetic function of language in the Jakobsonian sense. In a word it is *the becoming-poem of prose as much as the becoming-prose of poetry*' (162-3). This analysis resonates with what we saw in Fourcade's work in the previous chapter.

Alferi elaborated the term 'OVNI' ('objet verbal non identifié'). In this essay, Alferi and Cadiot write:

> Ce dont la fiction a besoin, c'est d'un matériau de construction spécifique : des boules de sensation-pensées-formes. Des calculs, des nids d'hirondelles. On peut les appeler Objets, parce qu'ils sont manufacturés […]. Plus que des contours lisses et familiers, ces petites agglutinations, sensibles-affectives-langagières, sont des sortes de monstres. Monstres de fidélité, des Objets verbaux non identifies.[110]

The term 'OVNI' thus resists the temptation to polarise, and acts to either suspend or evade the impasse of the prose-poetry debate. With its evocation of UFOs, it encapsulates the alien quality of a monstrous, generically hybrid or generically unidentifiable form. In his thesis on 'OVNIs', Lynch writes:

> The notion of the Ovni has also important consequences for poetic form. Playing on the French term for UFO, the Ovni implies experimental works that may be far from resembling traditional literary forms. Appearing instead as 'monstres,' these creations may combine multiple genres and several registers of language within a single work. As the title *Revue de littérature générale* implies, contemporary poetry may incorporate numerous sorts of prose as a sort of 'general,' post-genre literature. These hybridized forms also take verse and prose alongside works involving drawings, photographs, video, and other media. This theory of textual mechanics orients post-genre poetry by characterizing methods of intermedial composition proper to a specific work.[111]

Like Jean-Marie Gleize and his theory of 'post-poésie', discussed in the introduction, Cadiot and Alferi identify the presence of a form of post-genre literature in contemporary practice. In their essay 'Digest' that concludes the second *Revue*, they express overtly the resistance to classifying along generic lines:

> [I]l ne s'agit pas d'inclure artificiellement des poèmes dans un roman ou de la prose découpée dans un poème. Plutôt de travailler à une forme où l'on verrait les genres et les registres se justifier en cours de route. Cette forme, faut-il encore l'appeler 'roman'? Ou 'texte'? Ne pas l'appeler du tout?[112]

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[110] Alferi and Cadiot, 'La Mécanique lyrique', pp. 5-6.
[111] Lynch, *Unidentified Verbal Objects*, pp. 17-18.
[112] 'Digest', *Revue 96/2*. There are a number of contradictions in the way that Cadiot reflects on poetry and genre: his post-generic analysis in the *Revue* appears at odds with the way that, elsewhere, he wishes to maintain a clear prose-poetry divide. We saw above how he makes a distinction between *L'art poétic'* as a 'livre de poésie', his later novels, and *Futur, ancien, fugitif* as a 'roman par poèmes' (directly contrasting with his comment in the extract above).

In the conclusion to this thesis I will return to the issues raised by Alferi and Cadiot's post-generic analysis, particularly with regard to the place for poetry within it. For the time being, by way of an interim conclusion, we might maintain that their account applies also to the various aspects of Cadiot's oeuvre considered in this chapter. Indeed, we might conceptualise Cadiot's work as a vast literary or artistic rhizome, a Barthesian multidimensional space or a Bakhtinian intra- or extra-generic practice, where poetry and prose, music and theatre all exist on one single interconnected plane. Rather than superimposing particular generic distinctions onto a given work, and then attempting to identify how certain features relate back to some established notion of a 'novel', 'poem' or 'song', it can be more useful to explore the properties that transcend generic distinctions and forge links between one literary enterprise and the next. The cut-up, the heteroglottic assemblage of variegated images of languages, the destabilising 'usage mineur' of the major language, all of these practices transcend literary classification and translate throughout Cadiot's oeuvre from his early texts to his most recent performances. Having distilled from poetry, prose and music the fundamental, supra-generic or supra-media building blocks that Deleuze analyses – rhythm, refrain, repetition, and movement – Cadiot then assembles these building blocks to produce a number of effects, literary and formal, but also affective and political. Like Bakhtin's carnivalesque or parodic-travestying forms that undermine the conventions of major genres, the generic rhizome of Cadiot's oeuvre presents one further way in which his work operates as a 'littérature mineure', challenging and destabilising the clear delineation of genre in 'littérature majeure'.

Chapter Four: Christophe Tarkos, 'pour la poésie'

As is perhaps inevitable for a young poet who died prematurely, 'un mythe Tarkos' is already beginning to take shape.[1] This myth depicts Tarkos as a strange, somewhat subversive figure, a talented poet and thinker, troubled by illness throughout his brief but prolific career. In many respects, Tarkos invited a degree of mythologising upon himself, producing, throughout the course of his lifetime, a number of slippery 'auto-présentations': playful, semi-autobiographical descriptions that deliberately wrong-foot the reader in their combination of fact and fiction.[2] These passages include reflections on his poetic practice: 'Poète: bouleur, prononciateur, crieur, improvisateur […]. Produit autant de textes que de sons. Travail poétique traditionnel' (*E*, 7), and seemingly straightforward assertions about himself: 'Je suis intelligent / et / sérieux. / […] Je suis / un homme / d'une trentaine d'années. / […] Je suis de gauche. / Je suis athée' (*E*, 415-16). Things that we know to be true, 'Vit à Marseille et Paris' (*E*, 7), and things that we know to be false, 'Je n'ai pas de femme et pas d'enfants' (*E*, 35), are interspersed with provocative statements, the truth of which is uncertain: 'Profession alimentaire: vol, gardiennage' (*E*, 7), 'je suis anormal, sexuellement' (*E*, 35). This makes constructing a clear sense of Tarkos's life somewhat difficult, but there are a number of facts that we know for certain. He was born near Marseille in 1963, where he spent a large part of his life. He studied politics, and later literature, before beginning a teaching career which he soon abandoned. In the 1990s, he moved back and forth between Paris and Marseille, while holding down a number of jobs to put bread on the table: motorway tollbooth operator, toy salesman, 'vacataire' at the BNF. In the early 1990s, poetry became Tarkos's primary focus; he gave numerous

[1] Thomas Clerc, 'La Mite' in 'Dossier Christophe Tarkos', *Cahier Critique de Poésie*, No. 30 (Marseille: Centre International de Poésie, 2015), p. 73. In this short piece, Clerc asks 'Est-ce qu'il existe un mythe Tarkos?', before answering 'Oui, sans doute', and expanding upon the reception of Tarkos's work since his death in 2004.

[2] For some examples, see Tarkos, *Écrits poétiques*, p. 31, or *Morceaux choisis,* p. 110.

performances of his work, for example at the Centre International de Poésie in Marseille and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and published his texts, initially with various small publishers, and later with Al Dante and P.O.L.. As well as contributing frequently to poetry reviews, *Nioques*, *Doc(k)s*, *TXT*, *Java* and the *Revue de littérature générale 96/2*, for example, Tarkos co-founded *R.R.* with Nathalie Quintane and Stéphane Bérard, *Poézi Prolétèr* with Katalin Molnàr and Pascal Doury, *Quaderno* with Philippe Beck, and *Facial* with Charles Pennequin and Vincent Tholomé. In the last ten years of his life, Tarkos wrote prolifically, publishing, among others: *Morceaux choisis* (1995), *Oui* (1996), *Le train* (1996), *Processe* (1997), *Le Bâton* (1998), *Caisses* (1998), *L'Argent* (1999), *Le Signe* = (1999), *Pan* (1999), *Ma langue* (2000) and *Anachronisme* (2001). In November 1999, after suffering from severe headaches, Tarkos was told that he had a brain tumour. In the years that preceded his death on 4 November 2004, his illness consumed his day-to-day life, inflecting his poetry in ways that shall be discussed later in this chapter, and ultimately bringing his writing to a premature end. Since his death, critical attention to Tarkos's work has grown steadily, increasing in recent years after P.O.L.'s posthumous publication of *Ecrits poétiques* (2008) and *L'Enregistré* (2014). The first of these volumes presents Tarkos's written poetry, collecting together his earlier texts, often hard to get hold of due to their small print runs; the second, accompanied by a CD and a DVD, assembles his performance work.

Whether written or performed, there is a stylistic and thematic unity to Tarkos's poetry. In her thesis on Tarkos, Anne-Renée Caillé describes this unity as a 'projet totalisant'.[3] Tarkos's oeuvre presents itself as a distinct, cohesive whole, which means that, as Thomas

[3] Anne-Renée Caillé, *Théorie du langage et esthétique totalisante dans l'oeuvre poétique de Christophe Tarkos* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Montréal, 2014), p. 14.

Clerc suggests, it constitutes 'un art immédiatement reconnaissable'.[4] His poems, with their obsessive repetitions and revisions that circulate around a central, pivotal word or idea, have what Christian Prigent calls an 'arrogante simplicité' to their mode of expression.[5] Marking a noticeable contrast to many experimental poets of the preceding generation, Cadiot and Fourcade included, Tarkos's poetry reinstates the much-maligned lyric 'je', and often has a personal, if not autobiographical, inflection. His poetry is firmly grounded in 'la matière vécue' of the everyday, and, as Jocelyn Bonnerave points out in her short essay 'Le narratif chez le dernier Tarkos', it often demonstrates a narrative inclination.[6] These features of Tarkos's work are typically associated with 'les poètes du signifié', yet his poetry presents itself in an entirely different way to other poets assembled under this paradigm. His concern with the everyday suggests certain resonances with Jacques Réda, Henri Thomas and Paul de Roux, for example, and his emphasis on presence offers parallels with Yves Bonnefoy, but his preoccupation with language and linguistic experimentation gives his poetry a different orientation. It is precisely this idiosyncratic configuration that sets Tarkos apart from many of his contemporaries, and that serves to cement his position as a unique voice in his generation.

Despite its manifest singularity, the 'filiations' in Tarkos's poetry are apparent and manifold. In his written texts, we see the influence of, among others, Francis Ponge, Samuel Beckett, Gertrude Stein, Georges Perec, and Valère Novarina; in his performance work, Antonin Artaud, Kurt Schwitters, and Bernard Heidsieck. Likewise, links are often drawn between Tarkos and certain other contemporary poets - Nathalie Quintane, Charles Pennequin, and Philippe Beck - who formed a new generation of poets publishing in the

[4] Clerc, 'La Mite', p. 73.
[5] Prigent, 'Sokrat à Patmo', p. 12.
[6] 'Tarkos colle juste à la matière vécue'. Jocelyn Bonnerave, 'Le narratif chez le dernier Tarkos' in 'Dossier Christophe Tarkos', p. 65.

1990s. Their work, while different in many respects, constituted an observable movement, 'un phénomène *nouveau*', that Christian Prigent argues began to crystallise in the mid-1990s.[7] Their poetry was characterised by a new 'lisibilité', a readability that arose from a twofold rejection of the state of poetry as they had inherited it. On the one hand, with figures like Bonnefoy and Du Bouchet in the background, they were wary of poetry that, driven by the philosophy underpinning the texts, resulted in poems that were highly conceptual, often difficult, and paradoxically removed from the world that they purported to accentuate. On the other, responding to formalist or textualist poetry, typified by poets associated with *Tel Quel* or the *Oulipo*, they sought to move away from self-negating linguistic play, and the perceived stagnation of impossible meaning, absent reference and the problematising of poetic voice. However, like others of this generation, if Tarkos's work appeared as more immediately readable, it was no less experimental, and many of the same preoccupations of twentieth-century poetry were sustained, albeit in a different guise. As the following chapter will argue, despite features that often appear as markers of a traditional or lyric mode of poetry – the reprise of first-person voice, the narrative or descriptive dimension – Tarkos's work does not represent a return to a previous state of poetry.[8] It is not a form of 're-poésie', to use Jean-Marie Gleize's term, nor was it associated with the 'nouveau lyrique' or 'néo-lyrique' movements discussed in the introduction.[9] As we shall see, these features arise from the idiosyncratic theoretical underpinnings of Tarkos's project – his notion of the 'pâte-mot', which envisages the relationship between language and the world it describes differently. The following chapter will examine these theoretical underpinnings, their consequences for poetic form

[7] Prigent, *Salut les anciens*, p. 9. See Prigent, 'Sokrat à Patmo', p. 11, for further discussion.
[8] Tarkos insists on this point with characteristic enthusiasm: 'Je suis l'avant-garde en 1997' (*E*, 20). See Farah, 'Christophe Tarkos: situation de l'écrivain en 1997' in *La possibilité du choc*, pp. 28-36, for a more detailed discussion of the significance of Tarkos's claim.
[9] Gleize, *Sorties,* p. 58.

and voice, and the various types of experimentation that take place within Tarkos's work. It will highlight how this experimentation differs from that found in Cadiot's and Fourcade's poetry, primarily because Tarkos's approach to (and comprehension of) language is significantly different to that of the other poets I have looked at thus far. I will return to various aspects of my previous discussion – on 'littérature mineure', style, monoglossia and genre – which configure differently in Tarkos's work, presenting interesting points of difference and similarity to Cadiot's and Fourcade's.

'Pour savoir'

In the final stanza of *Je m'agite* (1999), a poem where Tarkos expresses a restless sense of existential anxiety prompted by uncertainty, he writes the following:

> je ne sais pas sur quoi je vais m'appuyer pour savoir.
> pour dire.
> pour appuyer ce que je suis.
> […]
> je ne sais pas ce sur quoi je vais bientôt m'appuyer pour dire.
> pour dire que je suis.
> pour savoir
>
> (*EP*, 315)

The concluding lines of the poem evoke the enterprise at the heart of Tarkos's poetic project. For Tarkos, poetry responds to the demand for a means 'pour savoir'; it is, to use Gleize's expression, 'un travail d'investigation-élucidation'.[10] It presents itself as a mode to pursue a further understanding of existence, to make sense of the self and the world, and to elaborate, as Tarkos writes in *Le Baroque*, a 'théorie de ce qui est' (33), a 'théorie de ce qui existe' (44). In *Processe*, he describes this project outright: 'je m'engage à chercher la vérité et à rester dans la vérité les yeux tournés vers le sens du monde' (*EP*, 88). In an

[10] Gleize, 'La post-poésie : un travail d'investigation-élucidation', p. 129. We recall here the opening lines of Gleize's *A noir*, which evoke how the investigative mode of poetry is also a self-reflexive one: 'Reste pour nous: la poésie. L'ignorance de ce qu'elle est. La faire, l'écrire, "pour savoir." Pour progresser dans cette ignorance. Pour savoir cette ignorance. Pour l'élucider. Lire, pas pour "expliquer," pour savoir' (11).

interview with Bertrand Verdier, Tarkos highlights certain similarities between poetry, as he conceives of it, and philosophy, suggesting that there is an equivalence in their quest for truth.[11] In this sense, poetry is seen as one practice among many engaged in a pursuit of truth, in its various forms, and Tarkos was, perhaps unsurprisingly, a wide reader in a number of disciplines: philosophy, theology, history, science, economics, sociology, and so on.[12] Throughout his work we find references to the various ways in which people have attempted to glean insight into the world: in *Le Baroque*, for example, Tarkos refers to anthropology, 'Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*' (20), linguistics, 'grammaire transfonctionnelle de Chomsky' (14), and a range of other disciplines besides: 'généalogie / logique des classes de Whitehead et Russell / code génétique' (14). The scope of Tarkos's subject matter is broad: in his writing we find meditations on, *inter alia*, substance, things, reality, consciousness, thought, feeling, bodily experience, language, literature, poetry, and meaning. His poetry touches on various ethical concerns; a recurring motif is the desire to ascertain not only what is true, but also what is of value and what is good. Thus, throughout his work we find recurring declarations such as the following: 'l'amour est bon' (*ML*, 33), 'la drogue est bonne' (*EP*, 220), 'les textes sont vrais, sont sincères' (*EP*, 135), 'l'argent est la valeur sublime' (*EP*, 263). In this respect, Tarkos's oeuvre might be seen to belong to a form of 'poésie pensante', concerned, in turn, with a 'poéthique' more commonly associated with figures such as Yves Bonnefoy, Philippe Jaccottet, Michel Deguy or René Char.[13] However, unlike many (although not all) of the twentieth-century poets that fall under this appellation, Tarkos's work resists abstraction

[11] Bertrand Verdier, 'Entretiens de Bertrand Verdier avec Christophe Tarkos' in *Écrits poétiques*, p. 356. The types of truth that poetry and philosophy seek are not necessarily the same, as Anne-Renée Caillé points out in *Théorie du langage*, p. 274.
[12] For a useful survey of Tarkos's eclectic interests, see Castellin, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 22.
[13] For a detailed discussed of 'poésie pensante' or indeed 'philopoésie' as he often refers to it, see Pinson, *Habiter en poète*, especially the second part: 'II: Éléments (Pour une philosophie de la poésie contemporaine)', pp. 61- 134. I shall return to his notion of a 'poéthique' in the final sections of this chapter.

and its ontological dimension is consistently grounded in the slightness of the everyday. In this sense, Tarkos's project sees an often surprising and occasionally disjunctive combination of the major and minor. It is major in so far as his work is ambitious in scope, tasked with nothing less than pursuing a further understanding of the world; minor in so far as these broader questions are always rooted in the resolutely small, and are expressed in simple, straightforward terms. As we shall shortly see, a theory of monistic materialism is elaborated via the consideration of a fruit compote (*EP*, 243); the sight of crowds moving outside the metro station at Barbès forms the pivot for a wider reflection on a theory of the 'ensemble' (*A*, 39). This derives, in part, from the way in which Tarkos presents what might in grander terms be called a 'philosophical investigation', as 'un modeste petit effort de mettre au clair certaines petites choses' (*EP*, 96). Philosophy is understood as event, and an entirely ordinary, quotidian event at that.

Tarkos's poetry often reads as a series of straightforward observations, postulates and assertions. In *Ma langue,* he writes: 'Une chose est sûre. Une chose est sûre. / Il y a une chose de sûr. […] Une chose est claire. Une chose / est sûre. Une chose est certaine à 100%' (29). This metapoetic refrain evokes his own *modus operandi*: begin with stating clearly what is certain, and proceed from there. Tarkos was interested in modal logic and truth conditional semantics; we saw above his reference to Russell and Whitehead, and logical propositions such as the following occur throughout his work: 'Ma mère est un homme est faux. Ma mère n'est pas un homme. Ma mère est une femme. […] Une femme n'est pas un homme. Un fils n'est pas une femme.' (*EP*, 238). Starting with tautological statements such as these, Tarkos constructs a philosophy from scratch, commencing with basic assertions of things that are certain and true. Complementing this desire to begin at the beginning, Tarkos's attempt to make sense of the world as a material entity starts with

a consideration of the constitutive elements of its substance. '[L]a grande substance' (*EP*, 163) is a pivotal motif in Tarkos's poetry: as we shall shortly see it is intimately linked to his theory of the 'pâte-mot', but it is also there in its most literal form, as a term that incorporates the sheer variety of different forms of matter from which the world, and everything in it, is constituted. As a result, we find prevalent references to the most basic, material particles: in *Anachronisme*, Tarkos lists elements from the periodic table, 'Le monde est fait d'étain, d'iode, d'or, de plomb, de fer, de plutonium, d'oxygène, de néon, d'uranium' (185); in *Processe* we find references to quarks, ions, and other 'éléments primordiaux' (*EP,* 126). Certain types of substance are granted a prominent position, most notably, elemental forms ('la terre', 'l'eau', 'la pierre', and so on), and viscous substances ('la pâte', 'la compote', 'la confiture', 'la merde', 'la bouillie'). Beyond this emphasis on substance itself, Tarkos elaborates a network of motifs – usually physical objects or geometric shapes – that reappear throughout his poetry. 'Carrés', 'ronds', bâtons', 'boules': these shapes operate not only as typographic models for the poem, but constitute primary forms, the patterns of which are then traced across multiple levels of existence and lived experience. To give just one example, in *Morceaux choisis* Tarkos describes the 'boule' as an abstract, geometrical form: 'Une boule, pressée à son centre, appuyée, pincée en son centre, tordue et pincée, tournée, torsadée est tournée, coincée, deux boules serrées tournées étranglées' (*MC*, 32). Here, Tarkos focuses on the geometric dimensions of a form, its spatial arrangement, the relationship between part and whole, centre and sides, as well as the forces that act upon it, and the movements it makes. The 'boule' then returns in various different manifestations: in *Ronds*, for example, it constitutes the shape of the poems themselves (*EP*, 207). Alongside its cognates 'boulette' and 'globule', it reappears in 'Quelle belle terre' in reference to the spherical shape of the Earth itself (*E*, 472-3), and in *Le Signe*= it describes units of meaning: 'Les expressions, les tirades sont des boulettes,

des poches d'eau, des bombes d'eau' (29). In a letter to Christophe Hanna, Tarkos acknowledges the way in which he traces the patterns of the 'boule' across multiple fields, writing: 'Les Boules sont […] des corps sphériques topologiques que l'on retrouve dans le voyage autour du Monde, ainsi la tête est une boule' (*E*, 49).[14] In this respect, there is something Deleuzo-Guattarian about Tarkos's project; like Deleuze and Guattari with the 'plateau' or 'rhizome', Tarkos identifies a number of basic forms, the 'boule', the 'bâton' or the 'beignet' for example, which manifest themselves on various strata of experience, and which then serve as conceptual models for his philosophical project. Just as Deleuze and Guattari might use the 'rhizome' to think about different forms of literature, Tarkos uses the 'boule' to think about the operation of meaning within language. There is an arbitrariness to the selection of these models, which reflects the fact that neither Deleuze and Guattari's nor Tarkos's project attempts to create an exhaustive or systematic philosophy. Instead, both projects involve the elaboration of an idiosyncratic vocabulary, a small, generative set of basic concepts that form a conceptual tool box from which to construct a broader philosophical programme.

'Une expérience, un truc expérimental, une expérimentation'

In the quest 'pour savoir', Tarkos's poetry advances through a series of experiments. The experiment is the operational principle for Tarkos's project, and references are found throughout his work to experiments of various kinds. In *Anachronisme*, for example, he details a medical experiment that monitors the effects of an antipsychotic drug, 'le traitement par le zuclopenthixol' (188), and evokes the 'expériences sur le circuit d'une pile' conducted by the French physicist Édouard Branly (205). With regard to Branly and his radio wave detector, he makes the following comment, which might equally well apply

[14] For a further elaboration of this motif, see Philippe Castellin's discussion of the 'boule' in 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 46.

to his own poetics: 'à noter les résultats, à enregistrer les phénomènes, à expérimenter tous les phénomènes avec toutes les matières' (205). Elsewhere his reflections on the experiment are more directly self-reflexive:

> Une expérience, un truc expérimental, une expérimentation, il est possible d'expérimenter, expérimenter sur soi, nous allons faire une expérience, faire l'expérience de certains produits cérébraux, de certains états d'âme, de certaines ambiances, de certaines substances qui suintent, qui coulent de la pensée, […] un certain attentisme, un flottement et c'est parti, l'expérience peut commencer
> (*A*, 21-2)

Here Tarkos evokes the thought experiments that form the inaugural 'point de départ' of his poems, which begin with an attentiveness to the states and modulations of the mind. As we saw with Fourcade, Tarkos also plays with the dual meaning of 'expérience', this time evoking an experiment grounded in the experience of different cognitive states. In *Processe* he describes how:

> les textes ne sont que le fruit d'un modeste petit effort de mettre au clair certaines petites choses, ne peuvent pas répondre intégralement d'un coup aux énormes demandes qui surestiment les possibilités d'un simple petit texte qui ne peut être que le résultat d'un petit effort de penser à quelque chose
> (*EP*, 96)

In describing the text as 'le résultat' of such an effort, this might suggest the poem is the end-product - a set of conclusions or outcomes of a prior process. However, it could equally be argued that, in Tarkos's work, the poem itself *is* the experiment. The process of experimentation is represented as if it is taking place in real-time, within the language of the poem itself, rather than in the mind prior to the production of the text. As we shall shortly see, the formal properties of Tarkos's poetry reinforce this idea; they often demonstrate the advancing a proposition, its repetition and subsequent revision, in a form

of ‘mastication verbale’ which in turn replicates or indeed performs the movements of thought itself.[15]

The experiment, although described thus far as a form of thought experiment, might therefore be seen as both an experiment in thought and simultaneously an experiment in language. Given that it is represented as taking place in the writing, the experiment involves language and thought synchronously, and their inextricability is reinforced by a focus in Tarkos’s work on their locus within the body. The adjectives Tarkos uses to describe thought and language, such as ‘hormonal’ or ‘corporel’, form part of a broader conception of the two phenomena as temporal, bodily events that involve a change of physical or neurological states.[16] One of the principal, recurring forms of experiment in Tarkos’s poetry is the transcription of the sensorial experience of the body: the lungs inflating and deflating, the heart beating, the movement of the arms and the elbows. Deriving from this attentiveness to the body is an attentiveness to the experience of thought and language as embodied phenomena. We saw this in Fourcade’s work too, but for Tarkos, a performance poet as well as a written poet, references to the experience of speech are particularly pervasive. His performances often comment on their own delivery, describing the movement of the tongue in the mouth, the sensation of air exhaled from the lungs, punctuated by the contraction of the vocal tract.[17] In his written texts, for example in *Processe*, the feeling of pronouncing different vowel sounds is transcribed on the page:

> A est différent de O. Il faut prononcer A et O. Montre l’incroyable différence. Aaaaaaaaaaaa / Ooooooooooo. S’imprégner de la prononciation, en prononçant

[15] Prigent, *Salut les anciens,* p. 88.
[16] In an interview with Bertrand Verdier, for example, Tarkos says: ‘pour moi, la langue, elle est comme…, c’est hormonal. […] C’est vraiment hormonal; la vérité corporelle’ (*EP*, 358-9).
[17] Examples of this can be found throughout Tarkos’s oeuvre, but the poem ‘Gonfle’, performed at the Pompidou centre in January 1999, is a prime instance of the attentiveness to breathing, the inflation and deflation of the lungs, and the movement of air in the respiratory passage. For a transcription of this poem see Tarkos, *L’Enregistré*, pp. 330-69.

> longuement dans la bouche. En vocalisant un a continu, Puis un o continu. Sentir l'évolution, les métamorphoses complexes dans la bouche.
>
> (*EP*, 117-18)

Here Tarkos appeals to the physical experience of language, which is felt in the body, or in the mouth. The verbs that Tarkos uses to describe this experiment, 's'imprégner' and 'sentir', reinforce this emphasis on sensation or feeling, which is found elsewhere, in *Signe*=, in a series of 14 poems all given the same title: 'Le sentiment'. In the following passage, which comes from this series, Tarkos begins with a description of the sensation of breathing, before drawing attention to consciousness situated within that same breathing body:

> Le sentiment du battement balancement régulier de la poitrine du ventre du devant, de l'oscillation lente, plus lente que le battement, le balancement lent du devant, du poitrail, de ce n'est pas la poitrine, c'est la personne, le centre de la personne qui se balance, trouve l'air en entier, trouve dehors, trouve de quoi, trouve son inspiration, trouve son balancement, […] le sentiment de la conscience, de la conscience qu'elle est en présence d'une personne, qu'elle a vu une personne, qu'elle est en face d'une personne, plus qu'en face, en phase d'une personne, qu'elle est avec une personne, que c'est une personne qui est trouvée dans le un balancement.
>
> (*S*, 112-13)

This passage moves from the observation of the beating of the heart in the chest to the awareness of the presence of consciousness. The regular beat of the heart is reflected in the marked rhythmic effects of the text: alliteration ('poitrail', 'poitrine' 'personne') and internal rhyme and assonance ('lente', 'ventre', 'devant') create a steady pulsation. At times, this is reinforced by the syntactic divisions of the text which, in the penultimate lines of the passage for example, present clauses of regular durations. The repetition of certain words ('lente', 'trouve', 'personne') forms pivots for the transition from one phase of the passage to the next, subsequently driving the language of the text forward with a sustained rhythm. These rhythmic effects replicate 'le battement' described, and serve to hold the passage together as an 'ensemble', creating a formal unity. As the focus of the passage shifts, this formal unity creates an equivalence or parallelism between the

description of the regularity of the heart and the constant presence of consciousness, something which Tarkos alludes to in a previous poem from this same series on 'Le sentiment', where he describes 'Le sentiment constant de la conscience' (*S*, 109). Consciousness is therefore presented in the poem, both in the words themselves and in the prosodic effects, as a constant presence which is 'en phase' with a person, synchronised with the beating heart, with the movement of thought, and with the production of language itself.[18]

In *Processe*, Tarkos applies a similar attentiveness to the movements of thought: 'La pensée flotte, elle existe. Circulent. M'amusaient. S'ouvrent. Se désaltèrent. Virent. La pensée flotte, elle existe' (*EP*, 69). His observations attempt to catch thought in the act, as it were, to trace its repetitions, revisions and derivations. As suggested above, the displacement of the locus of experimentation from a time prior to the poem, to taking place in the poem itself, accounts for many of the formal and stylistic characteristics of Tarkos's work. His poetry represents the flux of thought in language; as Kate Campbell observes, the 'pulsation' of the poet's thought provides the rhythm of the text, shaping the direction it takes.[19] I want to briefly illustrate this idea in practice, with the following passage which exemplifies many of the formal properties that are prevalent in Tarkos's poetry:

> Ce qui est se forme. Ce qui est est sans forme. Ce qui est n'est pas les choses. Ce qui est est sans choses. Ce qui est forme ses petites formes. Ce qui est est la formation des petites formes. Ce qui est voit apparaître une forme. Les formes se réalisent. Ce qui est forme. Ce qui est n'est pas rien. Ce qui est est quelque chose. Ce qui est est dangereux. Ce qui est fait un effet. Ce qui est a une présence effective. Ce qui est prend forme pour s'être. Ce qui est prend forme. Ce qui est ne prend pas toutes formes. Ce qui est prend certaines formes. Les formes sont formées. (*EP*, 177)

[18] For a detailed account of consciousness in Tarkos's work, see Kate Lermitte Campbell, *Thought, Perception and the Creative Act. A Study of the Work of Four Contemporary French Poets: Pierre Alferi, Anne Portugal, Valère Novarina and Christophe Tarkos* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2008).
[19] Campbell, *Thought, Perception and the Creative Act*, p. 187.

Here, as throughout his poetry, the basic pattern of Tarkos's style is the 'ritournelle', where repetition, and variations on that repetition, enact continuous processes of de- and re-territorialisation between phrases, an idea that will shortly be explored. Tarkos begins with a pivotal phrase, the anaphora 'ce qui est', which is then repeated and qualified as the passage develops. Polyptotons, in this instance 'former', 'formes', 'formation', are prevalent, reinforcing the effect of derivation and reformulation that exists between one sentence and the next. At times the passage appears to develop in logical sequence, 'Ce qui est n'est pas rien. Ce qui est est quelque chose', with one phrase following as a logical corollary of the previous. Elsewhere, an initial assertion is subsequently qualified, revised or negated: 'Ce qui est est sans forme' becomes 'Ce qui est est la formation des petites formes', and 'Ce qui est n'est pas les choses' becomes 'Ce qui est est quelque chose'. These revisions or reworkings appear throughout Tarkos's oeuvre, sometimes in close proximity (i.e. within the same passage), sometimes from one poem or text to the next. They often appear to negate each other, or to create paradoxes that are not easily overcome. For example, in *Le Signe*= Tarkos makes the following proclamation 'Les mots n'existent pas' (28), but in *Ma langue est poétique* writes 'Ma langue vit, est vivante, est poétique, est pleine de mots' (*EP*, 48). In this sense Tarkos's thought experiments involve the advancing of an idea or the extending and elaborating of an assertion, in order to test whether it holds up, before revising it or modifying it. Often the poet says one thing, and then says precisely the opposite, which can lead to a number of conflicting or contradictory statements on the same subject.[20] As we shall see, Tarkos's argumentation is thus in a state of continuous flux, which lends his work a slippery quality, inviting

[20] Lucie Bourassa discusses some of the paradoxes and contradictions that can be found in relation to language in Tarkos's work in '"Il n'y a pas de mots" et "Ma langue est pleine de mots" : continu et articulations dans la théorie du langage de Christophe Tarkos', *Etudes françaises,* Vol. 49, No. 3 (2013), p. 156.

contrasting analysis from critics, depending on which part of Tarkos's argument they choose to focus on. Furthermore, Tarkos frequently ventures deliberately problematic statements, such as the suspiciously rapturous exaltations of drugs and money in 'Drogue' and *L'Argent*, where the cracks in the argument are made overtly visible, yet sit in contrast with the apparent certainty of the rhetoric: 'L'argent est la valeur sublime. […] L'argent est la seule valeur qui a un lien avec le viable. Elle est une valeur extérieure morale' (*EP*, 263). In an interview, Tarkos resolutely denies that these texts are ironic.[21] This claim makes sense when we consider that Tarkos is instead testing an argumentative stance, trying it out for size in the space of the text, rather than offering, via the poem, a pre-established conclusion on a topic, delivered directly, or indirectly through ironic voice.

Alongside these revisions and contrasting assertions, Tarkos often uses tautological phrases, of the sort 'Les formes sont formées'.[22] Tautologies constitute a form of linguistic 'mise-en-abyme' which link into a broader dimension of Tarkos's work, clearly visible in this passage. His writing is often highly self-referential; here, the description of forms could easily be read as a metalinguistic comment on the verbal forms of the text itself. In this way, we could read 'Ce qui est forme ses petites formes. Ce qui est est la formation des petites formes' as describing the words of the text as they take shape. The final line, 'Les formes sont formées', might then be read as not only a logically tautological proposition, but also a metapoetic reflection on the composition of the text. Read in this way, the text is therefore both tracing the patterns of thought, while also continuously

[21] Verdier, 'Entretiens de Bertrand Verdier avec Christophe Tarkos', p. 354.
[22] Alongside tautologies, assertions such as 'Ce qui est est dangereux' are contrasted, precisely through their less immediately self-evident truth conditions. Enhanced by their similar rhetorical framing as declarative assertions, the juxtaposition of such declarations with tautological phrases, creates a contrast between subjective truths and communally-established ones. Again, phrases of this type tie into this broader practice of advancing a hypothesis, which will soon be revisited, to test its truth within the space of the poem itself (and, indeed, as the poem continues we will glean a further understanding of why this assertion 'Ce qui est est dangereux' might be true for Tarkos).

describing the language that shapes it, which in turn serves to sustain the impression of their inextricability.

In the passage above, the sequences and drifts of thought are presented in tangential series, where each sentence generates the next through some form of conjunctive relationship. In *Anachronisme*, Tarkos writes: 'La philosophie fait la chenille, une idée amène à une autre idée, un sentiment à un autre sentiment, un ami à un autre ami, une couleur à une autre couleur, un chemin à un autre chemin' (175-6). Thus, in *Oui* (1996), in the poem 'F' where the passage above appears, Tarkos circulates through a series of interconnected subjects: 'la fermeture', 'l'ensemble', 'le mélange', 'le déroulement', 'l'effectivité', 'le trou', 'la forme'. In the final paragraphs of the poem, the speed at which Tarkos passes from one subject to the next accelerates, and references accumulate in a series of tautologies that conclude with an epistrophe: 'La vérité est vraie. La pensée pense. La parole dit. Le destin destine. Ce qui est est clair. Les définitions sont par définition. Les mots sont par définition. Les choses sont par définition' (179). Talking about Tarkos's work, Philippe Castellin remarks: 'c'est d'une dérive, d'une série de « déviations » qu'il faut parler, en sorte par exemple que tout mot peut conduire à tout mot et par des chemins multiples : la langue est cet enchevêtrement qui sans arrêt prend la tangente'.[23] This tangential quality, where language and thought diverge endlessly, tending towards an infinite number of possible derivations, is performed in Tarkos's poetry to excess. This is something that Tarkos himself describes in the performance poem 'Improvisation-lieder', where, after a long list of words, generated by semantic or phonological similarities, he writes: 'petite série / série / série / série / […] où vas-tu ? / où m'emmènes-tu ? / jusqu'où continues-tu ? /

[23] Philippe Castellin and Jérôme Mauche, 'Entretien. Tout-se-tient' in 'Dossier Christophe Tarkos', p. 10.

vas-tu jusqu'à l'infini ?' (*E*, 122).[24] Describing this quality of Tarkos's poetry, which for him is grounded in the rhetorical figure of the 'polyptote sérialisé', Prigent writes: 'cette rhétorique est d'une part délibérément *abusive* (elle en fait trop)'.[25] As Prigent suggests, there is a desire on Tarkos's part to represent this tangential or sequential generativity in its excess, consequently provoking a vertiginous sense of accumulation.

In an interview with Verdier, Tarkos describes 'le danger que la pensée tombe, se perde, soit désorientée totalement', going on to remark that 'Je crois qu'il y a toujours du vertige dans la pensée, toujours un risque de vertige' (*EP*, 378-9). The mode of thought that is represented (or, indeed, performed) in Tarkos's work is at odds with the usual way in which thought is presented in writing as structured according to a pre-determined argument that is then delivered as an organised whole. Indeed, the accumulative tangents and repetitions of Tarkos's poetry prompt a form of disorienting reading experience akin to the vertiginous experience of thought he describes here. The proliferating deviations of the subject matter are reinforced by certain formal characteristics – sentence length and long, unformatted paragraphs – that create an impression of an excess of language. The usual signposts and breathing spaces that guide the reader through the text (typically punctuation or typographical arrangement) are often minimal or absent in Tarkos's work. The consequent sense of disorientation is one of the many means by which Tarkos's poetry subverts the ordinary experience of language, and thus one of the ways in which his poetry might be read as 'mineure', in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word. There are several

[24] Elsewhere in Tarkos's poetry, this notion of generativity is extended to its extremes in sequences that are generated by phonological similarities. In, '3 ronds du 19 mai' for example, we read: 'Gros haut / pot mot pot mot gros / haut haut mot pot hou hou poux / mou helo glo plot mlot helo gno mno' (*E*, 180). Likewise, in *Le train*, complete sentences disintegrate into agrammatical phrases which serve to simulate the sound of a moving train: 'Je ne. Je ne le. Je ne le. Je je je. Ne ne ne. Le le le. Je et me. Je est me. Est je me. Je me est. Je ne meule' (*E*, 183).
[25] Prigent, 'Sokrat à Patmo', p. 17.

instances in Tarkos's oeuvre where this form of disoriented language is more readily apparent, for example in the agrammatical poems in *Donne* ('tu le tu donné ma de nouveau avec moi il par il même', *EP*, 322), or the 'babil' in *Le train* ('Ta na ta na ta – ne te ne te ne te ne ---- to no to no to no to no', *T,* unpaginated). However, in keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, the minor quality of Tarkos's work appears not just in these more extreme examples, but in the comprehensive stylistic and syntactic variation on unmarked linguistic norms that, even in passages that are sensical and grammatically correct, render language strange and disorienting. His use of ritournelles, where 'normal' language is repeated excessively, continuously revised and reformulated until it becomes 'abnormal', presents an exemplary illustration of the deterritorialising process of minor literature. It might seem paradoxical that the strangeness of Tarkos's poetry arises precisely in the attempt to represent the experience of thought, an experience which is familiar to every reader. However, the atypicality of Tarkos's poetic language flags up its difference to conventional modes of representation, and thus points to the illusory quality of linguistic norms that appear to represent reality unproblematically (in this instance, the way we think or experience consciousness). In this respect, returning to Prigent's formulation, we see a desire on Tarkos's part to 'ne pas se contenter de l'expérience du monde telle que les langages communautaires la représentent, à vivre toute langue comme étrangère et donc à refonder un langage (à « trouver une langue », disait Rimbaud) pour re-présenter autrement ces représentations'.[26]

'Pâte-mot'

The distinct formal and stylistic features of Tarkos's poetry discussed hitherto are equally motivated by the particular way in which he conceives of language. Throughout his

[26] Prigent, *A quoi bon*, p. 10.

oeuvre, Tarkos elaborates the concept of the 'pâte-mot', which begins as a way of conceptualising the operation of meaning within language. Rather than seeing words as the foundational units of meaning, Tarkos, via the image of a vast and viscous mass or 'pâte', sees language as an 'ensemble' in which meaning is located in a more complex configuration. In *Le Signe*=, he writes: 'On parle, ce qu'on parle donne le sens des paroles, le sens n'est pas donné avant toutes les paroles dites, c'est la masse des paroles dans leur masse qui va donner leur sens aux blocs de paroles qui sont proférés, qui sont sortis, qui sortent de la bouche' (40). Meaning is therefore not a discrete property of the individual word, but forms instead 'des nuées, […] des nappes, […] des durées […], des boulettes, des poches d'eau, des bombes d'eau' (*S*, 28). This enumeration of several ways of conceptualising the units of meaning is deliberate, as Tarkos wishes to avoid the recourse to a singular or fixed location of sense. However, one particular term that he frequently returns to is that of the 'poussée de sens' – the thrust or upsurge of meaning – which attaches itself onto clusters of words: 'on ne peut plus prendre les mots pour des éléments de sens, pour les éléments de tirades sensées, il n'a pas de mots, il y a le sens qui pousse, qui s'attache à la poussée' (*S*, 28). The choice of term is significant: it marks a transition from envisaging meaning as grounded in a discrete entity (i.e. a word, taken as a graphic or phonological object), to envisaging it as force or momentum in a speech (or text) event, where it attaches itself as an attribute.[27] For Tarkos, meaning is thus not a fixed or stable locus, but melts between words and phrases:

> fondus dans le groupe de mots, dans tous les sens, [les mots] se mettent dans tous les sens, ils se fondent, ils sont fondus, ils sont regroupés en une masse indistincte pour pousser une petite poussée de sens, ils ne voudraient pas rester seuls, ils ne sauraient que faire en restant seuls, ils se mettent à plusieurs et le sens des mots est donné par le sens qu'ils voudraient donner en s'y mettant à plusieurs (*S*, 29-30)

[27] This distinction between meaning grounded in things versus meaning as movement and event is in keeping with his broader philosophical reflections. See, for example, the project description he sent to the *Collège International de Philosophie*, where he outlined his position on movement, time, objects and materialism (*E*, 483-8).

The repetition of the verb 'fondre' is significant here for two reasons: firstly, because it reinforces the emphasis on meaning as movement and event; secondly, because it forms part of the extended metaphor Tarkos employs to envisage language as a viscous 'pâte'. Indeed, while meaning is understood as movement, language itself is a substance: 'comme dans une compote, pâte-mot est une substance' (*S*, 32). It is a substance where meaning circulates and where words are 'collés' (*E*, 231) in an amorphous, elastic mass. The viscosity of the linguistic substance is significant because, as opposed to a solid substance, it is an object that contains the potential for movement. A viscous substance occupies an interim state between solid and liquid. It forms a resistance to forces acting upon it, but ultimately can be moulded and shaped at will: '[La pâte] peut prendre toutes les formes elle n'en reste pas moins sensée pleine de sens de ce qu'on dit, on peut la tirer et la tirer encore, l'allonger de beaucoup comme elle est élastique' (*S*, 31-2).

Significantly, this conception of language places emphasis on the whole as opposed to the fragment, which in turn marks a rupture with the modernist emphasis on fragmentation, disjunction, and detachment.[28] It also sets Tarkos apart from several of his contemporaries; his metaphor of language as a totalising 'pâte' marks a stark contrast to, for example, the image used by Cadiot and Hocquard of the poet as archaeologist, constructing the poem from 'fragment[s] de vase ou de fresque'.[29] On a formal level, this manifests itself in an

[28] '[On n'a pas] des petits fragments pour ----- parler ---- mais on a que des ---- choses qui sont collées les unes avec les autres comme ---- comme quand on fait quand on dit une expression quand on a des expressions ---- on dit un groupe de ---- de mots ----- qui n'ont pas tellement de sens pris isolément mais c'est tout un ensemble et le fait de parler c'est toujours tout un ensemble en même temps et avec cet ensemble pris en même temps comme c'est une pâte c'est complètement collé […] c'est un tout […] on peut pas séparer les éléments mais de l'autre on peut le prendre en entier' (*E*, 231).
[29] Hocquard, *Tout le monde se ressemble,* p. 12.

immediately striking visual distinction between Tarkos's agglutinative 'carrés' or 'blocs', and the cut-ups of Cadiot's work, where isolated clauses are dispersed across the page.[30]

As Philippe Castellin remarks, Tarkos's interest in the relationship between parts and whole, and his focus on structural relations in the production of meaning, offers an immediate resemblance to Saussure.[31] I want to briefly outline the similarities and differences in their approach to language, precisely because Saussure's conception forms the foundation for many (if not most) of the poets thinking about language across the twentieth century. It is where Tarkos diverges from Saussure's thought that we find some of his most interesting and innovative ideas, and where we see certain resemblances with Deleuze and Guattari's own critique of Saussure's theory of the sign.[32] Like Saussure, Tarkos describes the relational construction of meaning, where things are defined by their situation within a broader system: '[les choses se définissent] par la place qu'elles occupent aux côtés des autres à l'intérieur d'une constellation de places' (*E,* 53). However, Tarkos soon highlights the problem with this image of the constellation, borrowed from Saussure.[33] He writes: 'L'image de la constellation est ici trop discrète pour donner l'idée de la continuité des places' (*E*, 53). The distinction Tarkos draws here between the discrete and the continuous is an interesting one, and highlights where his analysis differs from Saussure's. If Saussure's analysis still maintains the word as a discrete unit of sense, albeit constructed by its relationship within a system, then Tarkos, while still employing the same framework of relational construction of meaning, sees sense as configured in a

[30] In a highly metapoetic text in *Anachronisme*, Tarkos describes 'le bloc', which serves as an apt description of the typographic arrangement of his poems (192).
[31] '[P]atmo ressemble à la langue selon Saussure'. Castellin, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 52.
[32] For a brief summary of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Saussure, see Young, Genosko and Watson, *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary*, pp. 283-5.
[33] Saussure also used the idea of the constellation to describe the relational identity of parts to whole in language. See Ferdinand de Saussure; Tullio de Mauro (ed.), *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1995), p. 174.

continuous series of relationships that transcend the individual unit of the word. In *Le Signe=*, which is prefaced by the phrase 'le signifiant = le signifié' (7), Tarkos writes: 'Le mot n'est pas le référenceur, n'est pas le signifiant, le mot est sans référence, n'a pas deux côtés, n'est pas un signe' (37). [34] In such a way, Tarkos sets about the dismantling of the very notion of the linguistic sign, a gesture which is reflected in the ambiguous title *Le Signe =,* one possible reading of which is that the sign equates to nothing. This rejection is no doubt in part because Saussure's theory of the sign is grounded on the word as the ultimate unit of meaning. Indeed, in a later passage in *Le Signe=*, Tarkos suggests that 'le sens a vidé les mots de toute signification' (28); words are now empty 'sacs' or 'coquilles', because meaning is to be found elsewhere. Conversely, for Tarkos, meaning arises at the intersection of various systems of 'relations'. In an interview with Pascale Casanova, he says the following:

> le problème c'est que ces groupes de mots sont souvent attachés à des relations, c'est-à-dire les relations que l'on a entre nous […], elles sont déjà toutes fourrées d'intérêts et de structures, donc ce qu'on va dire ça va être des groupes de mots qui sont toujours attachés à ces structures
>
> (*E*, 55)

In this emphasis on 'relations', we see the pragmatic dimension of Tarkos's work. Meaning cannot be isolated from the social context in which it is found, and from whose systems it derives; the 'pâte-mot' is part of a broader 'pâte-monde', and sense thus appears in the distinctions between one sociolinguistic event and the next. In his introductory essay to *L'Enregistré*, Philippe Castellin discusses this pragmatic bent, exploring the significance of the relations (social, interpersonal, etc.) that Tarkos describes. In this essay, Castellin draws on Wittgenstein's notion of 'formes de vie' to explore Tarkos's conception

[34] The 'equals' sign is significant here in so far as it ties into the 'levelling effect' described above and Tarkos's broader emphasis on equivalence and continuism.

of relations, before writing: 'Tarkos avec Quine pour la « Grande Substance » et avec Grice, Austin, Searle, Labov, la pragmatique et la sociolinguistique, pour Patmot'.[35]

A further divergence between Tarkos's and Saussure's conceptions of language appears in *Le Signe=*, where Tarkos rejects the dualism between world and word that is a corollary of Saussure's analysis of the linguistic sign.[36] When asked in an interview to expand on Saussure's analysis, Tarkos responded:

> Ce que je trouve bizarre dans cette idée-là, c'est le fait que la langue et le monde soient séparés. Pour moi la langue n'est pas en dehors du monde, c'est aussi concret qu'un sac de sable qui te tombe sur la tête, c'est complètement réel, complètement efficace, efficient, utile.[37]

Here, as elsewhere, Tarkos argues that language is not outside of the world, reflecting or representing it, but is interior to it, a constitutive part of a broader 'ensemble'. In 1997, during an interview given at the Poetry International Festival in Rotterdam, Tarkos addresses this point directly. He gave the following explanation of 'pâte-mot', emphasising the inextricability of language and world as two constituents of the same substance:

> toute la langue, elle est collée entre elle, et on peut pas lui prendre des petits morceaux pour s'inventer une histoire ou pour construire quelque chose. Alors on est obligé de tout prendre à la fois. Tout prendre le réel et tout prendre la langue qui est toute collée ensemble. Alors pour pouvoir avancer un tant soit peu là-dedans, pour faire même un geste, pour faire n'importe quoi dans une telle réalité cohérente, et collée, on est obligé, au départ, d'avoir un « oui ».
>
> (*E*, 244)

I shall return in the final section of this chapter to the significance of the 'oui', a recurring motif in Tarkos's poetry, but in the interim, I want to focus on this monistic conception of

[35] Castellin, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 55.
[36] 'Le mot n'est pas le référenceur, n'est pas le signifiant, le mot est sans référence, n'a pas deux côtés, n'est pas un signe' (*S*, 37).
[37] Verdier, 'Entretiens de Bertrand Verdier avec Christophe Tarkos', p. 357.

language and world, which sets Tarkos apart from many of his contemporaries. It is important to emphasise that Tarkos is not merely observing that language exists as a material phenomenon among others, a fact which, as we have seen in the previous chapters on Cadiot and Fourcade, is hardly remarkable or unique. Nor is it merely a reiteration of the fact that language is a social phenomenon, a series of linguistic events grounded in human interaction, as opposed to an abstract semiotic system. What makes Tarkos's analysis distinct is that it emphasises a levelling down, a flattening of distinctions, where language, no longer conceived as being outside of or exterior to the world that it purports to describe, is therefore stripped of its privileged status. This levelling is in part a response to the linguistic turn of the twentieth century, manifested in formalism, structuralism, or in the emphasis on linguistic materiality and surface in contemporary poetry. In all of these instances, language is granted a special status and conceived as a phenomenon set apart from others. In Tarkos's analysis however, it is understood as a cluster of phenomena – actions, movements, impulses, events, gestures, material substances, sensations, perceptions, etc. – that form the basis of all that is, and which configure in various arrangements in all things, language included. Tarkos frequently focuses on language as a series of 'actes', where speaking or writing are actions among other types of actions, such as smoking, sleeping, or walking in a park. This parallelism is particularly apparent in *Anachronisme*, where reflections on language and poetry are interwoven with a focus on a whole host of daily activities; each action presents itself as a sensorial experience, involving motor-neurological responses within the body, each taking place in a particular time period, involving a change of physical state, and so on. In such a way, Tarkos seeks to diminish the distinction between word and world, in a gesture which aims to avoid setting language apart as a singular phenomenon. Language is conceived as existing on a broader plane of consistency, to use Deleuze and Guattari's term, in a relationship of

continuity and interiority with 'la Grande substance'. Here we see, as Philippe Castellin describes it, Tarkos's 'ontologie radicalement *immanentiste, moniste, continuiste*' in practice.[38] Likewise, in arguing that language is part of a continuous, monistic reality, Tarkos then translates the same formal properties of 'pâte-mot' into a broader 'pâte-monde' (*E*, 216), emphasising structural parallels between the two levels. Patterns of the linguistic 'pâte' are traced across a number of different strata of experience; in *Anachronisme*, for example, Tarkos observes the movement of crowds outside the metro station at Barbès (39). He describes how the crowd forms an amorphous, elastic whole, in which the constituent parts, the individuals in the group, move together as a 'flux' (39). This echoes his comment that: 'Pâte-mot, c'est un peu comme dans les manifestations – j'aime bien cette image de troupeau – ; une manifestation, c'est une positivité totalement molle, étouffante, et tu ne peux pas la bouger beaucoup […]. C'est la grosse masse qui bouge'.[39] In a further shift in scale, in 'Quelle belle terre' the 'pâte' becomes a vast, immanent 'bouillie', as the world itself is described as gruel or porridge (*E*, 471).

In the light of Tarkos's theory of the 'patmo', and the analysis he offers of the linguistic sign, the following remark by Christian Prigent appears problematic:

> Peu de poètes, du coup, savent nous faire éprouver avec autant d'aisance ironique la sensation violente qui se dégage de ça : l'étrangeté de la langue, son tournis ahuri, sa distance implacable aux corps, aux choses, au réel. Peu savent nous introduire avec un aussi imparable mélange de tendresse subtile et de cruauté pince-sans-rire au malaise de la langue qui passe comme une lame entre le monde et nous.[40]

This reading, which reflects that of a number of critics who take the same theoretical stance as Prigent, conveys less about Tarkos's own position than about Prigent's. Prigent

[38] Castellin, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 36.
[39] Verdier, 'Entretiens de Bertrand Verdier avec Christophe Tarkos', p. 354.
[40] Prigent, *Salut les anciens*, pp. 86-7.

appears to be appropriating Tarkos into his own critical framework, where the division between word and world is taken as given, and where all writing begins from the negative, from the absence of the real in the text. While, as previously suggested, the 'étrangeté de la langue' that Prigent identifies here is certainly present, this strangeness of language, which is integral to 'littérature mineure', does not necessarily entail a divorce or a distanciation from the world as Prigent goes on to suggest. There are many instances where this might be the corollary, or indeed the desired effect, of the defamiliarisation of language within poetry (Francis Ponge being one such example).[41] However, if anything, the opposite is true for Tarkos, and the following section will argue that the 'ontologie radicalement *immanentiste, moniste, continuiste*' of his work aims to bring the world into closer proximity, and language, as a constituent part of the world, likewise.[42]

One of the ways in which Tarkos sets about the desired immersion in language and world in his poetry is through the exaggerated performance of 'pâte-mot' in the poem. As Castellin writes: 'on se met en posture de *manifester* patmot comme chose, et c'est alors qu'on retrouve « le vrai » […]. [Le poème] ne « dit » rien, ne « sert » à rien, ne « démontre » rien. *Il montre dans sa forme patmot en acte*. Il colle à patmot. La déploie. L'étale. Exagère ce qui est patent'.[43] To illustrate this idea in practice, the following extract is taken from 'Je fume' in *Caisses*:

> Je fume, la fumée s'échappe, la fumée sort, la fumée me sort
> de la tête, ma tête laisse échapper de la fumée, je laisse
> échapper de la fumée au-dessus de ma tête, ma chaleur
> part en fumée, une fumée monte du dessus de ma tête dans
> le ciel, je fume, je fume en l'air, ma tête est trouée, de la
> fumée monte dans le ciel me sort de la tête […] (32)

[41] Despite many initial similarities between Tarkos and Ponge – their focus on everyday objects, the simplicity of their language, their exploration of the subject-language-world relationship – this is one significant way in which their poetry differs.
[42] Castellin, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 36.
[43] Ibid., p. 58.

In this passage, the formal features replicate and exaggerate the properties of the 'patmo'. To give just two very basic examples, here, as elsewhere, words do not appear in isolation (on separate lines in the text) as they do, for example, in Fourcade's work, but are always in large blocks of texts, often in lengthy sentences (here, the 19-line poem is composed of one long sentence). The revision and reworking of phrases, alongside the use of polyptotons and epistrophes ('la fumée', 'je fume'), gives the impression that the poet is bogged down, caught in the sticky mass of words. The effects of accumulation produced by these features contribute to an impression of an excess in Tarkos's work: an excess of language, and with that, an excess of the world that is evoked. This excess no doubt contributes to the strangeness of Tarkos's poetic language that Prigent describes above. To illustrate this idea via one prevalent feature of Tarkos's work, the subsequent section will focus on the significance of the list.

'Je vais écrire la liste des choses. Il y a beaucoup de choses.'

Lists are pervasive in Tarkos's work and take a number of different forms. Often they are based on a straightforward semantic category: animals (*MC*, 33), parts of the body (*A*, 33), musical instruments (*A,* 9). Often they revolve around linguistic similarities: words beginning with 'k' (*A*, 57), or verbs commencing in 'a' (*A*, 60). Elsewhere, they are assembled according to more eclectic resemblances; in *Anachronisme*, for example, Tarkos enumerates things 'que j'ai volé l'hiver' (53), objects that 'font un bruit sourd' (95), and, in an exercise reminiscent of Perec, items 'sur ma table' (143). In *Le Baroque*, Tarkos enumerates a list of lists, creating a sort of metapoetic 'mise-en-abyme' of this property of his work:

> Liste des étoiles connues
>
> Liste des couleurs disponibles

Liste des objets vendus en France

Liste des insectes nommés

Liste des classifications

(11)

The final line evokes one of the many functions of the list in Tarkos's work, drawing attention to classification, taxonomy, and the many modes in which language wishes to divide and structure reality. In Tarkos's poetry, there is an exploration of the normative modes of thought which seek to find patterns in otherwise formless substances. The eclecticism of the 'family resemblance' for each series demonstrates the variety of ways in which we look for relationships between one entity and the next. Many of the lists are reminiscent of games of word association ('orange / ogre / horrible / autorisation / obligation', *E*, 117), depicting in turn the rhizomatic nature of language, characterised by endless points of juncture, and infinite relations between the words within it. The arbitrariness of certain sequences serves to emphasise the plurality of possible paths that might be navigated through 'la pâte faite de mots' (*E*, 231).

Certain lists prompt a distinct type of reading process which reinforces the idea, outlined above, of the performance of 'patmo' in the poem. The more prosaic lists, such as long enumerations of cheeses (*A*, 164-5) or fruits (*A*, 50), might well see the reader skimming through the poem, gathering an impressionistic sense of the ensemble ('a list of cheese'), as opposed to reading each individual name, word by word ('sainte-maure, chèvre, chaource, vache, le vieux lille' and so on, *A*, 165). In *Morceaux choisis*, in a text entitled 'La Liste', Tarkos quotes the German mathematician Rudolph Lipschitz: 'Si on veut avoir une vue d'ensemble de plusieurs choses, on en choisira d'abord une, et on ajoutera une nouvelle chose à la première choisie jusqu'à épuisement' (22). The poem composed of

lists will often place emphasis on the ensemble, as opposed to the individual unit, an idea that is reinforced by the formal properties of certain texts, such as *Anachronisme*, *Processe* or *Ma langue est poétique*. Tarkos does not divide these texts into individual poems, distinguishing them by titles or separate layout on a new page. A degree of distinction is made between one block of text and the next, either through paragraphs or alternating justifications on the page, but the division of the text as a whole is minimal. Coupled with the thematic unity that sees the same subjects returning from one passage to the next, this means that these books function as broader textual 'ensembles'. In this sense, there are then two layers of symmetry in the formal constitution of Tarkos's work: each list is constituted from several words or phrases, forming a complete paragraph, and each paragraph forms a series with the previous and the next, in turn constituting the text as a whole. When Jean-Michel Espitallier talks about lists in *Caisse à outils*, he writes that 'Toute liste est un objet fractal'.[44] We could conceptualise certain texts by Tarkos as 'objets fractals' – where the list provides a set of formal properties, the patterns of which are then mirrored on a broader structural level within the book. Given Tarkos's theory of the 'patmo', and his consideration of the relationship between part and whole in language and substance more generally, it is unsurprising that the list, which prompts these same questions, is such a prevalent feature in his work.

As Lipschitz suggests in the quotation above, the accumulative nature of the list, which involves a continuous process of supplementation or addition, tends towards a state of exhaustion. This practice of attempting to exhaust a subject, or to exhaust language itself in the process, recalls various pivotal figures for Tarkos: Georges Perec, Francis Ponge

[44] Espitallier, *Caisse à outils,* p. 183.

and Samuel Beckett, for instance.[45] In *Morceaux choisis*, Tarkos professes the following intention:

> Je vais écrire la liste des choses. Il y a beaucoup de choses. […] Je m'appliquerai. Je vais écrire la liste de toutes les choses, c'est possible en faisant attention, elles ne sont pas infinies. […] Les choses essayent toujours de s'échapper. Avec leur nom chacune, ni plus, ni moins, elles ne s'échapperont pas.
>
> (22)

The obvious impossibility of writing a comprehensive, exhaustive list of 'toutes les choses', coupled with the poet's apparent certainty, or indeed faux naivety, lend this passage a clearly ironic tone. In a similar gesture in *Anachronisme*, after enumerating an (admittedly long) list of animals, he writes: 'voilà il n'y a pas d'autres animaux, ce sont là tous les animaux, […] tous les animaux qui existent sont ceux-là' (15). This claim, which again can only be read as ironic as it clearly sits at odds with the non-exhaustive list that precedes it, identifies the way in which any attempt to exhaustively enumerate is ultimately destined to fail. The types of lists that Tarkos details in his work, rather than being closed-set classifications such as days of the week, are predominantly based on subjects that are, by definition, inexhaustible. In such a way, Tarkos's poetry sets up an apparent attempt to exhaust language, and subsequently performs the failure of such a task. This in turn serves to highlight the sheer vastness of language (and consequently the world it evokes), by juxtaposing its enormity with the comparative slightness of any one text's attempt to exhaust it.

The structural or syntactic properties of the list as a form contribute to the accumulative effect that characterises Tarkos's poetry. Typified by proliferation and interconnection, the

[45] Deleuze wrote about the trope of exhaustion in Beckett's work in *L'épuisé* in Samuel Beckett and Gilles Deleuze, *Quad; et Trio du Fantôme; …que nuages… ; Nacht und Träume. Traduit de l'anglais par Edith Fournier. Suivi de L'épuisé par Gilles Deleuze* (Paris: Minuit, 1992).

list forms a rhizomatic structure.[46] If the list represents an '(n+1)' equation, with the possibility of supplementation being an intrinsic property, then its inclusion in the poem complements the notion of an endless, ongoing project. This sense of continuity or interminability is alluded to in the final pages of *Anachronisme*, which ends with a three-page enumeration of the infinite number pi. There is a clear symbolism in the fact that pi can only be represented in the book to a certain number of decimal places. It offers a metapoetic reading, highlighting the way in which the poem, faced with the sheer expanse of reality, can only ever offer up some slight endeavour, necessarily carving out a meagre portion to present, and drawing itself to an artificial close. This recalls Tarkos's comment, when asked about the notion of 'l'infini' in his work, that 'C'est la différence entre le poète et le fou : le poète est celui qui arrête le poème' (*EP*, 360).

The list plays a role in Tarkos's broader project which seeks to affirm the presence of the world within the text. As Kate Campbell writes, 'For Tarkos, the poetic act is primarily an affirmation of presence'.[47] In an interview with Gudrun De Geyter at the Rotterdam Poetry International festival, Tarkos describes his poetry as 'un exercice, un petit entraînement physique, pour l'acceptation du monde' (*E*, 245). He continues: 'Alors, moi, je fais mon petit exercice physique, et j'espère que le lecteur, lui, aussi […] va faire aussi son petit exercice matinal de remise en forme, pour supporter, accepter le réel' (*E*, 245). This 'affirmation of presence' is clearly opposed to the tradition, discussed in the introduction, of 'poésie négative'. Following from Mallarmé, this 'poésie négative' derives from a certain conception of language, outlined above, whereby the nature of the linguistic sign produces an inescapable separation between language and world, leaving the text

[46] Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari write that 'le rhizome a pour tissu la conjonction « et… et… et… »' (*MP*, 36).
[47] Campbell, *Thought, Perception and the Creative Act*, p. 177.

characterised by negation and absence. On the question of presence and absence, we find a significant divergence in critical responses to Tarkos's work. While Campbell describes Tarkos's poetics of presence, Christian Prigent, like others, suggests that certain linguistic effects (such as the impression of 'vitesse') serve to empty Tarkos's texts of meaning, resulting in an 'effacement'.[48] Prigent extends his analysis of this supposedly self-cancelling mode of writing by looking at the significance of whiteness in Tarkos's work, again aligning the younger poet to the 'poésie blanche' associated with 'poésie négative'.[49] However, Tarkos himself rejected this reading of his work strongly. In response to Yves di Manno, who said that Tarkos's poetry was 'assez vide de sens à mes yeux', he wrote:

> Je ne veux pas jouer avec le manque de sens. […] Je ne supporte pas, pour vous dire la vérité, qu'un texte n'ait aucun sens, comme il s'en voit trop dans la poésie, des textes qui ne font que glisser, ruisseler, sur des ambiances de miroitement de sens de mots comme mutité par exemple
>
> (*E*, 492-3)

Here Tarkos is quick to refuse the analysis that his poetry is emptied of meaning; elsewhere, he extends these comments, refuting the possibility of meaningless texts altogether: 'tout ce qui est imprimé, est un texte, a un sens' (*EP*, 119). Although grounded ultimately in his conception of the 'pâte-mot' or 'pâte-monde', throughout his poetry Tarkos makes frequent use of a number of declarative, anaphoric refrains that reinforce this affirmation of presence: 'il y a', 'je suis', j'ai' and 'il existe'. These phrases, marked in

[48] Prigent, 'Sokrat à Patmo', p. 20. In *Salut les anciens*, Prigent writes: '[Tarkos] règle des phrases hoquetées, ressassées ou ironiquement précipitées – qui vident le sens dont elles pourraient être chargés' (85). In the same essay, he continues: 'Mais ce qu'on voit surtout dans ces phrases subtilement ahuries, c'est que le monde est plutôt là en tant que *pas-là*. Le monde est énoncé comme absent. La consistance des choses, des corps, des souvenirs, des pensées, est comme évidée par le mouvement même qui l'inventorie et le nomme : comme évincé par la mastication verbale' (88). For a detailed criticism of Prigent's analysis of the supposed 'évidement de sens' in Tarkos's work, see Caillé, *Théorie du langage*, p. 73.

[49] All of these terms are discussed in the introduction. Prigent identifies the recurring motif of 'blanc' in Tarkos's collection *Caisses*. However, the argument could easily be made that 'noir' constitutes an equally significant motif. The long poem 'Noir' at the end of *Le Signe* = (128-57), collates themes found throughout his poetry, exploring the properties of blackness: 'noir est mystérieux, est obscur, est muet, est sombre, est tranquille, est étoffé' (128). In *Anachronisme*, the 'noir' reappears, interwoven with themes of depression, bad weather, winter and the constant presence of death.

their simplicity, are often followed by lists or accumulative phrases: 'il y a des ingrédients, des tensions, des composants […], il y a un amas, un amassement, une amassure, un composé, une composition, un tas, une accumulation […], il y a une foule, une foule rangée' (*A*, 192-3); 'J'ai des pieds, des mains, […] des paupières, des cheveux, des ongles' (*A*, 33). We see here Tarkos's desire to render reality immanent in the poem and to immerse the reader in the material presence of the world. As suggested above, the focus on presence suggests an immediate parallel with the work of Yves Bonnefoy. However, if, as John T. Naughton suggests, Bonnefoy's 'highly abstract, even "conceptual" diction' and the absence of 'personal experience' means that 'the *specifically* human face is effaced or even obliterated in the highly "essentialized" landscape of [Bonnefoy's] poetic world', then quite the opposite is true for Tarkos.[50] Castellin describes Tarkos's emphasis on material presence as 'Une poétique de l'immersion: une *endopoétique*. Un réalisme si sauvage qu'il emboutit toute altitude. Le réel est infiniment plus vaste et contourné que nous ne le croyons, mais sans abîme, ni ciel'.[51]

The poem 'Quelle belle terre', originally a performance piece, later published in *Morceaux choisis*, before being disseminated in fragmentary form in *Oui*, illustrates Castellin's comment rather aptly:

Quelle belle terre,

Un vaste, et très grand paysage,
C'est une belle terre,
Une bonne bouillie
La simple richesse de sa richesse

[50] John T. Naughton, 'The notion of *presence* in the poetics of Yves Bonnefoy', *Studies in 20th Century Literature*, Vol. 13 (1989), p. 56.
[51] Castellin, 'Christophe Tarkos: « Poète de la lecture »', p. 33.

Elle est très vaste et très grande.

[…]

Un souffle
Un immense retentissement
Un poumon grand comme

Un camion

Comme une inspiration,

Sa beauté, une grande et vaste réalité nue, riante, chantante, qui danse.

Oui.
Elle est une grande, et belle, et vaste, et très nue.

D'une rare violence, imprègne

Ma pigeonneuse éponge.

(*E*, 471-2)

The power of the passage lies in the simplicity of its phrasing; the adjectives 'nue' and 'simple', used in the passage to describe reality, might therefore also be read as metapoetic, describing the language of the poem itself. The text rotates around a relatively small set of words that are repeated ('belle', 'vaste', 'richesse', etc.), an effect which is reinforced by the use of polyptotons ('beauté', 'belle', 'riante', and the nominal form found later in the poem 'rire'). Reality is described as stark or bare, and the formal properties echo this minimalism, with the lines being relatively short in length, and dispersed across the page so as to emphasise the empty space between them. On the one hand, we might read the slightness of the phrasing as a gesture towards the insufficiency of language to capture the vastness or richness of the world it evokes. The opening lines 'Quelle belle terre' present a cliché, the paired-down language of the passage is constantly at risk of appearing naff or trite, and the lacklustre simile 'comme / Un camion' has a bathetic effect which is reinforced by the subsequent need for revision or modification in

the following line ‘Comme une inspiration’. The metaphor that compares the world to ‘une bonne bouillie’, while clearly a reformulation of Tarkos’s motif of the world as a ‘pâte’ or ‘compote’, prompts a similar bathetic effect. However, the apparent slightness or simplicity of the language might also lend the text the same properties that it attributes to the world: a richness or pregnancy, where the words are charged with latent possibility. The image of the sponge might also be read as metapoetic; the words of the passage are absorptive, they contain more than the slightness of their exterior form might initially suggest. This metapoetic analysis gains some credibility when we consider the way in which Tarkos conflates reality, subject and language in the poem. Proceeding through a series of metaphors, Tarkos conceptualises the world as a human body – describing its ‘souffle’, its ‘poumons’, and its ‘inspiration’. Basing the imagery on the vocal tract thus evokes language itself. Set amongst this series of anthropomorphising images, Tarkos describes the Earth’s ‘retentissement’, which evokes in turn the effect or impact of the world on the human subject. The world lives, breathes and inhales, and in turn is lived, breathed and inhaled. This anthropomorphism is sustained in the qualification of reality as ‘riante, chantante, qui danse’ (and indeed the word ‘danse’ reappears later in the passage in the first-person form, ‘je danse’). Through this series of conflated metaphors, Tarkos performs an amalgamation of world, subject and language, where they melt into a single substance: ‘une bonne bouillie’. In the line ‘Elle est une grande, et belle, et vaste, et très nue’, the series of adjectives lead to a notably absent nominal phrase, reinforced by the full stop. Here, Tarkos creates a blank space which might be filled with any number of possible metaphors. The missing noun, and the accumulation of adjectives, could be read as a movement away from the desire to name and delineate forms within a substance, putting the emphasis instead on sets of attributes, properties and features, and reinforcing the idea of a monistic conception of matter. If Tarkos performs the collapse of several

typically differentiated phenomena into a single substance, then from this point of collapse, the language of the poem thus carries with it reality, the world and the subject, immersing the reader in the continuous substance that the passage evokes.

'Aujourd'hui Je vis'

Elsewhere this poetics of immersion manifests itself in a different form. Many of Tarkos's texts, most notably the last book he published, *Anachronisme*, are filled with vivid descriptions of the day-to-day world that Tarkos inhabits. As Prigent concedes in his analysis of the emptying of meaning in Tarkos's work: 'les poèmes de Tarkos ne disent pas rien […], ils montrent effectivement un monde. Ils posent un décor trivial qui est notre vrai monde'.[52] As seen in the previous discussion of lists, this 'décor trivial' is found in descriptions of the abundant paraphernalia of everyday life, elsewhere it involves the transcription of day-to-day events. Enacting the desire to 'décrire le défilement continu' (*EP*, 150), these transcriptions often appear in the present tense, and involve a form of running commentary, as in the following example: 'Je traverse la pont [*sic*], le pont traverse la Seine, je traverse la Seine, je marche le long du pont je ne m'arrête pas, je regarde en marchant la Seine, l'eau, je suis sur un pont, je marche au-dessus de l'eau, le pont passe au-dessus de l'eau, le pont est long, je marche longuement' (*A*, 11). Often these passages give referential markers – temporal or geographical – that, alongside adverbial phrases such as 'maintenant' and 'réellement', serve to ground the text: 'Cet après-midi vers dix-huit heures j'étais réellement sur un banc dans un parc. Il est maintenant vingt et une heures, je suis allongé dans mon lit. J'y fumais une cigarette, habillé de mon imper noir et de mon chapeau, je croisais et décroisais les jambes, je restais assis sur le banc, le ciel était menaçant' (*S*, 127). There is, especially in *Anachronisme*, an autobiographical

[52] Prigent, 'Sokrat à Patmo', p. 19.

dimension to this practice, where Tarkos makes reference to places and people that we know to be real: descriptions of his work at the Bibliothèque Nationale (*A*, 218), encounters with colleagues and friends such as Charles Pennequin (*A*, 54) or Jean-Marie Gleize (*A*, 106). In *Oui*, Tarkos writes: 'Je vais à l'usine / Aujourd'hui Je vis / Je vais travailler aujourd'hui […] / Je vais Je sais Je suis heureux' (*EP*, 206). The triplet in the final phrase captures three components of experience: action or event, knowledge or consciousness, and emotional or psychological response. The repetition of 'je' is significant; it affirms the presence of the subject, and grounds the everyday in subjective experience.

Throughout his oeuvre, Tarkos includes the most prosaic elements from his day-to-day life: a list of the contents of his cupboards (*A*, 155-6), intricate descriptions of his old white socks (*A*, 17) and his Adidas trainers (*EP*, 70). The elements Tarkos chooses to focus on are so markedly banal that emphasis is placed precisely on their ordinariness. In *Ma langue* he addresses this point explicitly: 'J'attends dans la file / d'attente d'un guichet de poste. Cela sans sous-entendre qu'il y a là quelque chose d'extraordinaire que d'attendre à l'intérieur d'une file d'attente d'un / bureau de poste. Je le fais régulièrement, normalement, ce n'est pas la première / fois, il n'y a là rien d'extraordinaire' (34). In such a way, the inclusion of these details in the poem is neither an attempt to tease out the extraordinary from the everyday, nor a desire to render the ordinary extraordinary through poetic language. Instead, Tarkos's poetry presents the ordinary precisely as ordinary which, as a marked practice in itself, results in a heightened awareness for the reader of the usually backgrounded texture of everyday experience. In this sense, Tarkos's engagement with the everyday involves a reworking of other ways in which it has been represented in poetry. *Anachronisme*, for example, seems to gesture towards Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du*

Mal and *Le Spleen de Paris*, in the emphasis it places on the encounter, often situated in the streets of Paris. In the text, Tarkos enumerates various events that represent 'un moment, un instant, un croisement' (*A*, 9), however these encounters are not the charged encounters of 'À une passante', but altogether more mundane meetings.[53] He meets an Englishman named Nigel, and then spots him again on the metro (57); a woman stops him while he sits on a 'terrasse' to ask if he's German, and then looks disappointed to hear he isn't (72). Earlier on in the book he describes crossing paths with a stranger on the way to an exhibition: 'j'ai rigolé, je me suis retourné, lui aussi s'est retourné, tout en continuant à marcher, il rigolait, j'allais voir les nuages des tableaux chinois dans le Petit Palais' (8). Here, there is a resistance to aestheticising the everyday, or to selecting only the most exceptional or notable details to depict. Later in *Anachronisme*, Tarkos expands on the significance of the 'rencontre' in the text:

> Un élément qui s'est passé. Un élément réel. Ce que fait l'élément quand il est réel. Sa façon de se refaire, de revenir, de dire je suis une rencontre, oui cela a eu lieu […], je sais que cela a eu lieu, je peux le remonter quand je veux, je ne peux pas le remanier, il est fait, il est solide, j'aurais pu le toucher de la main, je pouvais le toucher parce qu'il est réel, parce qu'il est là en chair et en os, probablement que je l'ai touché, que sa proximité a touché ma proximité
>
> (196-7)

The encounter thus represents a prototypical manifestation of an event, one that affirms both internal subjectivity and external reality, and brings the world and subject into proximity, rendering the 'exterior' immanent to the 'interior'. Later on in *Anachronisme* Tarkos considers the 'rencontre' again, this time tracing its rhythms, which punctuate the everyday, and extending the conceptualisation of the encounter as a locus of touch and proximity:

> Une fréquence, une autre rupture, par la fréquence, le rythme des rencontres, est-ce qu'il y a un rythme, est-ce que ça bat, les pieds touchent terre, les pieds ne touchent

[53] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), p. 137.

> pas terre, la terre vient toucher la plante des pieds, par fréquences, par battement, aléatoirement, régulièrement la terre vient toucher la plante des pieds, quelle est la fréquence, une fréquence rapide, un battement, une régularité, ce qui vient comme une régularité, comme un hiver qui a un pouls, comme le battement au milieu de l'hiver monotone qui ne change pas, qui est toujours la même masse de brouillard (113)

Here the encounter takes the form of the meeting point between the ground and the soles of the feet, which provides a fitting image for the point of juncture between world and subject. As we saw in 'Quelle belle terre', metaphors prompt a blending of forms, so that winter is described as having a pulse, and it is the earth that comes to meet the soles of the feet, as opposed to the other way around. The 'rencontre', as both event, and a spatio-temporal manifestation of 'relation', sees Tarkos's philosophical reflections crystallised in the everyday. This is true throughout *Anachronisme*, where we find a number of the concepts he has explored in abstract terms elsewhere situated in ordinary, everyday experience. Previous considerations of, for example, consciousness or materiality, manifest themselves here in the narrative and descriptive dimensions of the text. Likewise, the autobiographical inflection of *Anachronisme*, with its notably present 'je', presents the existential concerns discussed elsewhere in a more personal guise. As the following section will explore, *Anachronisme* is permeated by the poet's sense of metaphysical anguish, compounded by the depression of a seemingly endless winter and the day-to-day experience of illness.

'Je vais faire celui qui meurt'

I began my discussion of Tarkos's poetry with a citation from *Je m'agite*: 'je ne sais pas sur quoi je vais m'appuyer pour savoir. / pour dire. / pour appuyer ce que je suis' (*EP*, 315). Returning to this text, Tarkos makes clear the sense of urgency that underpins his poetic project, an urgency that is generated by an all-consuming 'agitation' and 'nervosité' (*EP*, 307). *Je m'agite* juxtaposes the poet's desire 'pour savoir' with his current state of

restless anxiety produced by *not* knowing: 'je ne sais plus où je suis', 'je ne sais plus où tourner mon regard' (*EP*, 307). Not knowing, an idea that is reinforced in the poem by the theme of sight and blindness (*EP*, 310), in turn provokes a sensation of a loss of control ('je ne me contrôle plus', 307) and a loss of familiar reference points ('il n'y a plus de guide', 307).[54] Tarkos's characteristic humour, his lightness of touch in approaching otherwise serious subject matter, is noticeably absent in *Je m'agite*. The second stanza sets out the stakes of this 'agitation':

> je peux tout arrêter.
> je peux me faire mourir.
> je peux me suicider.
> je vais me faire arrêter.
> je vais me faire disparaître.
> j'arrête.
> je coupe.
> je cesse.
> je meurs.
> je me tue.
> je me suicide[55]

The repetition of the first-person pronoun is striking. The project that Tarkos evokes at the end of *Je m'agite* – the tripartite desire 'pour savoir', 'pour dire', 'pour dire que je suis' – is thus not merely an abstract, intellectual pastime, but is altogether more personal and immediate. The compulsion to know and to say, is also a desire to make sense of the self, 'dire *ce que* je suis', and a desire to affirm the presence of the self in writing, 'dire *que* je suis' (my italics). Again, this marks a point of departure from a widespread posture in contemporary poetry, typified by Game's statement in the introduction to *Poetic Becomings*, where he refers to a 'heterogeneity of thought' on the 'subject's intrinsic

[54] The theme of blindness reappears in *Anachronisme* where it is linked to the motif of mist and fog of an endless winter (29).
[55] (*EP,* 308). The theme of suicide also appears in *Anachronisme*: 'c'est un jour pour se suicider, c'est le jour des suicidés, il ne fait pas beau, il n'y a plus rien à voir, la brume enveloppe tout […], on ne peut pas avancer, on ne peut qu'étouffer, on ne va pas vivre, on ne vit plus, il n'y a rien à faire, il fait noir, c'est un hiver de pluie froide brumeuse, on ne peut pas sortir' (28-9).

hollowness'.[56] Unlike, for example, Fourcade's account of poetic voice, where writing is described as 'une affaire très absentée' (*EJPPM*, 10) and the poet '[s'endort] au volant' (*CD*, 14), for Tarkos, particularly in these later texts, the lyric 'je' returns in full force. By rejecting a Saussurean conception of language in favour of his theory of the 'pâte-mot', and supplanting abstract signification with material, embodied sense, Tarkos, the poet, and the 'je' of his poetry, are not irrevocably divorced from one another. In this respect, his approach is pragmatic in both senses of the word. Firstly, it is pragmatic in so far as his theory of language focuses on the 'relation', on the contextual configuration of meaning that shifts between one event and the next, but which allows for the construction, albeit temporary and unstable, of a relationship between poet and first-person pronoun. Secondly, it is pragmatic in so far as, driven by the urgency of existential anguish and his approaching illness, his compulsion to affirm the self in lyric voice overrides a theoretical posture that would otherwise render poetry immobile and intransitive.

It is significant that Tarkos's reinstatement of the 'je' is most apparent in texts such as *Anachronisme* and *Je m'agite*, where the themes of illness are prevalent.[57] As Anne-Renée Caillé points out in the chapter of her thesis entitled 'L'hiver, la maladie du temps et le spectre de la fin', death appears as an omnipresent figure throughout Tarkos's oeuvre; like Arlette Albert-Birot, she reads this as a product of Tarkos's awareness of his own deteriorating health.[58] Long before his diagnosis in November 1999, Tarkos lived with chronic illness, both mental and physical, and references are pervasive in his poetry to the way this shaped his day-to-day life. In *Anachronisme*, we read about life in medical

[56] Game, *Poetic Becomings*, p. 10.
[57] Caillé observes how, in *Anachronisme*, first-person voice is compounded by seven 'reprises' of Tarkos's name ('Tark.', 'Christophe' etc). *Théorie du langage*, p. 362.
[58] Caillé, *Théorie du langage*, pp. 352–89. Arlette Albert-Birot, 'Découvrir C. Tarkos' in *Arlette Albert-Birot et Traverses* (Mandres-les-Roses: Traverses, 2011), p. 137.

institutions (26), trips to the pharmacy (51) and letters from the hospital (143). Death appears in abstract reflections ('Quand il y a la mort, il y a une organisation. La mort s'organise', *C*, 40), in flippant, humorous passages ('Heureusement qu'il est mort, ça fait du bien. Il a disparu. […] Merci d'être mort', *C*, 16), and, in reflections on writing ('J'écris de la mort. Ce qui est écrit est mort. […] Je suis mort', *ML*, 85). In *Caisses*, Tarkos presents a distressing address to the reader 'Tue-moi tue-moi ne me laisse pas crever de rien ne me laisse pas/ mourir sans que personne ne me touche' (6); in his 'autoprésentations', death pervades even the most factual descriptions: *Vit à Marseille et Paris. Né en 1964. N'est pas près de mourir. R. R. riste*' (*E*, 7).[59] In a passage in *Ma langue*, Tarkos addresses 'le spectre de la fin' directly:

> Je vais faire celui qui meurt. Je suis fragile. Doucement, je meurs. Je vais faire celui qui est mourant sans douleur. Je vis dans la vie, je ne vais pas vivre comme les autres, je suis mourant quand les autres vivent vraiment, je sais que je suis mourant, […] je fais la vie plus lentement, je vais faire celui qui meurt lentement (pour que cela se remarque), l'année prochaine je ne serai plus, je vais ralentir et parler lentement, je vais me voûter, je serai fatigué, il ne reste qu'une année ou deux, je vais faire celui qui est en train de mourir
>
> (51)

Here the phrase 'il ne reste qu'une année ou deux' evokes how illness shortens 'le temps d'écrire dans ma vie avant qu'elle ne soit finie' (*Le Baroque*, 9), compounding the sense of urgency described in *Je m'agite*. The syntax of the repeated phrase 'celui qui meurt', 'celui qui est mourant', 'celui qui est en train de mourir', places emphasis on the pronoun 'celui' instead of the various verbal forms of 'mourir'. This locates death in a nominal subject, instead of in the action itself, which reinforces the observation in the passage that death becomes a constitutive part of the identity of 'celui qui meurt', marking the subject, setting him apart from 'les autres'. This same idea also appears in *La Cage* (1999), a poem that

[59] The same phrase occurs in a different 'autoprésentation' in *Morceaux choisis*, p. 110.

was set to music and performed as an opera, where the alternating phrases 'je suis moi, j'ai mal / je suis moi, j'ai mal' (27) suggest an inextricability of illness and identity.

When asked about the theme of illness in his work, Tarkos replied: 'La maladie, c'est le contraire de ce qui est vital, mais la maladie, ça nous appartient. Ça fait partie de notre mode de fonctionnement, de notre pensée'.[60] In the interview, Tarkos goes on to extend this analysis of illness as a constitutive part of lived experience, to death itself: 'ce n'est pas extrême que de mourir. C'est à côté de nous. Juste à côté de nous. Juste avec nous. Tout le temps avec nous. C'est mélangé avec notre matière...'.[61] These remarks suggest how Tarkos conceptualises death and illness as part of the broader substance of life, not as an outside or other to it. They recall Tarkos's reflections in *Oui* on 'la fermeture', where he writes: 'La fermeture n'est pas à l'extérieur. La fermeture n'est pas extérieure' (*EP*, 170), 'La fermeture est une longue surface' (*EP*, 179). Death, for Tarkos, might be understood not as a transcendental beyond or outside of life, but rather part of a broader continuity, situated on the same plane of immanence. In turn, as Tarkos suggests in an interview with David Christoffel, death gives 'un sens à la façon dont on voit le monde' and renders 'le monde compréhensible'.[62] We might see these same ideas reflected in the closing pages of *Anachronisme*, where the final paragraphs describe a project Tarkos is working on – a novel about being in a waiting room before death. The last paragraph ends: 'Quelques mois plus tard je fis une crise d'appendicite et je démissionnai de la bibliothèque nationale', and is then followed by the enumeration of pi, as described above. Given the

[60] 'Entretiens de David Christoffel avec Christophe Tarkos' in Tarkos, *Ecrits poétiques*, p. 378.
[61] Ibid., p. 380.
[62] During the course of the interview, death is discussed as a 'trou' or series of 'trous'. Tarkos concludes his thoughts with the following suggestion: 'Ce sont des trous d'insignifiance qui nous donnent un sens à la façon dont on voit le monde parce que sinon, la façon dont on voit le monde, s'il n'y avait pas ces trous, elle serait complètement incompréhensible et le fait qu'il y ait des trous rend le monde compréhensible' (*EP*, 382).

prevalence of death as a thematic motif in *Anachronisme*, the enumeration of pi gains an additional significance. On the one hand, pi is a symbol of continuity and infinitude. On the other, its artificial termination in the text (where just three pages of the number are listed), represents a contrastive discontinuity. As an unknowable, indeterminate entity, pi is also a figure of uncertainty, which reflects, perhaps, the conflicting ways in which Tarkos conceives of death. Alongside his reflections on death as contiguous with life, in *Ma langue* he represents 'la mort' as a figure of immobility and fixity, a binary counterpart to the characteristic movement of life: 'c'est mort, ça / résiste, c'est résistant, c'est immobile. Cela / ne bouge plus, c'est mort. Cela ne peut plus / bouger. Ce qui ne bouge plus est mort' (85). In such a way, death appears in Tarkos's work as a highly ambiguous presence, one that, as we shall see, provides an important backdrop to his reflections on poetry.

'ma maladie est de parler, et le guérissement de ma maladie est de parler'

Throughout his oeuvre, Tarkos depicts a pervasive sense of 'étouffement'. In *Anachronisme*, it is a product of mental illness, embodied in the figure of 'l'hiver' (29); in *Le Signe=*, it is 'le réel' itself that is stifling (122).[63] In the following lines, which echo sentiments found throughout Tarkos's work, poetry appears to offer a form of liberation from this sense of 'étouffement': 'Je suis libre. J'écris ce que je / veux écrire, je suis libre d'écrire / ce que je veux écrire' (*ML*, 70). This theme is reworked throughout *Ma langue*, for example in the following poem in 'Carrés':

> Je ne suis pas bloqué. Je ne suis pas
> encerclé. Je n'ai pas casé. Je ne suis
> pas encastré dans le trou. Je ne suis
> pas serré contre la grille. Je ne suis
> pas mort. Je ne suis pas enterré. Je ne
> suis pas écrasé et étouffé. Je ne passe

[63] Caillé describes winter as a 'figure allégorique représentant la "maladie" du temps et de la parole' in *Théorie du langage*, pp. 354-5.

pas mon temps entre quatre murs.
Je ne suis pas enfermé. Je n'ai pas
le mutisme. Je n'ai pas le silence.
Je ne suis pas emprisonné, prisonnier.
Je n'étouffe pas. Je ne m'étouffe pas.
Je ne suis pas écrasé. Je suis libre.

(*ML*, 81)

There is a simplicity or minimalism to the formal properties of the poem: typographically, the 'carré' forms a regular square on the page; the 15 negated clauses that constitute the bulk of the poem then offer a neat syntactic contrast to the affirmative final clause: 'Je suis libre'. Echoing this formal simplicity, the poet sets up a binary opposition between freedom and restriction, where the adjectival phrases ('bloqué', 'encerclé', 'casé' etc.) represent a cognate set, diametrically opposed to the final adjective 'libre'. As the poem continues, a number of ideas are thus conflated; 'la mort', 'le mutisme' and 'le silence' gain a semantic equivalence, all being manifestations of 'l'étouffement'. Following this binary logic, freedom, by being contrasted with the confinement of death and silence, is therefore aligned with vitality and with language. There is a juxtaposition in the poem of the rigidity of its formal properties and the freedom that is expressed. Compared to many of Tarkos's other texts, the 'Carrés' have a relatively restrictive form: the language of the poem is quite literally 'casé' and 'encastré'. The central metapoetic image, 'entre quatre murs', evokes the four sides of the typographic square, drawing attention to the form of the poem itself.[64] However, poetic form is represented in the poem as only an artificial type of restriction. Indeed, the choice of a comparatively rigid formal framework for a text that gestures towards the liberation of poetic language appears significant.[65]

[64] We might also read the 16 sentences of the poem (4x4, or four-squared) as a further expression of the significance of the number of four in the text.
[65] Caillé expands upon the significance of these 'formes carrées' in Tarkos's work. She suggests that Tarkos's predilection for these particular typographic arrangements is because they offer a heightened restrictive form in which to model the 'patmo'. This certainly seems to be the case in this instance in *Ma langue*. See Caillé, *Théorie du langage*, p. 337.

As the following analysis will suggest, for Tarkos, it is the heightened emphasis on form that makes poetry 'le plus grand moyen face à la grande substance' (*EP*, 163). Poetry is therefore conceptualised as a mode of resistance against this sensation of 'étouffement' which, as we have seen, is a product of the poet's ontological conception of 'le réel', as well as the more pressing concern of his illness and impending death. In *Processe*, Tarkos writes the following:

> Pas d'autre méthode pour comprendre. Que cette langue. Continuer. […] Il faut continuer à construire. La substance visqueuse menace, essouffle, paralyse, donne envie de ne plus parler, fatigue, endort, donne envie de dormir. […] La seule méthode est de te parler. Est la méthode, définie sans blanc.
>
> (*EP*, 143)

Echoing the same binary contrasts found in the poem above between movement and paralysis, language and silence, here Tarkos suggests how a 'méthode' is required to fend off the threat of 'la grande substance'.[66] 'La grande substance', we will recall, is the sum of all that is ('ce qui existe'), taken in its entirety, and, necessarily, therefore, the formless mass of language itself. In such a way, language is both the problem and the cure, as Tarkos suggests in *Anachronisme*: 'ma maladie est de parler, et le guérissement de ma maladie est de parler, parler forme un tout qui est la maladie et qui est le soignement de la maladie, il n'y a rien d'autre, il n'y a rien de plus' (48). A 'méthode' is required, a means of continuation must be found within 'cette langue', because there is nothing else at our disposal: 'Il n'y pas d'autre langue que la langue, il faudra entrer à l'intérieur, on a toujours été à l'intérieur, il n'y pas à entrer à l'intérieur, on est dedans' (*S*, 45). Although 'patmo' is a substance that provokes a certain 'vertige' or 'maladie', its potential lies in its elasticity, as Tarkos suggests in *Oui*: 'Heureusement la langue s'agrandit de beaucoup et se

[66] This idea of the menacing 'substance visqueuse' recalls both Francis Ponge's poetry, where language offers a means of bridling the infinitude of things, and the 'nausée' of external phenomena freed from their linguistic frames of reference in Sartre's *La Nausée*. In a passage that describes his bookshelves in *Anachronisme*, Tarkos echoes Sartre's terminology, describing 'la nausée' provoked by disorder (217-18).

réduit de beaucoup parce qu'elle est très élastique' (*EP*, 163). Tarkos performs these same ideas in the improvised poem 'J'ai un problème voilà', where the formlessness of 'patmo' results in a very literal manifestation of Deleuzian 'bégaiement'. The poem describes the sensation or experience of 'patmo', of words being stuck together and inseparable: 'j'ai remarqué que tout était complètement collé/ j'ai remarqué que que que que tout complètement collé est complètement collé' (*E*, 312). In his performance of the poem, Tarkos stutters, stumbling over his words, repeating phrases and words in quick succession. The symbolism of the gesture is clear: language is always at risk of descending into disorder, the poet can't get his words out, and 'le mutisme', described above in *Ma langue* and *Processe*, threatens. By conceptualising this state as a form of aphasia, poetry then presents itself as a form of 'soignement' or 'guérissement', as suggested above. If 'Le poème est le plus grand moyen face à la grande substance', this is because it combats formlessness by moulding or shaping language within the text. As Tarkos would have it, poetry presents itself as a distinct type of language use, set apart from other linguistic modes in so far as it is predicated on form and allows for a heightened degree of formal innovation.

Throughout his oeuvre, Tarkos experiments with a number of typographic arrangements; the wide variety of forms that Tarkos uses draws attention precisely to their significance. In several instances, the appeal of poetry is that it highlights the shape of language on the page, with the poems in *Caisses*, 'Carrés' and *Dix ronds* and the calligrams in *Morceaux choisis* being the most obvious examples.[67] In a passage in *Morceaux choisis*, Tarkos elaborates an enumerated list 'des conditions indispensables pour créer un poème' (91).

[67] A preoccupation with form, taken in its broadest sense, is manifested in the prevalent inclusion of tables and diagrams in Tarkos's work. They represent an exaggerated form of typographic organisation, for example, in *Morceaux choisis* which includes an eclectic combination of tables of words (43), letters (58), and quantities, arranged by year, of 'Imports of Goods and Services' (111).

These ‘conditions’ consist of simple assertions such as ‘Le résultat d’un poème doit être un poème’ (92) and ‘Le poème se doit d’être une chose’ (92), which might at first appear tautological or wilfully unhelpful, but which gain relevance in the context of Tarkos’s broader project. What becomes clear from the enumerated statements is the primary significance of form, with the majority of the conditions making reference to it: ‘Le poème peut prendre toutes les formes’ (92), ‘Le poème doit parvenir à une forme concrète’ (92), and so on. At first glance, phrases such as ‘Le poème doit faire remarquer qu’il est un poème. Dans le cas contraire on pourrait le prendre pour autre chose’ (92) and ‘Un poème doit être distinctement visible. Il faut qu’en le voyant, l’on puisse dire: voilà un poème’ (92) are frustratingly slight, but they acquire a certain significance in so far as they emphasise the necessity of a visibly recognisable shaping of language in the text (or in the performance). Tarkos’s comments are important when read against the backdrop of radical experiments with form in modern poetry, where from the nineteenth century onwards a comparatively narrow set of traditional verse forms were supplanted by an unrestricted range of textual possibilities (free verse, prose poetry, etc.), and expanded further by the extension of poetry into performance and other media. If, as discussed in Chapter One, these experiments saw the depreciation of form as a necessary constituent of poetry, then Tarkos appears to be reasserting its significance in his own poetics.

That said, while Tarkos reaffirms its significance, his conception of form is not confined to a narrow interpretation based on typographic arrangement. For Tarkos, whose performance poetry constitutes a substantial part of his oeuvre, the shaping of the ‘patmo’ takes place on a broader level, in the novel patterning of language within the poem, whether written or performed. I have outlined already several of the most striking and prevalent features of Tarkos’s work: the way he reworks a central pivotal phrase, creating ‘dérives’ that advance

and modify an idea, expanding and contracting it through repetition, polyptoton, anaphora and epistrophe. Lucie Bourassa, like Samuel Lequette whom she quotes here, describes how Tarkos creates new linguistic forms in his poetry, which in turn work against 'des stéréotypes, du déjà tout dit et tout pensé qui sont incrustés dans la pâte'.[68] She writes:

> c'est une poésie de l'accumulation, de la retouche et de la variation ; une poésie des articulations – des délimitations et des liaisons – qui « décolle » la pâte en lui imposant de nouvelles découpes et de nouvelles jointures. Comme l'écrit avec justesse Samuel Lequette, « Le sens [dans les écrits de Tarkos] n'est pas produit par des références, mais par des différences, des phases et des changements de phases. »[69]

Bourassa identifies how the 'nouvelles découpes' and 'nouvelles jointures' in Tarkos's poetry involve a remoulding or reworking of set patterns of language. These novel linguistic forms then create new possibilities in thought, as Tarkos himself suggests: 'l'expression langagière peut changer notre pensée / […] la langue, le langage est une arme / qui va assouplir, changer, modifier la pensée' (*E*, 74).[70] It is here that we see what Tarkos describes as the revolutionary quality of poetry, and what inspires him to make the claim: 'Le poème va faire la révolution' (*EP*, 163), 'Faire la révolution / Devant la grande Substance/ Le monde s'éveillera' (*EP*, 210).

Throughout his work, Tarkos develops a motif that revolves around the revisions of the phrase 'pour la poésie'.[71] He writes: 'Je suis pour / l'avant-garde […] Je suis affilié, adhérent, / je suis pour. […] / Je milite. / Je suis pour / la participation. / Je participe. / Je suis pour. / Et / Je travaille pour' (*E*, 416). The choice of vocabulary is significant,

[68] Bourassa, '"Il n'y a pas de mots"', p. 165.
[69] Ibid., p. 165.
[70] He expresses the same idea in an interview with Verdier: 'c'est vrai que tu changes la langue, ça change tout, probablement que ça change tout' (*EP*, 358).
[71] In Tarkos's various 'autoprésentations' the phrase reappears in different configurations: in one he writes that he is 'Pour les poèmes' (*MC*, 110), in another he states: 'Je participe. Je suis pour. Je travaille pour' (*EP*, 32).

presenting poetry as a form of participation or 'engagement'. There are instances in Tarkos's work where this notion of 'engagement' takes an overtly political form, for example in *Ouvriers vivants* (1999), which was based on a project where a number of contemporary poets worked in collaboration with 'ouvriers sans papiers'.[72] However, the revolutionary nature of poetry, as Tarkos would have it, is generated by the transformative power of its language. As a locus of linguistic experimentation and formal innovation, poetry remodels the 'déjà tout dit et tout pensé qui sont incrustés dans la pâte', activating new modes of thought or perception.[73] Returning to Deleuze and Guattari's account, it is this property of Tarkos's work which qualifies it as 'littérature mineure'. In *Kafka : pour une littérature mineure*, they write that 'Autant dire que « mineur » ne qualifie plus certaines littératures, mais les conditions révolutionnaires de toute littérature' (33). We read in *Dialogues* that 'Le langage n'est pas fait pour être cru mais pour être obéi' (30), thus the form of linguistic disobedience found in Tarkos's work marks a dismantling of the 'dispositifs de pouvoir' that are encoded within the language it deforms.

These questions of revolution, language and literature also recall Roland Barthes's discussion in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1977. Having established that all language is inextricably bound up with power, and that there is no outside of language, he writes:

> Mais à nous […], il ne reste, si je puis dire, qu'à tricher avec la langue, qu'à tricher la langue. Cette tricherie salutaire, cette esquive, ce leurre magnifique, qui permet

[72] Resisting the administrative and legal erasure of 'ouvriers sans papiers', the project attempts to reaffirm the identity of the eponymous workers. In such a way, it reprises the questions of identity and of affirmation and presence found throughout Tarkos's work, in a more immediate way. In turn it demonstrates in practice the idea of a 'littérature mineure', which resists the dominant 'langue majeure'. See *Ouvriers vivants* [collected publication] (Romainville: Al Dante, 1999). Likewise, Tarkos contributed a number of texts to the review *Action poétique*, a review established precisely for poetry that was engaged in the sociopolitical realities of contemporary society. See Pascal Boulanger, *Une "Action poétique": de 1950 à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998) for a history of the aims and scope of the review.
[73] Bourassa, '"Il n'y a pas de mots"', p. 165.

> d'entendre la langue hors-pouvoir, dans la splendeur d'une révolution permanente du langage, je l'appelle pour ma part : *littérature*.[74]

He continues:

> Les forces de liberté qui sont dans la littérature ne dépendent pas de la personne civile, de l'engagement politique de l'écrivain, […] ni même du contenu doctrinal de son œuvre, mais du travail de déplacement qu'il exerce sur la langue.[75]

This echoes what he had written earlier in essays such as 'Ecriture et révolution' and 'L'écriture et le silence' in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, where he draws the same distinction between writing about overtly political subjects, and employing an implicitly political mode of writing, predicated on the subversive nature of its form. Rejecting or revising the codified formal properties of a given literary style serves to disrupt the ideology that is embedded within these conventions.[76] Barthes's comments here reflect a moment in literary history where the avant-gardes of the 1960s-1980s wished to assert the importance of literary production in political action. Associated with journals such as *Tel Quel*, to which Barthes himself contributed, as well as *Change* and later *TXT* (founded by Prigent), these writers 'se donnaient pour mission de théoriser la coïncidence entre subversion formelle et désir de révolution politique : changer la langue, trans-former la littérature, changer la vie, agir sur les représentations, change le monde, la société'.[77] It is clear that Tarkos's own poetics owe much to this form of 'langagement'. Returning to Tarkos's claim cited above, 'Je suis l'avant-garde en 1997' (*E*, 20), we see how Tarkos inherited from his predecessors that same 'subversion de l'ordre des représentations par la langue, […] subversion de la langue, transgression des codes', but in place of the

[74] Roland Barthes, *Leçon* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 16.
[75] Barthes, *Leçon*, p. 17.
[76] In his discussion, Barthes explores the formal conventions of realist and naturalist literature, which he reads as markers of bourgeois 'literariness', opposing this to the 'neutre' style or non-style of Camus (*Le Degré zéro*, pp. 53-61).
[77] Gleize, 'La post-poésie : un travail d'investigation-élucidation', p. 124. Julia Kristeva's *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974) is an obvious notable example of this.

'mécriture' of figures such as Denis Roche, with its 'excentricité verbale' and 'grandes irrégularités', his poetry favours a more accessible mode of engagement.[78] In a more modest reformulation of the phrase 'Le poème va faire la révolution', Tarkos states: 'comme [la patmo] est un peu élastique, on peut l'élargir un peu dans un sens ; c'est tout ce qu'on peut faire. Ce n'est pas grand-chose mais on essaie au départ de s'ouvrir et de danser, de danser… Pour faire bouger un tout petit peu la pâte-mot' (*EP*, 353). In his own way, Tarkos reprises the conception of poetry as revolution in language, as the making-other of language, as a linguistic utopia or an 'au-délà de la langue'. This is well-trodden territory, rendered idiosyncratic by Tarkos's inflection of language as 'patmo', and poetry as 'malaxage'.

'Oui'

As previously suggested, the word 'oui' forms a key motif in Tarkos's work; it is the title of one of his texts, and it reappears throughout his writing. In a passage already quoted, Tarkos describes this 'oui' as a point of departure for the poetic act: 'pour pouvoir avancer […], pour faire même un geste, pour faire n'importe quoi dans une telle réalité cohérente, et collée, on est obligé, au départ, d'avoir un « oui »' (*E*, 244).[79] This 'yes' is multifaceted: it signifies the affirmative gesture of his poetry, which reinstates meaning and points to the material presence of the world. It also represents a 'yes' to poetry itself: an affirmation of its value as a practice. In this respect, the 'oui' echoes the sentiment, described above, whereby Tarkos declares himself to be 'pour la poésie' and 'pour la participation' (*E*, 416). Talking about the 'oui' as it relates to 'pâte-mot', Tarkos says: 'Oui, je vais le faire, oui il y a une volonté, de l'extraire, de le dire, de le transformer, de … Sinon, on se retrouve

[78] Gleize uses these terms to describe 'langagement' of the 1960s-1980s in 'La post-poésie : un travail d'investigation-élucidation', p. 126.
[79] Jacques Derrida also evokes this inaugural gesture of the 'yes' in 'Ulysse gramophone: ouï-dire de Joyce' in *Ulysse gramophone : deux mots pour Joyce* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp. 57-143.

dans une vaste hypocrisie très poétique d'ailleurs, qui est le « non » désespéré' (*E*, 244-5). In this sense, Tarkos outlines how this inaugural gesture of the 'oui' sets his project apart from a disillusioned 'poésie négative'. We see here a further correspondence with Francis Ponge, who describes a similar embrace of language and gesture of consent:

> C'est le ton affirmatif du Verbe, tout à fait nécessaire pour qu'il 'porte'. C'est le OUI du Soleil, le OUI de Racine, le OUI de Mallarmé […]. C'est enfin la seule justification de la Parole (prose ou poésie), une fois franchies toutes les raisons de se taire. C'est la décision de parler.[80]

In contrast to figures such as Arthur Rimbaud and Denis Roche, or Olivier Cadiot and his conclusion that 'Il fallait abandonner le bateau', Tarkos's work asserts a renewed commitment to poetry.[81] This commitment and the affirmation of the value of poetry is most apparent in the text *Ma langue est poétique*. Pivoting around the repeated nominal phrase 'ma langue', Tarkos qualifies the language of his poetry through a series of revisions:

> Ma langue est poétique et musicale, ma langue est imagée et musicale, ma langue est souple, étincelante et merveilleuse, ma langue aime jouer de la musique, elle vibre et fait vibrer chacun de ses mots qui rayonnent de leurs contours
>
> (*EP*, 48)

The refrain 'Ma langue est poétique' alternates with the anaphora 'Ma langue est [X]' which accumulates a series of adjectives of the sort: 'sonore', bruitée', 'féconde', 'douce', inondée de soleil' (50). This creates a structural parallelism, where the logical inference is that the poet's language is rendered 'poétique' precisely through the qualities of the adjectives it is attributed. If his language is poetic, it is *because* it is rich or sonorous or supple. Poetic language in *Ma langue est poétique* is thus presented as having a number of distinctive features. It involves a 'désir de langue': 'ma langue est poétique, […] c'est un désir de langue, un désir de langue poétique, […] ma langue est un désir de langue' (*EP*,

[80] Francis Ponge, *Pour un Malherbe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 216.
[81] Cadiot, Mangeot and Zaoui, 'Cap au mieux', p. 12.

52). It is thus marked by this initial gesture of a 'oui', a 'désir' which contrasts with the 'fatigue' that might be provoked by 'patmo': 'la substance visqueuse menace, essouffle, paralyse, donne envie de ne plus parler, fatigue, endort, donne envie de dormir' (*EP*, 143) In contrast to the stasis of 'la mort' or the untouched 'substance visqueuse', poetic language is 'vivante': 'Ma langue vit, est vivante, est poétique, est pleine de mots' (48). Its vivacity is a product of the fact that it is characterised by movement, an idea which is expressed in a stanza that enumerates a long series of verbs of motion: 'Ma langue abonde accélère accorde accumule additionne agresse ajoute alterne amalgame amorce amplifie […]' (51). Poetry sets language in motion; the poet's quest, after all, is to 'faire bouger un tout petit peu la pâte-mot' (*EP*, 353).

This alphabetical list of verbs describing the movements of poetic language recalls a list found in *Anachronisme*, where Tarkos enumerates the processes involved in modelling 'patmo' in poetry: 'Mélanger, presser, malaxer, tourner, touiller, écraser, compresser, cercler, ficeler, compacter, serrer, fondre, intégrer, introduire, faire tenir ensemble, rameuter, ramasser, coller, agglutiner' (192). The verb 'malaxer' reappears throughout Tarkos's work, encapsulating the handling, moulding or kneading of language that the poetic act involves. In these descriptions, the etymology of the word 'poetry' itself is never far away, with its original sense of making and shaping being restored in Tarkos's project. Indeed, Tarkos tended to substitute the term 'poète' with 'fabricant de poèmes': 'je suis fabricant de poèmes, j'essaye de fabriquer des poèmes' (*EP*, 36). Here, we are reminded of Cadiot's description of poetry as a form of 'travail plastique', as well as the conception of the poet as craftsman in Cadiot and Alferi's essay 'La Mécanique lyrique' in the *Revue de littérature générale* (to which Tarkos contributed).[82] For Tarkos, a performance poet as

[82] Ibid., p. 12.

well as a published author, the emphasis is always on the process or act of poetry, not on the resulting poetic object. This idea is conveyed in the emphasis on verbal forms in these two lists, and more overtly in a document entitled 'Acte', dating from June 1999, where Tarkos writes the following:

> la poésie est un acte
> le poème est un acte
>
> […]
>
> quels sont les actes les actes sont variés les actes sont ceux
> qui appellent de nous, s'appellent de nous, nous appellent
> pour faire un acte, ce qui se rapproche de nous
> il y a une proximité
> tout ce qui est le plus proche est alors un acte
> rougir, être en colère, descendre vertigineusement, esca-
> lader vertigineusement, avoir une dépression, désespérer de
> tout, ne plus avoir de goût pour rien, péter,
> un acte est ce qui pour le faire demande à soi une trans-
> formation
> il y a une transformation de soi
>
> […]
>
> le passage à l'acte est la pénétration
>
> (*E*, 373-4)

In this text, poetry is presented as one type of act among many, and it is notable that, among the various acts that Tarkos enumerates, 'avoir une dépression, désespérer de tout, ne plus avoir de goût pour rien' reappear. As Tarkos suggests, these acts involve a change of internal states, a 'transformation de soi', and a form of 'pénétration' that connects to a proximate external world.[83] This definition can then be traced in the poetic act; Castellin writes: 'la poésie est acte […]. Que l'on « écrive » ou que l'on lise en public, on agit-réagit : on réagit à ce qui nous entoure, on l'éprouve et en éprouve « la poussée », on la

[83] In Tarkos's discussion of, among other things, proximity, experience, rhythm and relations, we see the influence of Deleuze, whom the poet read and commented on. In his description of his unrealised project, 'La terre', Tarkos evokes this influence directly, describing how he will draw on 'une vision deleuzienne de la proximité à l'objet' (*E*, 504).

prolonge, la transmet *via* un corps singulier, et cette transmission est nécessairement une action à laquelle autrui réagit' (*E*, 75). The poetic act therefore connects outwards to the world, affirms its presence, and inaugurates a relation between poet and reader.[84] The phrase 'le passage à l'acte est la pénétration', recalls a passage from 'Le texte est expressif', Tarkos's first public performance poem, given at the Centre International de Poésie Marseille in 1993. In the performance, an initial silence is pierced by 'quatre hurlements' (*E*, 107). Playing on the contrast between silent pauses and the interjection of his reading, Tarkos announces the following: 'Le texte est bon. Court et frappant, il sort sonore et intense. […] Le texte est surprenant. Sort, fort, exprimé. Le texte exprime intensément. Ample et beau, il sonne et perce' (*E*, 107). These verbs, 'percer' and 'pénétrer', are significant; they evoke the 'engagement' of the poem, which enters into the world, transforming silence into sound, blank space into text, absence into presence.

We have seen then, how poetry offers a way of being inside the amorphous mass of language, creating new forms, and in so doing, constituting a form of 'pénétration'. Albert-Birot suggests that poetry, for Tarkos, is therefore a way to 'faire partie du monde'. She writes:

> Modeler la langue, la plier à ses obsessions, fabriquer des poèmes – au sens latin de *faber* – créer dans une prolifération déstabilisante pour lui, pour son lecteur ou son auditeur. Tarkos explore le verbe et le monde, c'est sa façon d'être au monde, de faire partie du monde, d'y laisser sa trace météorique.[85]

These verbs 'être au monde', 'faire partie du monde', are reminiscent of Jean-Claude Pinson's reflections on what he calls a 'poéthique'. As discussed in the introduction, Pinson, following Heidegger, draws on the etymology of the word 'ethos' ('dwelling'), to

[84] Tarkos insists, throughout his work, on the presence of the reader. In *Le Signe*=, he writes: 'On écrit pour le monde / Notre écrit est adressé au monde entier' (56).
[85] Albert-Birot, 'Découvrir C. Tarkos', p. 137.

evoke how poetry involves a particular way of being in the world. In his collection of essays on contemporary poetry, *Sentimentale et naïve*, Pinson writes:

> La poésie n'est pas seulement création de feux d'artifice verbaux, production de textes qui ne seraient que des objets esthétiques sans incidence sur nos existences. « Morale de la forme », l'écriture poétique est aussi mise en forme de l'*éthos*, de l'être au monde. Elle est aussi, pour reprendre encore une fois l'expression de Deleuze, « créatrice de vie ».[86]

He continues, describing how 'toute grande oeuvre poétique' is a:

> *proposition de monde* – et notamment proposition, une ou plurielle, quant à telle ou telle modalité possible de son habitation. En même temps qu'elle est invention de formes, événement de langage, elle est, plus ou moins directement, *en vue* de l'existence ; en vue d'une habitation ragréée du monde. En faisant entendre une voix, en racontant (ou ne racontant pas) des histoires, en jouant des émotions ou en les déjouant, elle pose, plus ou moins obliquement, la question « poéthique » du comment vivre, la question de la « vraie vie » toujours absente et toujours recherchée.[87]

I think this analysis holds true for Tarkos's oeuvre, which, in its own way might be said to 'pose[r], plus ou moins obliquement, la question « poéthique » du comment vivre'. For Tarkos, the stakes of the question are grounded in his analysis of 'la grande substance', and the answers will be found, ultimately, in language. Indeed, if his work explores a possible 'modalité de son habitation du monde' then the question is first and foremost a linguistic one: 'Comment écrire' he asks, 'dans la proximité, pâte-mot contre pâte-monde […]?' (*E*, 216). The response, then, begins with a commitment to language: 'pour pouvoir avancer […], pour faire même un geste, pour faire n'importe quoi dans une telle réalité cohérente, et collée, on est obligé, au départ, d'avoir un « oui »' (*E*, 244). This gesture, reminiscent of the final lines of Beckett's *L'Innommable*, is thus one of continuation: 'Pas d'autre méthode pour comprendre. Que cette langue. Continuer' (*EP*, 143).[88] The question

[86] Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve,* p. 24. See also Pinson, 'Poéthique de Gilles Deleuze' in Gelas and Micolet (eds), *Deleuze et les écrivains*, pp. 187-200.
[87] Pinson, *Sentimentale et naïve,* p. 186.
[88] '[I]l faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, il faut continuer, […] il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer' in Samuel Beckett, *L'Innommable* (Paris: Minuit, 1953), p. 213.

is then to find ways to continue within language, which is the only 'méthode', and for Tarkos, this involves the shaping or moulding of the 'patmo' into new forms. We have seen then how this practice subsequently represents 'un exercice […] pour l'acceptation du monde' (*E*, 245), whereby Tarkos, in response to a 'poésie négative', reinstates meaning, and affirms the presence of the world within the poem. This 'poetics of presence' also involves a restoration of poetic voice, and in this very immediate sense, Bakhtin's analysis of poetic monoglossia holds true in Tarkos's work. The combination of direct, authorial voice, and the unity of style that traverses Tarkos's oeuvre, lends itself to Bakhtin's reading. However, Bakhtin's proposition that monoglossia necessarily involves submitting to the 'homogenizing power of myth over language' (*DI*, 60), the myth of a language that purports to be the only language, is clearly not supported in Tarkos's poetry. For Tarkos, the function of the formal properties that, conversely, lend his poetry a stylistic or, as Bakhtin would have it, 'monoglottic' unity, is to 'faire bouger un tout petit peu la pâte-mot' (*EP*, 353), to find new forms and new variations that deterritorialise ordinary language within the poem. In this sense, returning to a hypothesis advanced in Chapter One, his poetry seems to be not so much monoglottic as internally diglottic, with its syntactic and rhythmic effects offering variations on an absent but implicit norm. Returning to a second idea already outlined, Tarkos's poetry flags up a tension between Bakhtin's and Deleuze and Guattari's accounts of the role of style in an author's work. The same features of his work that, for Bakhtin, would represent the maintenance of power structures within language, are precisely the features that Deleuze and Guattari would argue constitute its status as a power-disrupting 'littérature mineure'. It is obviously with the latter of these two accounts that I wish to agree. Within the 'patmo' (which might be read as a 'langue majeure'), the 'malaxage' of Tarkos's poetry mobilises difference, rendering language strange or other, and pointing to new possibilities in the process.

Conclusion

One of the primary objectives of this thesis was to pursue the notion of a 'poésie mineure', an idea to which I wish to return in these concluding remarks, so as to draw together the various lines of argumentation hitherto developed. My initial concern was to explore whether Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of 'littérature mineure' might apply to the poetry of the three contemporary French writers considered here. In the previous chapters, I have attempted to demonstrate how the language of Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's poetry relates to other forms of language, such as 'ordinary language' or traditional modes of poetic discourse, while mapping this onto the paradigm of the 'major' and the 'minor' that Deleuze and Guattari elaborate. Following Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, I have sought to identify some of the stylistic features of these poets' work that act as tensors for the deterritorialisation of language within the poem. From Fourcade's use of truncated, agrammatical clauses to Tarkos's vertiginous ritournelles, these features lend their work a foreign or strange quality. They highlight the rule-governed, variation-suppressing operation of the now-absent major language, while at the same time pointing towards new linguistic possibilities, characterised by heteroglossia and multiplicity. Again, following Deleuze and Guattari's account whereby major languages are intricately bound up in systems of power, and minor literature involves the destabilising or deterritorialising of such systems, I have argued that the use of language in these poets' work lends it an implicitly political dimension. As the title of my thesis would suggest, the centrality of linguistic experimentation in their work plays a constitutional role in its status as 'poésie mineure'. By definition, experimentation involves deviation and difference from a normal or established linguistic code. The various forms of linguistic experimentation found in Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's poetry deviate from two principal forms of 'major language': on the one hand, 'ordinary language', understood in its broadest, loosest sense;

on the other hand, established poetic discourses. With regard to the first, it could be argued that poetry, more so than other genres, has long since been characterised by its difference from normal modes of communication. Historically, this difference has been seen as residing in its formal properties, its rhythmic or prosodic effects, and/or its self-reflexivity. Roman Jakobson's notion of the 'poetic function' is emblematic of how this divergence might be understood, and its popularity as a theoretical approach reflects the convergence of opinion on poetry's essential difference to other linguistic modes. The impulse to linguistic experimentation that has gone hand-in-hand with the development of modern French poetry has extended this difference further. For example, experiments with non-semantic or non-signifying language, where the usual referential function of language is subverted and emphasis placed on the materiality of the signifier, have widened the gulf between poetic language and the 'mots de la tribu'.[1] Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's work is situated within this tradition, and its legacy is apparent in what might be described, in somewhat paradoxical terms, as the more conventional forms of experimentation in their poetry. To give just one example, the glossolalia of earlier Dada experiments returns, albeit configured in novel ways according to the various concerns of their particular projects, in the infantile babbling of Fourcade's *Est-ce que j'peux placer un mot?*, in the segmented samples of Welche speakers in Cadiot's *Welche*, and in the agrammatical, onomatopoeic play of Tarkos's *Le train*. A further dimension of their work that again has been a defining feature of modern French poetry is a self-reflexive tendency, where experiments target not only ordinary language in its broadest sense, but more specifically the conventions of traditional poetic discourses. In the preceding chapters, we have seen how Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos return to some of the dominant preoccupations of poetry

[1] Mallarmé, 'Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe' in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 70.

over the last 150 years, experimenting, for example, with voice, subjecthood, and the relationship between poetry, prose and other media.

I hope also to have identified some of the more idiosyncratic forms of experimentation that appear in these poets' work, either in the elaboration of novel devices, or in the reprise of pre-existing ones, reconfigured innovatively in each writer's particular poetics. In Fourcade's poetry, we saw how multilingual play intersects with the anthropomorphisation of language in such a way that, although neither property is unique to his work, they are put to new ends within his wider exploration of the mother tongue/foreign language paradigm. Likewise, Cadiot develops a novel use for the otherwise well-rehearsed technique of the cut-up; by using prescriptive grammar books in *L'art poétic'* and samples from minority languages in *Welche* and *Hôtel Robinson*, he introduces an additional dimension that explores the interplay of power, authority and language, and the possibilities for its destabilisation within the poem. The innovative quality of Tarkos's poetry stems from the theoretical underpinnings of his project and his experiments with the 'patmo', which challenge a dominant, Saussurean conception of language, and generate a cohesive and idiosyncratic style that, although reprising some of the more traditional features of poetic discourse, is altogether more subversive. Crucially, the centrality of experimentation in these poets' work lends it to a Deleuzo-Guattarian reading because the experiment does not seek simply to supplant the major language it deforms, but remains minor in its contingent relationship, where it is constituted precisely by its divergence. The experiment thus involves the same contingency and impermanence of minor literature more generally; both are simultaneously bound to their past, to the existing forms they deterritorialise, and, as Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the 'becoming-minor' of minor literature would suggest, to the possible but fragile futures they potentialise.

By exploring the notion of 'poésie mineure', as opposed to 'littérature mineure' more broadly, a further question that this thesis has aimed to address is whether there is some value in such a distinction. Beyond simply identifying the minor quality of certain poets' work, I have asked whether there is something specific to poetry, or, indeed to this experimental strand of contemporary poetry, that might lend it a particular place in a Deleuzo-Guattarian analysis. In light of Deleuze and Guattari's own discussion, distinguishing 'poésie mineure' from 'littérature mineure' might seem a somewhat contradictory gesture, as it works against their rhizomatic conception of artistic production, their emphasis on multiplicity and heterogeneity, and their resistance to the arborescent structure of genealogically motivated taxonomies. As discussed in Chapter One, when they refer to the 'poetic' it is often used synonymously with the 'literary', with both ultimately being subsumed into broader notions of creative stuttering, deterritorialisation and lines of flight. Likewise, the gesture might seem at odds with the post-genre approaches to literature that have recently gathered momentum in contemporary poetry and its criticism. In Chapter Three, we saw how Cadiot and Alferi's concept of the 'OVNI' represents one such example. In their editorial essays in the *Revue de littérature générale*, they asked whether doing away with generic distinctions altogether, to focus instead on the properties of literature that transcend such distinctions, might not be a better line of approach.[2] In an interview with Nathalie Wourm, when asked whether 'La Mécanique lyrique' was a 'projet deleuzien', Alferi replied yes, stating: 'Nous étions tous les deux viscéralement du côté de la multiplicité et de l'horizontalité, au sens au moins de la déhiérarchisation, plutôt que du côté des systèmes de pensée hiérarchisés,

[2] We recall their comments from the concluding essay of the second *Revue*: '[I]l ne s'agit pas d'inclure artificiellement des poèmes dans un roman ou de la prose découpée dans un poème. Plutôt de travailler à une forme où l'on verrait les genres et les registres se justifier en cours de route. Cette forme, faut-il encore l'appeler "roman"? Ou "texte"? Ne pas l'appeler du tout?' Alferi and Cadiot, 'Digest', *Revue 96/2*.

exclusifs et autoritaires'.[3] In her introduction to the collection of interviews from which this comment is drawn, Wourm argues convincingly that the post-structuralist philosophy of figures such as Deleuze and Guattari and Jacques Derrida has shaped the field of contemporary poetry in significant ways. Evoking the *Revue de littérature générale* and critical approaches such as Jean-Marie Gleize's 'post-poésie', she suggests that the generic status of poetry is one area where Deleuze and Guattari's influence has been particularly great. On this same subject, in an article in *L'Esprit Créateur*, Wourm asks whether a post-generic approach spells the death of poetry, responding:

> No, simply the death of poetry as one single, narrowly defined category of the writing activity. […] [P]oetry enters the rhizome of artistic activity, leaving behind its elevated status in a fabricated literary hierarchy, as part of a process very much like Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization.[4]

Wourm then returns to this idea of the deterritorialisation of poetry in the introduction to *Poètes français*, where she cites her interview with the poet Jean-Michel Espitallier:

> « Je pense qu'on a tous lu Deleuze » affirme Jean-Michel Espitallier dans les entretiens, évoquant une bibliothèque commune, des repères partagés et – reprenant un concept deleuzien – une même *déterritorialisation*. Et il précise : « Nous sommes tous dans une impureté de la poésie, une impureté générique ». Selon lui, cette « déterritorialisation » de la poésie passe par son hybridation, son croisement avec d'autres disciplines, telles les arts plastiques ou la musique. En s'hybridant, la « poésie » est dépossédée d'un territoire, perd sa pureté. Cette interprétation deleuzienne de l'interdisciplinarité de la poésie contemporaine mène implicitement à l'idée d'une remise en question du concept de « poésie ». Et étant génériquement impure, celle-ci est moins facilement reconnaissable, définissable.[5]

Wourm goes on to evoke the same 'crise de poésie' that Gleize identified in *A noir* fifteen years earlier. She describes, in similar terms, how this identity crisis, this deterritorialisation of the very notion of poetry, becomes a defining feature of what constitutes its specificity as a practice: 'C'est donc cette absence d'identification, cette

[3] Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 43.
[4] Nathalie Wourm, 'Anticapitalism and the Poetic Function of Language', *L'Esprit Créateur*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2009), p. 129.
[5] Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 3.

propension à être méconnaissable, cette désintégration d'un concept, qui font de la poésie ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui'.[6] While beyond the scope of this particular thesis, it is nonetheless worth remarking that contemporary poetry finds itself at a crossroads, where poets and critics will either continue to uphold a notion of the poetic, of poetry's specificity and its distinction from other forms, or will abandon it altogether in search of post-generic, all-encompassing notions of literary or artistic work. For the time being, we note how in these accounts that gesture towards a post-generic stance, there is often a paradox, where at the same as wishing to leave poetry behind, they simultaneously sustain its centrality. Jean-Marie Gleize's concept of 'post-poésie' typifies this paradox: the innovative, a-generic forms of artistic practice that he promotes are nonetheless contingent, as the prefix 'post-' would suggest, on a historical or genealogical relationship with poetry. Likewise, in Wourm's account, the deterritorialisation of poetry into other media, into a rhizomatic relationship with other forms, requires that this post-genre literature diverges from a territory that is poetry. Thus, in both accounts, even if in the very gesture of rejecting it, genre returns to centre stage. In light of this, far from negating the utility of distinguishing minor poetry from minor literature, here we see how the term 'poésie mineure' takes on a particular significance. The term captures how, posed at a threshold in its own history, this strand of contemporary poetry grapples with its own generic identity, simultaneously deterritorialising established conceptions of poetry on which it is contingent, and becoming-other in the process.

What will be clear from the preceding chapters is that each of the three poets considered, while experimenting with its generic features, nonetheless maintains the specificity of

[6] Wourm, *Poètes français*, p. 3. In a passage already cited, Gleize writes: 'la poésie vit son état de crise, sans doute *de* son état de crise, un état critique et autocritique permanent qui est certainement sa seule définition possible aujourd'hui' (*A noir*, p. 102).

poetry, in one form of another. In each poet's work, there is some notion of poetry that is either maintained, rejected or fought for, and in this regard, each poet reflects something of their generation and the broader movements to which they belong. Fourcade, no doubt influenced by both the 'lyrisme critique' and 'modernité négative' movements of the 1980s, depicts simultaneously a compulsion towards poetry, a sense that he *must* write, but that he must do so in the knowledge of its inevitable failure to 'toucher le monde'.[7] Inscribed in a lineage of 'poésie pensante', he presents the particular linguistic experience of poetry as a unique way of being in the world, one that is both essential and, as he puts it, terrifying.[8] Conversely, Cadiot typifies the ludic and altogether more cynical approach of the following generation. In his work, we find both a Rochean rejection of poetry, despite, as he says, his preference for it, and a quest, manifested in his consideration of the 'OVNI' in 'La Mécanique lyrique', to explore how poetry might continue by other means.[9] As we have seen, the *Revue de littérature générale* (1995, 1996), alongside other notable works such as Gleize's *A noir* (1992), represents a post-poetic, sometimes anti-poetic posture that formed the Zeitgeist in the 1990s. A number of figures who began publishing in the mid-1990s – Tarkos, but also Pennequin, Quintane and Beck – rejected this posture strongly. Tarkos's insistence on the necessity to militate 'pour la poésie' reflects a compulsion to reassert its value and to ensure its continuation.

[7] On poetry's intransitivity, Fourcade writes: 'Je me résume: j'ai donc eu à ce jour l'expérience de deux langues: celle (de l'amitié) qui touche tout point du monde et se laisse toucher, et la langue de l'écriture, qui ne vient pas et dans laquelle, de toutes façons, on ne peut toucher à rien' (*EJPPM*, 80). Note that, as we saw in Chapter Two, Fourcade uses the term 'écriture' interchangeably with 'poésie', as, whether composed in prose or verse form, writing is in each case a 'travail de poésie'. See Fourcade, 'Entretien avec Frédéric Valabrègue', p. 15.

[8] 'Parmi toutes les peurs que j'éprouve c'est l'écriture la très grande peur' (*EJPPM*, 79).

[9] Without expanding on what he means by it, in an interview Cadiot states: 'Au fond, moi je préfère la poésie. Simplement, la part concrète de poésie que je peux m'autoriser diminue à chaque livre. J'ai de moins en moins le droit de faire de la poésie parce que la poésie comme chacun le sait est inadmissible. Je le pense vraiment'. Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 21.

Amidst these various postures, the question remains as to what precisely constitutes poetry's specificity, or what precisely poetry *is*. Over the course of the previous chapters a number of ways of approaching these questions have been advanced. For example, in the last chapter we saw how, for Tarkos, a rudimentary notion of form, based on the shaping of language within the poem, might offer one such account. Various critical approaches have also been evoked: some more traditional (poetry as rhythmic variation), others more innovative (poetry as the tension between different linguistic codes and forms, replacing a traditional tension between its metrical or syntactic features).[10] One approach that I have returned to intermittently, and which carries some weight in light of the theoretical framework elaborated, derives from Pinson's notion of a 'poéthique', where poetry is seen as a particular linguistic way of inhabiting the world. At first glance, Pinson's analysis might lend itself more readily to poets such as Bonnefoy or Du Bouchet, who are more immediately concerned with ethical and philosophical notions of being. However, I think it also offers a useful framework to approach Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's work. Although their poetry is, to varying degrees, often ludic, ironic or humoristic, it nonetheless poses broader questions of the place of the real, the subject, voice and affect in poetry, and converges on the insistence that poetry serves an important function. This is particularly apparent in Tarkos's oeuvre, where the autobiographical themes of death, illness and existential anguish lend his work a sense of urgency, and where he affirms in no uncertain terms the propriety of poetry as the medium in which to explore such topics.

[10] In Chapter Two, we saw how Agnès Disson evokes poetry's difference from prose as being predicated on the 'découpe, la mise en rythme'. She writes : 'Mais comment distinguer la poésie de la prose, si son matériau privilégié est désormais de "la prose découpée"? Simplement : par le découpage, la mise en rythme. Le vers devient mouvement, élan, flux, symétries de séquences, "puissance rhthmique, velléité de fuite et de suspens, de répétition et de retournement."' Disson, 'Poésie années 90', pp. 14-15. In Chapter Three, we saw how Anna Boschetti analyses the tension between different forms and codes in Cadiot's *Futur, ancien, fugitif* as a fundamental property of modern poetry. Talking about Cadiot's text, she writes: 'Ainsi, loin de confondre les codes, en brouillant les différences, le texte tend à accentuer les écarts, pour entretenir la tension, qui est une caractéristique fondamentale de la poésie. La modernité remplace la tension traditionnelle entre le mètre et la syntaxe par la tension entre les matériaux, entre les codes.' Boschetti, 'Le formalisme réaliste d'Olivier Cadiot', p. 242.

A similar sense is conveyed in Fourcade's work, and is again most apparent in texts that engage with autobiographical themes, such as the death of loved ones in *Manque*, or overtly political subjects, such as the treatment of Iraqi prisoners by American troops in *En laisse*. While these examples illustrate how poetry might address, thematically, particular ethical or sociopolitical concerns, this is not, to my eyes, the principal expression of the 'poethical' dimension of their work, which is to be located, rather, in their conception of poetic language.

As we have seen, Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos are all interested in the relationship between language and power, and in language understood as a sociopolitical phenomenon. This amounts, ultimately, to an exploration of the various linguistic ways in which we inhabit the world, and to an interrogation of the place of poetry, as a distinct 'expérience' of language, within that. Indeed, a recurring motif in the previous chapters has been the idea that experimenting with new linguistic modes might engender new ways of seeing, representing, or being in the world. This is clearly present in Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'littérature mineure', and in Chapter One, I touched on a number of critical approaches that convey the same possibility. The notion that poetic language offers a space for resisting or changing the current state of language reappears in various ways in each of our three poets' work, most brazenly in Tarkos's, where his claim 'Le poème va faire la révolution' (*EP*, 163) rests on his belief that 'tu changes la langue, ça change tout, probablement que ça change tout' (*EP*, 358). For Cadiot and Fourcade, such a claim would have to be attenuated. For example, for Fourcade, poetic language works against an intransitivity, an inevitable absence of the world in the poem, that is a product of the semiotic structure of the language system. To use the terms of Prigent, whose theoretical stance is similar to Fourcade's, poetry is thus involved in the pursuit of more accurate

('justes') ways of representing the world and its 'écart' than those of the conventional 'contrat verbal socialisé'.[11] Although with a greater wariness than the others, Cadiot also has, as he puts it, 'important things to say'; experimenting with various literary techniques and artistic forms, a driving ambition of his project is to find a way in which language can say these things.[12] While Tarkos might be an outlier, the following description by Dominique Rabaté conveys rather aptly the posture of many contemporary poets who take a more tentative and critical approach to the transformative potential of poetic language, while nonetheless sustaining its centrality to poetic practice. In his introduction to *Gestes lyriques*, he traces how, across the history of modern poetry, the idea of what poetry can do or accomplish in the real world, has shifted:

> A l'ère du soupçon, la croyance que les mots peuvent changer le monde a sans doute reculé, et les ambitions du dire poétique ont reflué d'autant. La tâche du poème est rendue plus modeste ; elle s'accomplit avec scepticisme ou ironie, avec une nécessaire lucidité contre les puissances de l'auto-illusion. Mais l'interrogation reste bien celle des pouvoirs des mots, contre la mort, et pour décrire la réalité. Pour chercher des voies de sortie, des modes de contact, pour inventer une manière de se tenir ensemble.[13]

At the outset to this thesis, I introduced Christian Prigent's hypothesis that deterritorialisation might offer a possible definition for poetry. For the strand of linguistically experimental contemporary poetry to which Fourcade, Cadiot and Tarkos belong, it does indeed appear that the deterritorialisation of various forms of major language within the poem constitutes a significant and central dimension of their practice.

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[11] Prigent writes : 'Du coup, il y a toujours un excès innommable aux figures que forme le contrat verbal socialisé pour que le «monde» soit par nous nommable. La reconnaissance empirique de cet innommable porte à trouver des langues pour le symboliser *malgré tout.* Pas pour le *nommer* positivement. Mais pour en *suggérer* l'instance : pour laisser sa présence agir en négatif dans le concert des énoncés positivés. Et donc pour former des figures plus justes du «réel» : des figures plus conformes à l'expérience pour autant que capables d'inclure en elles le négatif dont se trame l'expérience. En somme : des représentations plus *justes*.' His account here is emblematic of the approach to the linguistic possibilities of 'poésie négative', and summarises rather aptly Fourcade's own posture. Prigent, 'Deleuze / « Poésie »'.

[12] We recall Cadiot's comment: 'Le lyrisme, c'est bien ça, l'expression des affects importants. Il y a des affects importants. Il y a des choses importantes qui se passent dans la vie. Comment les dire ?' Person, 'Olivier Cadiot', p. 23.

[13] Rabaté, *Gestes lyriques*, pp. 23-4.

A unifying property of their poetic language is its difference from, and relationship to, other forms of discourse. In such a way, Michael G. Kelly's observation, evoked in Chapter One, that poetry is a permanently othered discourse, whose minority is bound to, and contingent on, the majority of the discourses that it deterritorialises, also appears to be true.[14] Furthermore, where minor literature deterritorialises the power structures of a major language, then one of the first discourses that it will tackle is likely to be that of its own generic conventions. This is all the more true for our three contemporary poets, working in a generic form that has historically been more self-reflexive and inward-looking than other literary forms, and in a contemporary field that is undergoing a so-called 'identity crisis', radically determined by its relationship with its past, and in a perpetual quest to define its current specificity. While Deleuze and Guattari do not extend their discussion of minor literature and its relationship to generic conventions in any great depth, in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, they gesture towards it. They evoke how minor literature takes place within the framework of a major literary form, and their subsequent analysis of the metaphor-less language of Kafka's prose points to one way in which a minor author will deterritorialise the conventions of that major literary language. In Bakhtin's analysis we have found a further framework in which to approach the relationship between major literary modes and their counterparts. In Chapter Three, we saw how Bakhtin's account of parodic-travestying forms might apply to Cadiot's work, particularly *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, which parodies the conventions of a number of different major literary genres and modes. More broadly, we have seen how Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's poetry might be read as a form of internally dialogic poetry, which evokes an absent but implicit mode that it deforms or deterritorialises. Rejecting Bakhtin's account of poetic monoglossia, I have argued that far from upholding the myth of a single and unitary language, embodied in the

[14] Kelly, *Strands of Utopia*, p. 6.

major languages they minorise, their poetry presents heteroglottic forms, either implicitly (for example in Tarkos's 'lyric' poems) or explicitly (in Cadiot's polyphonous, hybrid texts).

Significantly, in the form of 'poésie mineure' that I am arguing for, the discourses that correspond with the categories of the 'major' and the 'minor' will constantly be in shift. As once-experimental practices crystallise as 'major' forms, so too will the minor forms that are contingent on them adjust. Given the generational differences between the three poets considered, we can trace this shift across their work. For example, the focus on linguistic materiality and the absent referent in Fourcade's *Son blanc du un* (1986), or the experiments with voice in the grammar book cut-ups of Cadiot's *L'art poétic'* (1988) dismantle a major language that takes the form of traditional lyricism. A decade or so later, when Tarkos published *Ma langue* (2000) and *Anachronisme* (2001), his reinstatement of the lyric 'je', his emphasis on presence and his affirmation of the value of poetry, responds in turn to what he conceives of as a newly established major poetic mode. Indeed, one of the starting points for this thesis was Emmanuel Hocquard's description, in 1988, of the poetry associated with 'modernité négative' as 'poésie mineure (au sens deleuzien du terme)'.[15] In Tarkos's oeuvre, we see how this had already become an established set of literary conventions, from which his poetry diverges. In this sense, reprising Fourcade's term that has had some currency in recent criticism, 'poésie mineure' will always inhabit the 'extrême contemporain' (*OU*, 20). It will always be 'avant-garde', to use Tarkos's own

[15] Hocquard, *ma haie*, p. 26. His comment comes from 'La Bibliothèque de Trieste' which was published originally in 1988 by Editions Royaumont. Note that, in this essay, Hocquard actually pre-empts this codification of practice: 'La *modernité négative* ne risque-t-elle pas d'engendrer à son tour un système de valeurs légitimantes tel que l'avait été autrefois la croyance au progrès, au sens de l'histoire, etc. Comment des notions comme celles de manque, de défaut, d'absence, d'impossible, prises naguère à la lettre, en arrivent-elles à se transformer en clichés rhétoriques ? Les inventions formelles en jeux esthétiques ? […] Cela semble montrer en tout cas que sans une vigilance extrême, le vieil accent revient toujours au galop, que la machine poétique tend à s'encrasser rapidement' (27).

self-designation (*E*, 20). Defined by experimentation, by a dialogue with its past, by the perpetual renovation of traditional and pre-existing forms, literary, poetic and otherwise, I think there is value in arguing that Fourcade's, Cadiot's and Tarkos's work might be read as a form of 'poésie mineure'.

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