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Evading Frames: D'Antin van Rooten's Homophonic *Mother Goose*
Hors-cadre : la traduction homophonique de *Mother Goose* de d'Antin van Rooten

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Résumé de l'article

En 1967, Luis d'Antin van Rooten, comédien américain spécialisé dans les voix hors-champ et dans la surimpression des dialectes, a publié un ouvrage devenu classique, *Mots d'Heures : Gousses, Rames*, dont la composition en collage finit par créer une version francophone homophonique des comptines de *Mother Goose.* Maintes fois lus et imités, les *Mots d'Heures* (1967) ont pourtant échappé à la mainmise théorique, peut-être parce que de par leur structure unique, ils échappent à l'encadrement contextuel et sont même la satire de la « contextualisation », étape méthodologique devenue cruciale depuis le tournant culturel en traductologie. Je propose ici, tout d'abord, une recherche des contextes possibles des *Mots d'Heures* (1967) – biographique, intertextuel, cinématographique – pour ensuite démontrer, avec Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1990), que les *Mots d'Heures* résistent à tous ces encadrements en faisant s'effondrer les frontières conceptuelles entre texte et contexte, texte-cible et texte-source. Les *Mots d'Heures* (1967), finalement, seraient la mise en oeuvre et l'illustration de la pensée de Derrida (1988) sur le « sevrage, » la « dérive », et la « restance » propres à toute structure signifiante, et un rappel agréable, dans un climat intellectuel dominé par la « mise en contexte », de l'ascendance structurelle de la forme signifiante, de son « itérabilité ».

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Introduction

Most translation scholars and French-English bilinguals read Luis d'Antin van Rooten's homophonic translations of *Mother Goose*, the now classic *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames* (1967), for the sheer enjoyment of it. These are translations where the English-language speech sounds of the rhymes come re-patterned into sometimes intelligible, yet more often than not piecemeal and nonsensical French-language phrases that are vaguely homophonous with their source and lead to a moment of recognition when they are read out loud, without any undue pauses:

Oh, les mots d'heureux bardes	Old Mother Hubbard
Où en toutes heures que partent	Went to the cupboard
Tous guetteurs pour dock à Beaune. →	To get her poor dog a bone.
Besoin gigot d'air.	But when she got there,
De que paroisse paire.	The cupboard was bare,
Et ne pour dock, pet-de-nonne.	And the poor dog had none.
(d'A.V.R., 1967, rhyme 4)[1]	

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1 The pages of the *Mots d'Heures* are not numbered, but each rhyme is. I will reference here the number of the rhyme.

What appears on the page to be a stanza of obscure French poetry is actually a beloved nursery rhyme that has been read to Anglophone toddlers for centuries now. [2]

To reinforce the irony, to widen further the chasm between the French-language text that appears on the page and the English-language sound structure that the reader must detect beneath it, d'Antin van Rooten perpetrates a playful philological fraud on his readership: He presents the collection as a series of (possibly) Medieval French poems whose trace was lost in the 18th century, and which were delivered to him in manuscript form. The obscurity of the verse, he speculates, "the cryptic phrasing, the disconnected thoughts, the mysterious allusions to places and people suggest an affinity to the prophetic quatrains of Nostradamus" (d'A.V.R., 1967, foreword).[3] Following this tenuous ascription to the context of medieval French letters comes a strangely anachronistic, inter-cultural ascription that shatters any pretence toward serious contextualization—both linguistic and historical—and hints to the reader that perhaps the latter is being set up for satire: The poems are perhaps "some Gothic cultural link midway between François Rabelais on the one hand and James Joyce on the other" (*ibid.*). To help the reader navigate these difficult verses, the editor provides generous tongue-in-cheek annotations. The first two lines of the French poem cited above are about "minstrels," for example, who "were no doubt a happy lot, and it is not surprising that France, a cradle of wit and culture, could turn them out in such numbers that they came and went on an almost unpredictable schedule" (*ibid.*).

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2 The *Mots d'Heures* have spawned a number of imitations, all following the same literary conceit: There is Ormonde de Kaye, for example, who published her own anthology of *N'heures Souris Rames* (1980). Then there is John Hulme, who produced the German version *Mörder Guss Reims* (1981) as well as an anthology, in French, of English poetry from Shakespeare to Blake and Byron: *Guillaume Chequespierre and the Oise Salon* (1985).

3 All citations in this paragraph are from the foreword, which, like the rhymes, is without page numbers.

There is more than just delight, here, for lovers of word play. Called into question by the *Mots d'Heures* is not only the fundamental first step of virtually every research method in Translation Studies developed since the Cultural Turn, but also the primordial conceptual distinction that scholars take for granted even before undertaking this step. The step itself is "contextualization," the all-important business of placing both translated texts and those who produce them into a logical relationship with the external factors—historical, cultural, linguistic, and so on—influencing their production and activity. The primordial distinction making this step possible is the one consolidating the very act of translation: the operative distinction between "source texts" and "target texts," each assumed a priori as pertaining to its separate and distinct language, and each pertaining, therefore, to its own particular constellation of the above-mentioned factors. Indeed, this distinction is what spawns the first and most obvious context to which any translated text pertains: the source text itself. "Pertains" is the operative word here, in the sense of "belonging to," "created and determined by," or "dependent upon." The step of contextualization carries implicitly a bias towards the latter's determining authority.

It is a bias that I willingly adopt in the first and second parts of the present study, where I assume the existence of the *Mots d'Heures, Gousses, Rames* as a translation determined by its contexts. Like any other translation forming an object of investigation, the *Mots d'Heures* beg this type of framing as a methodological first step, one that attempts to explain them in terms of the outlying cultural practices and traditions that may have—always only likely, and never definitively—influenced their creation or made them relevant subsequently, be it the literary model of D'Antin van Rooten's American contemporary Howard Chace, the tradition of the French poetic avant-garde, or D'Antin van Rooten's profession in cinema, as an actor specializing in dialect construction for voiceover.

These attempts at contextualization are important, not only because they help explain how and why these homophonic translations have come about, but more importantly, and quite ironically, because they manifest the very same "epistemic

intention" (Derrida, 1988) that the *Mots d'Heures* are structured to confound, to satirize in an unique gesture producing an anomalous specimen: a translation designed to beg contextualization while undermining the conceptual boundaries allowing the latter to take place. Jean-Jacques Lecercle, in *The Violence of Language* (1990), sees in the *Mots d'Heures* a reminder that while language is the first and most trusted instrument for the construction and separation of conceptual frames, it is also, by virtue of its structure, an instrument allowing its user to slip, evade, or confound these frames. This evasion—Lecercle sees it as a sign of language's "irrational" dimension, while Derrida (1988) makes it the basis upon which he articulates one of the enduring tenets of postmodern theory: that of the signifying structure's "iterability." The *Mots d'Heures*, I will contend in the third and final section of this study, are a unique translation that not only exemplifies "iterability," but serves as a constant reminder, in our current scholarly climate where context reigns, that the "mark" is not as anchored as we may believe in any single discursive time, place, and intentionality.

Searching for Biographical Frames

 Virtually the only Anglo-American response to the question of how to interpret the *Mots d'Heures* comes framed as an explanation of either d'Antin van Rooten's career as a Hollywood actor, or of his literary model, Howard L. Chace (1956). "Context," in this first sense, then, is the account of biography. Moreover, the details of this account are scant enough to suggest that scholars have, for the most part, preferred to laugh with the poet rather than to over-examine his work or to speculate about his motives. The book itself contains a short biographical sketch:

> Born in Mexico City, Luis d'Antin van Rooten was raised in the United States, where he lived in New York City and Chatham, Massachusetts. Along with his obvious interest in the scholarship of language, Mr. van Rooten pursued a distinguished career in the theatre and movies. He appeared in many Broadway plays, and his movie credits include *City Across*

the River, The Sea Chase, and The [sic] Night has a Thousand
Eyes.[4] (d'A.V.R., 1967, biographical note)

The International Movie Data Base fleshes out this information
somewhat. Luis d'Antin van Rooten was born in 1906 in Mexico
City and raised in the US, where he was educated in architecture
and in Romance Languages at the University of Pennsylvania.
After spending the first part of his professional life as an architect,
he transitioned to theatre, radio, television, and film acting, where
he would accumulate numerous credits in minor roles, specifically
in the film-noir genre: John Farrow's *The Big Clock* (1948) and
Night has a Thousand Eyes (1948), William Wyler's *Detective
Story* (1951). By all accounts, he was a highly skilled polyglot
and performer, which won him emceeing positions in French,
Spanish, and Italian radio broadcasts during the Second World
War. It was at this time that he took up residence in New York
and California, and began his career as a dialect actor in films
demonizing the Nazi party: In Douglas Sirk's *Hitler's Madman*
(1943), he provided the appropriately Germanized American-
English voice to be dubbed over Howard Freeman's on-screen
performance of Heinrich Himmler. He would reprise his role
as Himmler twice more on-screen himself, in John Farrow's *The
Hitler Gang* (1944), and at end of his career in R.G. Springsteen's
Operation Eichmann (1961). In the interim came a proliferation
of melodramas, where he played minor characters from foreign
cultures speaking Hollywood's version of their languages, which
was in the end a form of "shtick": an American English spoken
with synthetic-sounding accents. There were other German
characters (*My Favourite Spy*, 1951; *Fräulein*, 1958), French
characters (*To the Victor*, 1948; *The Secret of Saint Ives*, 1949), and
Italian ones (*Curse of the Faceless Man*, 1958). He retired from
acting in the mid-1960s to settle in Chatham Massachusetts, and
to pursue sideline interests in horticulture and writing. It was
there that he authored his three books: *Mots d'Heures, Gousses,
Rames*, *The Floriculturist's Vade Mecum of Exotic and Recondite
Plants, Shrubs and Grasses* (1973), and *Van Rooten's Book of
Improbable Saints* (1975).

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4 "Night" is a proper noun in the film's actual title. See works cited for
information on each of these film titles.

Searching for Inter-Textual Frames: Howard Chace

D'Antin van Rooten had more than just his history in dialect acting to call upon when composing his homophonic translations: He also had a model from contemporary pedagogical literature. In 1956, the American education-materials publisher Prentice Hall gathered together and published under the title *Anguish, Languish* a series of texts composed from the early 1940s by Howard L. Chace, Romance Language professor at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. The materials in the book were conceived and developed as a lesson to his students on the importance of context in the parsing of speech sounds. He prefaced *Anguish Languish* (1956) with a word of introduction:

> A visiting professor [...] who, while learning to understand spoken English, was continually bewildered and embarrassed by the similarity of such expressions as *boys and girls* and *poisoned gulls*, used to exclaim: "Gracious! What a lot of words sound like each other! If it wasn't [*sic*] for the different situations in which we hear 'em, we'd have a difficult time saying which was which."

> [He] was right. [...] Although other factors than the pronunciation of words affect our ability to understand them, the situation in which the words are uttered is of prime importance. You can easily prove this, right in the privacy of your own kitchen, by asking a friend to help you wash up a dozen cops and sorcerers. Ten to one, she'll think you said a dozen *cups and saucers*, and be genuinely surprised if you put her to work cleaning up even *one* police officer [...] and the magicians, too. (Chace, 1956, pp. 8-9)

To drive home the lesson, Chace inaugurated the technique of homophonic transformation. He leveraged the wealth of English-language homonyms, as well as the sound symbolism of alphabetic writing to construct alternative dictions for popular fairy- and folk-tale narratives, nursery rhymes, and children's songs—dictions that created homophonic approximations of their sources. *Little Red Riding Hood* became *Ladle Rat Rotten Hut* (Chace, 1956, pp. 19-22). *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* became *Guilty Looks Enter Tree Beers* (pp. 23-28) *Old Mother Hubbard* is accounted for as well, in the form of *Oiled Murder Harboured*:

Oiled Murder Harbored	Old Mother Hubbard
Wen tutor cardboard	Went to the cupboard
Toe garter pore darker born. →	To get her poor dog a bone.
Wenchy gut dare	When she got there
Door cardboard worse bar	The cupboard was bare
An soda pore dark hat known.	And so the poor dog had none.
(p. 40)	

It is easy to see how Chace leveraged the visual stability of written words to trap his reader temporarily in an "open text" that de-functionalizes the familiar speech sounds of the English rhyme. The game consisted of "closing" this text, re-adjusting these sounds to a common cognitive context—in this case a heritage of Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes written so deeply into the shared experience of Anglophones that their very sounds are a bodily habit.

Its ludic character notwithstanding, Chace's experiment is a fine illustration of John Rupert Firth's phono-contextualism, his central hypothesis regarding speech-sound comprehension. Structural phonology in the tradition of Saussure (1966) had committed an error, Firth maintained, in attributing the perception and comprehension of speech sounds to a process of parsing, by which "acoustic disturbances" are synthesized into phoneme chains that are intelligible by virtue of their internal differentials alone, that is to say independently from the context of utterance. "The sounds of speech," he countered, "are ex-intimis [...]. The dominating interest of the immediate situation, the urge to diffuse or communicate human experience [...]—these are the origins of speech." (Firth, 1968, p. 13) Language sounds are inextricable from the *immediate situation* in which they are proffered because their perception, synthesis, and comprehension depend on a complex inter-action with it. The context of utterance, every bit as much as the internal properties of the phoneme chain, shapes what would otherwise be verbal noise into a situation-appropriate speech act. In *The Tongues of Men and Speech*:

> In the normal contexts of everyday life, the sounds of speech are a function of social behaviour situations, and we do not merely attend to the details of pronunciation and the sounds of

the words to get the meaning. The meaning is largely gathered from the situation either perceptually present or by adjustment to an assumed common background of bodily habits. The sounds direct and control, but as they do not in themselves hold or convey meaning, some of them can, by common consent of course, be omitted, or be replaced by other slightly different sounds. When people have to write down the sounds they hear, without context of any kind, they have to make a special effort of auditory attention, and even then may make many mistakes. Speech sounds which are "defunctionalized" are merely gibberish at first and difficult to recognize. (Firth, 1964, p. 171)

Three important ideas emerge here: (1) Context allows the listener to reduce phonetic variants to a single meaningful structure, as when a single word is pronounced in a variety of dialects. (2) By the reverse token, context allows the listener to distinguish between perceived homophones like "forth" and "fourth." (3) De-functionalized speech sounds that seem at first to be gibberish may well, with a bit of effort, be re-adjusted to an assumed context—a "common background of bodily habits"—in which they would be re-functionalized, made to make sense.

It is safe to assume that this pedagogical exercise would not have achieved its subsequent popularity if, in the end, it did not produce a text with poetic properties. Earlier, I used the terms "open" and "closed" to refer to de-functionalized and contextually reduced readings of Chace's text, respectively. These terms, as employed by Umberto Eco (1979, 1989, 1994), are apt for invoking the poetic potentiality of Chace's homophonic transformations. Any work of art, for Eco, combines an underlying "closure" of authorial design or intention with a concomitant "openness" for interpretation on the part of each individual reader (1979, p. 49). *Anguish Languish* takes this binary conception of "closure" and "openness" deep into the grain of language's inscribed phono-structure, where two separate orders of signification become perceptible: one that "closes" the text, in Eco's sense, reduces to the conventional English-language structure, and therefore coincides with the author's design as evidenced in the preface; and one that "opens" the text," allows the reader to engage the

potentiality of the de-functionalized target structure in virtually infinite ways, which transcend the author's design.

The trajectory of each individual reader's own open interpretation transcends the author's design. The "potentiality for openness," however, is *of* the author's design. The latter makes use of techniques, Eco argues, that open the work's interpretive potential. Chace, for his part, exploits the rhetorical scheme that Roman Jakobson (1960, pp. 350-377) considered to be the sine qua non of the poetic text: paronomasia. The latter, just to recall, is the scheme by which a writer creates a phonemic equivalence between two or more words so that ultimately, the reader will infer an association between their meanings, as in Jakobson's classic example of the American political slogan "I like Ike." Chace takes this principle to an extreme. I am proposing the notion of "viral paronomasia," here, to characterize both his experiment and his ideological positioning with respect to it. When paronomasia is made to run unchecked, to re-figure entire texts into the most unlikely of homophones, then it no longer serves to figure words, but rather to infect them with a virulent excrescence: a "wart." The "word" sprouts a "wart," which is itself the morphological unit of a new language loosely defined as the suffering brought on by a viral pathology, an STI of sorts ("sound transmitted infection"): the "Anguish Languish." Chace explains:

> The experiments described above...show that *an unbelievable number of English words, regardless of their usual meanings, can be substituted quite satisfactorily for others.* When *all* the words in a given passage of English have been so replaced, the passage keeps its original meaning, but all the words have acquired new ones. *A word that has received a new meaning has become a* wart, *and when all the words in the passage have become warts, the passage is no longer English; it's* Anguish. (Chace, 1956, p. 11)

As English words or phrases are translated into Anguish, the "word" sprouts a homophonic "wart," which burdens the source word or phrase with a secondary meaning, creates unexpected connotations that are as entertaining to some as they are potentially distasteful to others. *Oiled murder harboured* is still just *Old Mother Hubbard*. Only now, the character of the old woman

may well acquire something of a slick, homicidal and criminally complicitous dimension.

The Poetics of the French Avant-Garde

Eco's tenet, just ascribed to Chace's work, is still more relevant in light of the *Mots d'Heures* reception among the contemporary French avant-garde. The trajectory of each individual reader's own open interpretation transcends the author's design. The potentiality for openness, however, is *of* the author's design (Eco, 1979, p. 49). Less than ten years after the publication of *Anguish Languish*, which was widely popularized in the commercial media and the press, Luis d'Antin van Rooten used the same technique to turn the same type of literary material into homophonic nonsense. His *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames*, however, could claim one design feature that both differentiated them from Chace's work, and opened them to the horizon of French avant-garde poetics: To construct his homophonies, d'Antin van Rooten used French-language words and phrases.

It was this inter-linguistic framing that would lead the *Mots d'Heures,* within the few years following their original publication, into the new experimental poetic frame of a circle of high-profile French poet intellectuals who, along with Haroldo de Campos, put together in February of 1973, the 14th issue of *Change*, a review founded in 1968 by three poets of Raymond Queneau's Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentiel): Jean-Pierre Faye, Maurice Roche, and Jacques Roubaud. *Change* was devoutly formalist in the tradition of the Russian and Prague Schools, and devoutly avant-garde in its ambitions—avant-garde because it was devoted to seeking out poetic forms that broke resolutely with the past. These new forms would come under the scrutiny of *Change* from the work of the major figures of the historical avant-garde in literature and film (Mallarmé, Joyce, Eisenstein), as well as from the type of experimental writing espoused by the Oulipo itself: the exercise (promoted by the historical vanguard as far back as Russian Futurism) of writing under arbitrarily imposed formal constraints. The Oulipiens were formalist because they rejected any explanation of this new poetry on the basis of contexts external to the poetic object itself, which they

deemed self-contained, explainable by virtue of its own intra-systemic properties derived for the most part from core concepts of structural linguistics.

A shift in perspective is all that is needed to understand why d'Antin van Rooten attracted the Oulipo, a shift perhaps best explained as a twist on an outworn conceptual binary: source and target orientation. The charges are familiar: the source-oriented translation is excessively literal because it calques source-text forms rather than striving for idiomatic functionality in the target language. The target-oriented translation, for its part, panders to target-language conventions and disregards the formal features of the source text that made it poetry in the first place. The potential for undesirable results coming from both orientations has been affirmed time and again: The source-oriented translation alienates, reads like sorcery. The target-oriented translation banalizes, reads like a poem's gloss rather than as a poem in its own right.

D'Antin van Rooten reverses these charges diametrically. The *Mots d'Heures* prescribe, for the Anglophone reader, an exercise in banalizing, source-oriented back-translation: In recovering the correct speech sounds of the original *Mother Goose*, the reader is essentially re-adjusting a new and alienating poetic form to a traditional form that solves the puzzle and confers closure. Such a source-oriented reading could not be further from the project of a vanguard that not only rejected any sort of resolution to traditional forms, but indeed sought actively to erode these forms through a resolutely forward focus on "change."

It seems fair to assume, however, that the Anglophone cultural context of *Mother Goose* would have been parenthetical enough for the Oulipo, and its alienating use of French-language materials conversely emphasized, to provoke, among this predominately Francophone vanguard, a reading in the exact-opposite orientation: a target-oriented reading fixated entirely upon the "sorcery" of a new and radically de-functionalized poetic form corresponding in several points with contemporary modes of avant-garde experimentation. The *Mot d'Heures* feature language collage, a technical mainstay in avant-garde poetry. They also demonstrate the type of stylistic exercise dear to the Oulipo:

translation under formal constraint. In short, they would have presented the circle of *Change* with a poetic form that, in many respects, met its ideological criteria, and could be elucidated in its terms.

Change 14, the issue edited by Léon Robel and entitled *Transformer, traduire*, is about producing new poetic forms through translation. Robel sets the tone with a call for theory to associate translation with disruption and discontinuity from past practices: "La théorie de la traduction doit prendre sa place, toute sa place, mais sa juste place dans une théorie générale du CHANGE DE FORME (ou des transformations)" (Robel, 1973, p. 6). After a section addressing linguistic perspectives on poetry translation—and featuring the first French translation of de Campos's "De la traduction comme création et comme critique" (de Campos, 1973, pp. 71-83)—comes a collective article on experimental translation (Annenski, Innokenti, *et al.*, 1973, pp. 86-113), where the emphasis is on new forms that emerge from the exercise of translating under formal constraint. Mallarmé's hyper-literal "auto-traductions" (pp. 86-89) are featured along with François le Lionnais' "traductions figurées," (pp. 94-96) which impose certain typographical and geometric constraints. Then there are Robel's "traductions retour," (p. 90) which are literal back-translations from Russian target texts into their French source language. These back translations produce de-functionalized French-language forms to challenge any theory that would equate translation with the conservation or after-life of traditional forms. Georges Perec offers a number of "micro-traductions" (p. 113)—virtually identical source and target texts with a single, subtle formal variation to be detected by the careful reader. And Sylvia Roubaud offers her reading of Luis d'Antin van Rooten's "traductions phoniques." (1973, pp. 97-111)

This reading is a testament to formalist language fixation and militant vanguardism. Concerned primarily with the lexematic and phonological levels of d'Antin van Rooten's collage, it is resolutely target-oriented, detailing a transformation from a familiar Anglophone form to one or more possible homophones composing the de-functionalized Francophone form. In an effort to keep the latter open-ended, Roubaud conspicuously avoids

moving in the opposite direction, even addressing the process of the source-oriented back translation: there are no arrows directing the reader from de-functionalized French forms to the re-assuring, closure-providing forms of *Mother Goose*. For Roubaud, translation, be it homophonic or conventional, is not a vehicle for the recovery of familiar forms. Quite the opposite: It is consistently represented as a vehicle for a corrosive trans-figuration pointing up the absurdity of any attempt at contextual recovery. In an eloquent display of formalist rhetoric, Roubaud leverages the concept of "re-translation" into English, not to re-cover *Mother Goose*, but rather *to corrode the French target form further*. Re-translation into English is how she explains d'Antin van Rooten's glosses. From the conventional English rhyme is derived the alienating and open-ended French form, which is then re-translated into the information of the glosses:

Anglais I	**Français**
Now I lay me down to sleep,	Noyé, l'ami, dans tout, sa lippe
I pray the Lord my soul to keep →	Après d'alarmants saut, l'équipe
And if I die before I wake	En duvet deuil beffroi évêque
I pray the Lord my soul to take	Apprête alors ma sale de teck.

Anglais II

Scornful of life, the friend was drowned
After alarming leaps by the clique.
In downy mourning the bishop's tower...
Prepare, then, my room of teak. (Roubaud, 1973, p. 111)

Any semblance of origin, of a firm contextual foundation in the English-language speech sounds is "lost in translation," eclipsed by an open-ended process of continued metamorphosis into ever-more de-functionalized forms meant, ultimately, to replace "the canon," that historical edifice of founding texts and poetic practices, with that of a Borgesian, inter-textual sprawl without beginning or end. Luis d'Antin van Rooten, Hollywood actor turned *Mother Goose* translator, is now co-opted into an elite company of poet intellectuals:

> Là s'arrête dans les *Mots d'Heures, Gousses, Rames* le jeu des métamorphoses ; mais il va de soi que rien n'empêche les amateurs de performances de le poursuivre indéfiniment en

remettant le deuxième texte anglais en français, puis le deuxième texte français en anglais, et ainsi de suite. Si L. d'A.V.R ne s'en donne pas la peine, c'est sans doute parce qu'il estime avoir suffisamment démontré la valeur subversive d'une démarche qui met en question à la fois l'écriture poétique, l'opération de traduction et la critique littéraire. Démarche dont il indique lui-même la portée lorsqu'au terme d'une transformation particulièrement insidieuse—«Yes sir; yes sir… → Y est-ce art? Y est-ce art? → Where is art? Where is art? »—il déclare avec la gravité ambiguë qui lui est propre : « Il s'agit d'une destruction totale. » (*ibid.*)

The rhetoric is no less dazzling than the translator's invention. No one but a critic of the avant-garde, fed up with the edifice of "Art" (with a capital "A") would read D'Antin van Rooten's translation of "Bah, Bah, Black Sheep" ("Yes sir, Yes sir"→ Y est-ce *art*? Y est-ce *art*?) as a questioning of this edifice, and then answer the question with such—perhaps tongue-in-cheek, perhaps not—anarchistic fervour: "Il s'agit d'une destruction totale." And along with "Art" goes d'Antin van Rooten's own American context: Near the end, Roubaud begins Gallicizing his name (Luis-Louis). For better or worse, he is now an Oulipien.

Change had a ripple effect: Luis d'Antin van Rooten was raised out of the arena of the para-literary language game and into the critical literature on poetry translation. In *Palimpsestes* (1982), Gérard Genette describes d'Antin van Rooten's work as an experiment in inter-textuality hyperbolized for the purpose of parody (1982, p. 37). Annie Brisset (1985) followed shortly after with her own study on parody, "La traduction comme transformation para-doxale." The *Mots d'Heures* are featured here, once again, as a form of hyper-textual transformation running counter-current to prevailing translational doxa (Brisset, 1985, pp. 191-207). Both critics posit a radical, oppositional stance assumed by the translator/poet against the dogma of translation praxis. By reversing the sound-sense hierarchy typical of the latter—sound is traditionally transformed, and sense is preserved—d'Antin van Rooten achieves two higher purposes: (1) He forces cristallized and now largely unconscious translation conventions out of the torpor of habit and into new critical light. (2) He elevates sound, the materiality of language, consolidating

its importance over the denotation in the creation and translation of poetic texts.

Searching for Cinematic Frames: Dialect Construction

Annie Brisset is right to insist that although the *Mots d'Heures* struck a chord with Francophone experimental poets, the fact remains that they are, for all intents and purposes, a work written in English, by an Anglophone, and for Anglophones (Brisset, 1985, p. 195). They fulfill their function with respect to their readership when they are read aloud and recognized not as French, but as an artfully synthesized Francophone dialect of English. In this sense, the *Mots d'Heures* could well be considered the natural extension of d'Antin van Rooten's life's work as a Hollywood actor who dubbed French, German, and Italian dialects of English over the voices of American film actors.

A reading that departs from the position that the *Mots d'Heures* is a work written in a French dialect of English would presume that the phono-structural affinities bringing the poems into relation with the English-language rhyme are indeed strong enough to overwhelm and subordinate the fact of their orthographic construction in two different languages. French-language orthography, in other words, is enough to produce the phonetic shifts implicit in foreign-language dialect, but is not enough to erode a more or less solid phono-structural frame identifying the poem sonorously with its Anglophone source. The tenth poem of the collection:

Lit-elle messe, moffette, →	Little Miss Muffet,
Satan ne te fête,	Sat on a tuffet,
Et digne somme cœurs et nouez.	Eating some curds and whey.
À longue qu'aime est-ce pailles d'Eure.	Along came a spider,
Et ne Satan bise ailleurs	And sat down beside her,
Et ne fredonne messe. Moffette, ah, ouais!	And frightened Miss Muffet away.
(d'A.V.R., 1967, rhyme 10)	

Detecting this frame requires, in a first instance, the willful restriction of French-language orthography to only one of its many functions: that of cueing phonetic movements. This means reading in willful suspension of all orthographic components

that serve both syntax and semantics. The result is a purely vocal construction of the poem, where affinities begin to surface. It is of course impossible to account for the myriad ways that this verse might be bodied forth by a given speaker, and I am bound here to generic orthographic symbols in my representation of sound. This does not mean, however, that these symbols cannot be leveraged to illustrate the sonorous affinities of the *Mots d'Heures*, even if in a necessarily abstract and generic way. As a rule of thumb, in the *Mots d'Heures*, articulate consonants seem to present the closest affinities, and therefore serve to construct the shared phono-structural frame of "Little Miss Muffet":

(English)	(French)
/l/../t/.../l/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../f/.../t/ →	/l/.../t/.../l/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../f/.../t/
s/.../t/.../n/../t/.../f/.../t/	/s/.../t/.../n/../t/.../f/.../t/
/t/.../s/.../m/.../c/.../nd/.../w/	/d/.../s/.../m/.../c/.../s/../n/.../ou/
/l/.../g/.../c/.../m/.../sp/.../d/.../r/	/l/.../gue/.../qu/.../m/.../c(e) p/.../d/.../r/
/nd/.../s/.../t/../d/.../n/.../b/.../s/../d/.../h/.../r/	/n/.../s/../t/.../n/.../b/.../s/.../ll/.../r/
/n/.../fr/.../t/.../nd/.../m/.../s/.../m/...	/n/.../fr/.../d/.../n/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../
/f/.../t/..../w/	/f/.../t/.../ou/

Purged of vowel sounds, the framework of articulate consonants veers toward phono-structural identity. Where position shifts occur, they are usually between closely related positions: non-voiced alveolar plosive /t/ ("Ea*t*ing") to its voiced counterpart ("Et *d*igne"). Nasals like the English /n/ and /ng/ allow for close affinities ("Sat o*n*" → "Sata*n n*e") or for a slightly larger positional variance ("sat down" → "Satan"), ("eati*ng*" → "Et di*gne*"). In this particular poem, perhaps the greatest positional variance at the level of articulate consonants is the frequent suppression of the /d/ sound when it occurs in the word's terminal position ("cur*d*s and whey" → "cœurs et nouez"), ("An*d* sat" → "Et ne Sat"), ("besi*d*e her" → "bise ailleurs").

If consonant-articulating movements demonstrate the closest affinity, component vowels and diphthongs demonstrate the greatest variance in positional shifting between the English source and the French target. The high-middle /i/ in /little/ (/'lItl/), for example, moves to high-front */i:/*, in /lit-elle/, and a second vowel is integrated in the French phrase serving as a

homophone: /lit-elle/. (/liːˈtelə/). The high-middle /i/ in /miss/ (/mIs/) turns into an /e/ in /messe/ (/mes/).

It is in the introduction to *Anguish Languish* that one finds a clear articulation of the potential that homophonic transformation could well have for the purpose of dialect construction. Chace foreshadows the *Mots d'Heures*:

> People who are addicted to telling dialect stories, or chronically frustrated because they can't tell them without Scotch brogue or Brooklynese getting mixed up with Deep South, will be overjoyed with Anguish. *Anguish is definitely* not *a dialect, since it consists* only *of un-changed English words which anyone can pronounce.* By imparting a delicate and indefinably exotic accent to one's speech, however, it not only provides a socially acceptable substitute for telling dialect stories, but adds to one's personal charm. (Chace 1956, p. 14)

D'Antin van Rooten fulfills this potential admirably. His non-organic arrangement of French-language words and phrases (Pis-terre, pis-terre/Pomme qui n'y terre (d'A.V.R., 1967, rhyme 8) naturally elicits from the reader his or her best-learned French-language movements, but for all of this forced phonetic variation, the English-language phono-structure "Peter, Peter/Pumpkin eater" still becomes recognizable upon successful closure.

Evading Frames: Text-Context Collapse

The search for frames certainly does not end with the biographical, inter-textual, and cinematic contexts just invoked. Theorists have made other—for the most part parenthetical and passing—inter-textual analogies with other specific experiments in the homophonic translation of poetry. Lawrence Venuti (2008), for example, makes a passing comparison with Louis and Celia Zukofsky's modernist translation of Catullus (1969). Still other generic frames are tempting: Are the *Mots d'Heures* not comparable, for example, with other known examples of literary fraud, such as Pierre Louÿs's *Songs of Bilitis* (1988)? Ironically enough, it is the structural anomaly of the *Mots d'Heures* that elicits all of these contextualizations while making them problematic, viable only to a point. Zukofsky did translate homophonically, but his version

of Catullus was guided by an intention altogether different from d'Antin van Rooten's: a sincere effort to map over the meanings of the source text in the form of extended metaphor. Consequently, his phono-structural affinities are nowhere near as close as those of the *Mots d'Heures*. Fraudulent, forged, or pseudo-translations, for their part, tend to be specific in, and mimetic of, the frames that they falsify. The *Songs of Bilitis* (1894) were successful as a fraud due largely to Pierre Louÿs's ability to imitate the Sapphic genre, as well as to imitate a contemporary style of translating this genre. D'Antin van Rooten, for his part, prefaces his collection as essentially *frameless*, as a found manuscript with a question mark still hovering over them. The only clue is a structuring that appears, at least lexically, to be French.

Yet that turns out to be English, or both French and English, or perhaps neither. It is here, in the *closeness* of its phono-structural affinity with the English-language rhymes, that the *Mots d'Heures* approach and perhaps even cross a threshold allowing them to defy contextualization. The latter, it seems, would be dependent on a vital discretionary underpinning: the critic's ability to distinguish between—to separate and treat as discrete entities—a hypertext from its hypo-text, a translation from its source text.

In the case of the *Mots d'Heures*, this is far from an obvious distinction, notes Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1990), who places the homophonic translations of the *Mots d'Heures* in a tradition of nonsense poetry, where language rationality is breached by what he terms "the remainder," the irrational side of language, which defies the conventional delineation and separation of elements within or between textual and even linguistic systems. Through an impulse to manifest "the remainder," d'Antin van Rooten, according to Lecercle, has created a radical form of quotation: "What Luis d'Antin does is to take the possibility of quotation to excess, to the impossible point where the same sentence is both the frame and the foreign quotation, both French and English" (1990, p. 71). The "frame," the French-language target text, *is* quite "literally" (pun intended) the "quotation," or the English-language source text. "In what language is this written?" asks Lecercle (*ibid.*). Earlier, I used the word "frame" to speak of the

infrastructure of articulating consonants causing the formerly distinct and separate textual entities to collapse into what is essentially a single signifier articulated in dialect. Little Miss Muffet, once again:

(English)
/l/../t/.../l/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../f/.../t/ →
s/.../t/.../n/../t/.../f/.../t/
/t/.../s/.../m/.../c/.../nd/.../w/
/l/.../g/.../c/.../m/.../sp/.../d/.../r/
/nd/.../s/.../t/.../d/.../n/.../b/.../s/.../d/.../h/.../r/
/n/.../fr/.../t/.../nd/.../m/.../s/.../m/...
/f/.../t/..../w/

(French)
/l/.../t/.../l/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../f/.../t/
/s/.../t/.../n/../t/.../f/.../t/
/d/.../s/.../m/.../c/.../s/../n/.../ou/
/l/.../gue/.../qu/.../m/.../c(e) p/.../d/.../r/
/n/.../s/.../t/.../n/.../b/.../s/.../ll/.../r/
/n/.../fr/.../d/.../n/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../
/f/.../t/.../ou/

These nearly identical frames are what create the inter-linguistic confusion that Lecercle invokes, for they are virtually super-imposable:

> (English/French)
> /l/../t/.../l/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../f/.../t/
> /s/.../t/.../n/../t/.../f/.../t/
> /t (d)/.../s/.../m/.../c/.../n(d)/.../w (ou)/
> /l/.../g (gue)/.../c (qu)/.../m/.../sp (ce-p)/.../d/.../r/
> /nd (n)/.../s/.../t/.../d/.../n/.../b/.../s/.../d (ll)/.../(h)/.../r/
> /n/.../fr/.../t (d)/.../n(d)/.../m/.../s/.../m/.../f/.../t/..../w (ou)/

Only as separate and distinct entities can these frames exist in a relationship that can properly be considered "inter-linguistic" and "inter-textual," can either one claim the other as its "context," its "source" or "target text." The use of French words containing the differential sound components of the frame, as well as the use of the para-textual ruse implicit in the footnotes, amounts to the elaboration of false contexts to sustain the illusion necessary for keeping these frames separate—*the illusion of an inter-text*. Once the ruse becomes transparent, however, so do the differentials composing the one and only frame, the one context-evasive sound articulation appearing to function as a phono-structural sluice gate through which formally diverging, tributary languages, texts and contexts collapse together into a single signifier.

Or so it may seem. The notion of a "context-evasive-sound articulation" is every bit as problematic, however, as is the notion that the *Mots d'Heures* are, underneath it all, "identical" to the English source text, this "identity" being detected as a sort of "phono-structural essence" from within the profound transformation accompanying inter-linguistic and contextual re-framing. Rather, the reader remains caught in Lecercle's embattled middle position, within the competing tensions of an inter-textual paradox—the Francophone target signals at once a profound transformation wrought through contextual re-framing and a type of permanent semiotic infrastructure capable of generating sound-for-sound identity both within and despite these transformations.

Evading frames: The *Mots d'Heures* as Exercise in Iterability

For Lecercle, the "remainder" does not manifest in any irrational impulse guiding d'Antin van Rooten's pen. Rather, it manifests in the "structural possibility" of such a text, in the fact that homophonic translation "works so well," and that "language lends itself so readily to such practices" (Lecercle, 1990, p. 71). The *Mots d'Heures* find here their larger theoretical relevance, as of yet suggested but unexplored: The translations are not simply a one-off event, a demonstration of useless skill with no other conceivable contribution to scholarship. They exemplify, rather, a paradox implicit in the phono-structure of all language—a structure that both forces a rational construction and differentiation of contexts that are instrumental to signification, and evades this construction and differentiation, even allows contexts to collapse and language to revert to the nonsensical "rag-bag." What is, for Lecercle, language irrationality is, for Derrida, an abiding irony threading through his reflections on text and context, both in his pivotal essay "Signature Event Context" (1988), and in the debate surrounding it in *Limited Inc* (1988).

Perhaps second only to the the context-defying, letter-for-letter translation of Borges's hypothetical Pierre Ménard, d'Antin van Rooten's homophonic version of *Mother Goose* could well be the translation serving as the most direct exemplification possible of Derrida's postmodern view on language, text,

and context. When John Searle concluded that Derrida was defending the position that "contexts" (both those of authorship and readership) were irrelevant to the functioning of the language sign, Derrida felt compelled to clarify his position. In so doing, he shed new light on the way in which the most fundamental phonological components of the "mark" inter-relate structurally to make it "iterable" across contexts.

The *Mots d'Heures* play, first of all, upon the tensions implicit in the relationship between speech and writing. Graphic representation of spoken language makes the game possible. Recited out loud and in willful negligence of the grapheme, the rhymes close, self-identify. Read visually and silently, as graphic inscription, they open up interpretatively and self-divide, become subject to contextual drift. For Derrida, the structures of spoken language have just this type of closure and self-identification as a condition of their functioning: "Through empirical variations of tone, voice, etc., possibly of a certain accent, for example, we must be able to recognize the identity, roughly speaking, of a signifying form" (Derrida, 1988, p. 10). This "identity," however, is perceived, paradoxically, through a series of internal divisions or ruptures, which are both exploited in the construction of alphabetic writing, and exacerbated to the point that they are capable of generating the type of contextual rift and collapse observable in the *Mots d'Heures*: "Why is this identity paradoxically the division or dissociation of itself, which will make of this phonic sign a grapheme?" (*ibid.*).

A structure of spoken language, Derrida clarifies by drawing on Saussure's basic phono-structural principles in the *General Course in Linguistics* (1966), has nothing to do with the presence of sound as a permanent and substantive signifying material. Rather, it is determined in the negative space of the differential relations allowing listeners to parse the sound stream into discrete units.[5] Because the spoken language structure is

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5 Language structure is therefore perceived as "present" only by virtue of the "absence" implicit in the differential relationship between component sound elements, and therefore cannot subscribe to the conventional logic of "presence" or "absence." In an effort to avoid terms that invoke connotations of "substantive presence," either of the signifying structure

synthesized by virtue of these internal oppositions, Derrida argues, it is, in its very emergence, able to cleave, at any articulate point, from its original frame of utterance, to "drift," and subsequently to be "grafted" onto other chains, and into a new frame, where it is, on the one hand, profoundly transformed, and on the other hand, fully recognizable as a "repeated" and infinitely "repeatable" structure. Because the idea here is of a signifying structure that is recognizable as "repeated" despite being "transformed," as "identical" despite being "different," Derrida once again veers away from loaded terms like "repetition" and "identity" to invoke this phenomenon, and proposes instead the term "iteration." To invoke the aspect of a spoken language structure that is recognized as "the same" trans-contextually, he opts for "the remainder" ("la restance"). The unity of language forms, he argues, hinges upon iterability, and the recognition of the remainder:

> This unity of the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its "referent," which is self-evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or the intention of actual signification, as well as of all intention of present communication. This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say […] the non-present *remainder* [*restance*] of a differential mark cut off from its putative "production" or origin. (Derrida, 1988, p. 10)

The homophonic translations of the *Mots d'Heures* turn the iterability of the differential mark into a game or exercise, where the object is the detection of the remainder, is the restitution, through speaking out loud, of the unity of an English-language signifying form that, by virtue of its iterability, becomes recognizable despite having been weaned from an original "intention of signification" and grafted into a new, tongue-in-cheek, fraudulent one, which veils only thinly the real intention of producing no French-language signifier whatsoever. The fact

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itself or of what it signifies, Derrida abandoned the word "sign" for the word "trace" (signifying structures as the indices of "absence"), whose written representation is the "mark."

of "iterability," of the differential stucture's trans-contextual drift, of its transformation and remainder, could not be more clearly exemplified than in d'Antin van Rooten's patented style of homophonic translation.

If in the *Mots d'Heures*, speaking out loud allows for the restitution of the English-language form, then writing is what allows for its weaning, its re-framing in French-language orthography. As a semiotic regime, "writing"—so goes Derrida's most controversial claim in *Of Grammatology* (1997)—should not be subordinated to speech, for it is more of language's structural specificity than even speech is. This is why, in the above quotation, Derrida concludes: "This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general." For Derrida, *the oral language sign is a grapheme*. The latter subsumes and enhances the spoken phoneme. By turning the ruptures implicit in the spoken word's differential structure into a linear and visual system of symbols, writing enhances the iterative potentiality of language in ways inconceivable through speech alone. In a first instance, even the most immanent, sound-structural levels of the signifying form become susceptible to voluntary rupture, separation and manipulation. A perfect example is the frame, discussed earlier, of the articulating consonants of "Little Miss Muffet." If it weren't for writing, such a voluntary incursion and manipulation of structural differentials for the purpose of articulating a repeatable infrastructure, a "remainder," would be inconceivable:

> (English)
> /l/…/t/…/l/…/m/…/s/…/m/…/f/…/t/
> /s/…/t/…/n/../t/…/f/…/t/
> /t/…/s/…/m/…/c/…/nd/…/w/
> /l/…/g/…/c/…/m/…/sp/…/d/…/r/
> /nd/…/s/…/t/…/d/…/n/…/b/…/s/…/d/…/h/…/r/
> /n/…/fr/…/t/…/nd/…/m/…/s/…/m/…/f/…/t/…./w/

In the process of translating homophonically, the above frame is d'Antin van Rooten's remainder, a paradigm of articulate sound differentials conceived as separable from its English-language

frame, graftable into a new frame composed of French-language lexical elements in their standard orthography, and ultimately recognizable within this new frame as one and the same structure, despite the phonetic transformations entailed by the graft, and despite the sham generated by the artful, inter-linguistic iteration:

> **/L/**i/**t/**-e/**l/**le /**m/**e/**s/**se, /**m/**o/**f/**fe/**t/**te,
> **/S/**a/**t/**an /**n/**e /**t/**e /**f/**ê/**t/**e,
> Et /**d/**igne /**s/**o/**m/**me /**c/**oeurs et /**n//ou/**ez.
> À /**l/**on/**gu/**e /**qu/**'ai/**m/**e est-/**ce p/**ailles /**d/**'Eu/**r/**e.
> Et /**n/**e /**S/**a/**t/**a/**n/** /**b/**i/**s/**e ai/**ll/**eu/**r/**s
> Et /**n/**e /**fr/**e/**d/**o/**n/**ne /**m/**e/**s/**se. /**M/**o/**f/**fe/**t/**te, ah, /**ou/**ais!

Writing is to credit for the unique translational feat of a remainder evoking almost differential-for-differential a source structure that it iterates, while at the same time being dissimulated by a target-language frame serving to cleave it from this same source structure. Linear visualization of the sound differential, resulting in enhanced power over its segmentation and re-combination, is what makes possible: (1) The type of non-organic arrangement in French, where phono-structural affinities are actually close enough to iterate the source text's signifying form. (2) The French-language orthography masking this iteration in the new, French-language frame.

Precisely where does Derrida meet Lecercle's reflection on the implicit irrationality of the *Mots d'Heures* and their collapsed inter-text? It is Derrida, we have seen, who theorizes both the potentiality and process of the language structure's rupture, drift, and unlimited potentiality for re-framing. It is Lecercle who points up the irrationality implicit in the *Mots d'Heures*' specific mode of rupture and re-framing, which results in an English-language "remainder" (in Derrida's sense) that is intact enough phono-structurally, despite its new French-language frame, to force the reader to interrogate preconceived boundaries between source and target signifiers. In this collapse and conflation of boundaries, Lecercle sees emerge his own "remainder," which is language's implicit potential as an instrument of irrationality.

As instrument for nonsense. For Lecercle, this collapse of boundaries results in a text that is nonsensical, the type of text

that *Mots d'Heures* certainly constitute, from one perspective. Or it results, as Derrida argues above and as Sylvia Roubaud and the Oulipien poet-intellectuals of *Change* intuited, in a text "engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (Derrida, 1988, p. 12). Nonsense or agrammaticality, for Derrida, is one of the more obvious proofs of the signifying structure's iterability: A word without meaning or a syntagm without grammaticality is necessarily one without a frame or context (pp. 11-12), an iterating form seized in mid-drift. This does not prevent grafting and re-framing from occurring, however: "As 'the green is either' or 'abracadabra' do not constitute their context by themselves, nothing prevents them from functioning in another context as signifying marks" (p. 12). What Derrida is referring to here, specifically, is the creative constitution of frames compelled by "a will to know," an "epistemic intention" (*ibid.*).

In "Signature, Event, Context," Derrida (1988) invokes homophonic translation and transformation as one of the means by which language users force weaned "nonsense forms" into potential frames. Referring to Husserl's investigation of nonsense (*Sinnlosigkeit*) in the *Logical Investigations* (1970), he borrows the German non-sense form "Das Grüne ist oder" ("the green is either"):

> Not only in contingent cases such as translation from German to French, which would endow "the green is either" ["Das Grüne ist oder"] with grammaticality, since "either" (*oder*) becomes for the ear "where" [où] (a spatial mark). "Where has the green gone? [Le vert est où?] (of the lawn: the green is where?)." "Where is the glass gone in which I wanted to give you something to drink?" [Où est passé le verre dans lequel je voulais vous donner à boire?] (Derrida, 1988, p. 12)

By the accident of sound, translation can confer grammaticality upon nonsense ("oder" → "où"). Furthermore, homophony among target structures ("vert" → "verre") can serve to multiply potential frames. In the *Mots d'Heures*, homophony has a related, antithetical function: it confers French-language nonsense upon formerly grammatical English-language forms. In either case, the

result is the same: creative and successful attempts are made to explain nonsense.

Part of what makes the *Mots d'Heures* compelling is their particular tongue-in-cheek appeal to, and satirical inversion of, this epistemic intention. Before the English-language remainder is detected and re-constituted, the French-language text is treated by d'Antin van Rooten as if it were a mystery manuscript—a mark weaned from some unknown, and perhaps unknowable context and caught mid-drift. And while he maintains a tongue-in-cheek question mark over the manuscript's origin, he goes about constituting a series of minor, localized frames—equally tongue-in-cheek and consummately "recherchés"—in the notes accompanying and explaining each poem:

> Lit-elle messe, moffette,[1]
> Satan ne te fête,
> Et digne somme cœurs et nouez.
> Et ne Satan bise ailleurs
> Et ne fredonne messe. Moffette, ah, ouais![2]
> [1]*Moffette.* Noxious exhalations formed in underground galleries or mines.
> [2] This little fragment is a moral precept addressed to a young girl. She is advised to go to mass even under the most adverse conditions in order to confound Satan and keep her heart pure until the knot (marriage) is tied. She is warned against long engagements and to stay out of hayfields, be they as lush and lovely as those of the Eure valley, for Satan will not be off spoiling crops elsewhere. She must not mumble at mass, or the consequences will make the noxious fumes of earth seem trivial. (D'Antin van Rooten, 1967, p. 10)

More than the parody of a given literary genre or of a specific poetic text, the *Mots d'Heures* suggest a satire of what Derrida has termed "the epistemic intention," present in every effort to frame the mark, but doubtless the most pronounced among those who contextualize for a living: academics and theorists. More pointedly perhaps, this is a satire of those academics driven for whatever reason to ignore more traditional, serviceable frames (i.e., *Mother Goose*), and to contrive new ones in accordance with intellectual self-interest.

Conclusion

Even "satire," however, proves in the end to be a difficult categorization for the *Mots d'Heures*, if only because all levels of the fraud are simultaneously operative and transparent. The reader's enjoyment of the text is derived from the obviousness of this fraud and from his or her tacit agreement with the author to exploit it with him. Through this complicity, the poems elicit multiple readings in any number of hypothetical frames. They could simply be read as dialect, as English-language rhyme in a buttery French accent. Or they might be read "as if" they were as the author claims them to be, and reach far to infer some cohesive grammatical logic. Finally, they could also be read as pure Dada without the sound translational element. Dominating virtually any mode of reading is the fundamental irony implicit in the text-context binary, and articulated by Derrida: Texts may well be discourse, but they are also a "mark." As naïve as it is to assume that a translation might be considered out of context, it would be more naïve still to force any translation to assume a position within any single, privileged frame—historical, structural-linguistic, comparative literary, sociological. Under their playful exterior, the *Mots d'Heures* are a singular triumph of structure over context, and serve as a reminder to researchers—pursuing reflexively the urge to explain through context—that the text before them could not be a text if it was not able, implicitly, to be weaned from its context of production, to traverse any number of unpredictable and potentially conflicting frames, and finally to find itself before them, far from its point of origin, as the object of their own speculation.

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ABSTRACT: Evading Frames: D'Antin van Rooten's Homophonic *Mother Goose* — In 1967, American dialect actor Luis d'Antin van Rooten published his now-classic *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames*, a non-organic arrangement of French-language words and phrases designed to approximate the speech

sounds of *Mother Goose Rhymes*. Though much read and imitated, these homophonic translations have largely evaded theoretical focus. Perhaps this is because their unique structuring allows them to evade anchorage in any specific contextual frame, and to send up the researcher's own efforts toward contextualization, which has been prescribed as the methodological "first step" in Translation Studies since the Cultural Turn. Presented here, first of all, is a search for the potential frames of the *Mots d'Heures*– biographical, inter-textual, cinematic. These homophonic translations, I will then contend with reference to Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1990), exist to defy these frames by collapsing together, at the phono-articulate level, the target text with its most obvious context: the English-language source. Finally, I would contend, this collapse exemplifies the phenomena of "weaning," "trans-contextual drift," and "remainder" argued by Derrida (1988) as the enduring property of the signifying structure. The *Mots d'Heures* serve, then, as a playful reminder, in an intellectual climate where context reigns, of the signifying form's structural ascendancy over the frame, of its "iterability."

RÉSUMÉ : Hors-cadre : La traduction homophonique de *Mother Goose* **de d'Antin van Rooten —** En 1967, Luis d'Antin van Rooten, comédien américain spécialisé dans les voix hors-champ et dans la surimpression des dialectes, a publié un ouvrage devenu classique, *Mots d'Heures : Gousses, Rames*, dont la composition en collage finit par créer une version francophone homophonique des comptines de *Mother Goose*. Maintes fois lus et imités, les *Mots d'Heures* (1967) ont pourtant échappé à la mainmise théorique, peut-être parce que de par leur structure unique, ils échappent à l'encadrement contextuel et sont même la satire de la « contextualisation », étape méthodologique devenue cruciale depuis le tournant culturel en traductologie. Je propose ici, tout d'abord, une recherche des contextes possibles des *Mots d'Heures* (1967) – biographique, intertextuel, cinématographique – pour ensuite démontrer, avec Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1990), que les *Mots d'Heures* résistent à tous ces encadrements en faisant s'effondrer les frontières conceptuelles entre texte et contexte, texte-cible et texte-source. Les *Mots d'Heures* (1967), finalement, seraient la mise en œuvre et l'illustration de la pensée de Derrida (1988) sur le « sevrage, » la « dérive », et la « restance » propres à

toute structure signifiante, et un rappel agréable, dans un climat intellectuel dominé par la « mise en contexte », de l'ascendance structurelle de la forme signifiante, de son « itérabilité ».

Keywords: Luis d'Antin van Rooten, homophony, homophonic translation, context, framing, iterability

Mots clés : Luis d'Antin van Rooten, homophonie, traduction homophonique, contexte, encadrement, itérabilité

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