
ARTICLES – FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE

Language and Statelessness in the Poetry of Olivier Cadiot

Daisy Sainsbury

University of Oxford, GB

daisy.sainsbury@queens.ox.ac.uk

Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's analysis of language and literature, formulated in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure* (1975), *Mille plateaux* (1980) and elsewhere, this article pursues the idea that certain forms of language, such as national languages or major literary discourses, might be conceptualized as states. Each operating as a locus of power, these forms of language codify regulatory rules (grammatical, lexical or stylistic, for example) that serve to stake out the boundaries of their territories; adherence to these rules and norms subsequently identifies belonging or non-belonging to a given linguistic or literary community. Concomitant with the notion of the linguistic state is the notion of linguistic statelessness, which might describe a general sense of alienation within language, such as that produced by the defamiliarizing effects of poetic discourse, or a more localized sense, prompted by the socio-political situation of certain marginalized, regional languages. Taking Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'déterritorialisation' as a point of departure, this article explores how certain forms of literature dismantle or disrupt dominant linguistic codes, pointing to a decentralized position outside of the established state. Here, literature involves a movement outside of a given linguistic territory, prompting a kind of statelessness within language. Having elaborated these notions of 'state' and 'statelessness', 'territories' and 'déterritorialisation' in greater detail, the article traces their configuration in the work of the contemporary French poet, Olivier Cadiot. It considers Cadiot's first collection of poetry, *L'art poétique* (1988), and then his collaboration with the musician Rodolphe Burger on the album *Welche: On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage* (2000). In both instances, Cadiot uses ready-made language, employing cut-ups and sampling techniques that rework dominant discourses, deterritorializing them and making them 'minor'.

Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's analysis of language and literature, formulated in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure* (1975), *Mille plateaux* (1980) and elsewhere, this article pursues the idea that certain forms of language, such as national languages or major literary discourses, might be conceptualized as states. Each operating as a locus of power, these forms of language codify regulatory rules (grammatical, lexical or stylistic, for example) that serve to stake out the boundaries of their territories; adherence to these rules and norms subsequently identifies belonging or non-belonging to a given linguistic or literary

community. Concomitant with the notion of the linguistic state is the notion of linguistic statelessness, which might describe a general sense of alienation within language, such as that produced by the defamiliarizing effects of poetic discourse, or a more localized sense, prompted by the socio-political situation of certain marginalized, regional languages. Taking Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'déterritorialisation' as a point of departure, the article explores how certain forms of literature dismantle or disrupt dominant linguistics codes, pointing to a decentralized position outside of the established state. Here, literature involves a movement outside of a given linguistic territory, prompting a kind of statelessness within language. The article will first elaborate these notions of 'state' and 'statelessness', 'territories' and 'déterritorialisation' in greater detail, before tracing their configuration in the work of the contemporary French poet, Olivier Cadiot.

This article thus joins a growing body of work exploring the fruitful possibilities of applying Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy to the study of contemporary poetry.¹ As will shortly be explored, Cadiot acknowledges explicitly the influence of Deleuze, which has led to a number of Deleuzian readings of his work, although, for the most part it is Cadiot's prose writing, which forms the bulk of his literary output to date, that has attracted such readings.² Two exceptions are Jérôme Game's discussion of the Deleuzian concepts of the stutter and the ritournelle in Cadiot's generically hybrid text *Futur, ancien, fugitif* ('Olivier Cadiot' and 'La Répétition différenciante'), and Michael G. Kelly's brief consideration of Cadiot's *L'art poétique* in an article on 'unhoused' writing subjects in four contemporary poets' work: Cadiot, Prigent, Fourcade and Molnár ('Poetry as a foreign language'). Both critics demonstrate how Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy might be harnessed in our understanding of subjectivity in contemporary poetry, tracing how processes of subjectivation take place on a textual level in Cadiot's work. However, to my knowledge, Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of linguistic territories and the deterritorializing force of literary language has not been considered in relation to notions of states and statelessness, nor to Cadiot's work, nor indeed to contemporary poetry more broadly. This article thus aims to explore this subject to further our understanding of the various operations of language in Cadiot's poetry, the overall state of the contemporary poetic field, as well as to reflect back on the nuances of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis.

Linguistic territories and the deterritorializing force of literary language

In the chapter 'Postulats de la linguistique' in *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari elaborate a certain conception of the language system, before going on to discuss how literature is situated within it (95–139). They emphasize how language, rather than being involved purely

¹ See, for example, Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet's collective volume, *Deleuze et les écrivains* (2007), which 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 'Poétique de Gilles Deleuze' and Jérôme Game's 'La répétition différenciante dans la poétique deleuzienne: bégaiement, ritournelle, galop'. Reprising themes found in his contribution to *Deleuze et les écrivains*, Prigent's 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) represents the only book-length exploration of contemporary French poetry through a Deleuzo-Guattarian lens.

² For example, Jean Renaud traces the rhizome in Cadiot's novels *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé* and *Fairy queen* ('Le Monologue extérieur'). Cadiot's protagonist, Robinson, a polymorphous, schizophrenic writing subject who reappears throughout his novels, has attracted a number of Deleuzian readings, from Game, but also Alain Farah and Eric Lynch (Lynch, 2016), who see him as an illustration of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'personnage conceptuel' (*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie* 60–81). Nathalie Wourm argues that 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 ('Non-readings').

in the transmission of information, is first and foremost a socio-political system, structured around relations of power. Within this system, certain forms of language, such as standard national languages or traditional literary discourses, operate as 'langues majeures'. A 'langue majeure' is 'homogénéisée, centralisée, standardisée, langue de pouvoir, majeure ou dominante' (127). It codifies regulatory rules, standards and norms – grammatical, syntactic, stylistic, phonological and so on – that 'territorialize' language, delineating the boundaries of a linguistic territory. Through the insistence on adherence to such rules and norms, dominant socio-political groups wield language as a regulatory tool, using it to control and reinforce power relationships within society. A brief glance at the history of the French language offers a number of concrete 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. Here, the elaboration of a standard language served as an instrument in the expansion and reinforcement of the power of a nation-state.

In opposition to the territorializing impulse of major languages, Deleuze and Guattari identify a process of deterritorialization, which appears with a 'usage mineur' of the major language (*Kafka* 49). This 'usage mineur' presents variant forms to the constants and norms of a 'langue majeure', highlighting the heterogeneity that is already inherent in the language system. As Deleuze and Guattari would have it, this minor usage traces a 'ligne de fuite', a movement outside of a major territory (*Mille plateaux* 16). Giving examples from writers such as Kafka, Beckett, Artaud and Luca, they argue that the process of deterritorialization is particularly present in certain forms of literature, which they call 'littérature mineure'. Here, the author's style undoes the familiar expressions of the major language, making language strange and foreign. Their analysis offers several examples: the stylistic 'pauvreté' and suppression of metaphor in Kafka's work subverts the conventions of literary language (*Kafka* 40). The marked use of syntax in Cumming's poetry destabilizes the normal function of grammar (*Mille plateaux* 125). Artaud's glossolalia, and the alliterative and prosodic effects of poetry more generally, decompose language into phonetic components, stressing language's materiality, pointing to the conventions of meaning production in ordinary language use, and bringing language into continuity with music.³ Deleuze and Guattari write that the stylistic variations and the 'expression atypique' of these writers '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' (*Mille plateaux* 126). Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari do not create a straightforward binary distinction between major languages and minor languages. A 'langue mineure', they argue, would replicate the same homogenizing tendencies of the major language; it would involve the construction of a new territory (a 'reterritorialization'), and would thus constitute 'une langue localement majeure' (*Mille plateaux* 130). Instead, they insist on a 'usage mineur' or a *becoming* minor of the major language: 'un devenir-mineur de la langue majeure' (*Mille plateaux* 132). The distinction is slight but significant: the language of minor literature is constituted by the very process of deterritorialization itself, by its movement *beyond* a dominant linguistic territory, not by the elaboration of a novel linguistic state in its place. It is here that we find an idea of linguistic statelessness. The form of literary language that Deleuze and Guattari evoke involves a contingency and impermanence; it is suspended in an indeterminate, liminal space, simultaneously bound to the existing linguistic forms it deterritorializes, and pointing towards a potentialized outside, an 'un en-deçà ou un au-delà de la langue'.

³ The contemporary poet and critic Christian Prigent gives a helpful account of the recurring stylistic characteristics to which Deleuze and Guattari allude ('On ne fait pas de poésie' 435).

Deleuze and Guattari characterize the deterritorialized language of minor literature in two principal ways. Firstly, they evoke how the minor author becomes a foreigner in his or her own native tongue (*Mille plateaux* 124), with the literary act involving the decomposition or destruction of the mother language (*Critique et clinique* 16). Throughout 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' language or an 'être-chez-soi' to use Derrida's term (*Le Monolinguisme* 36). The 'minor' quality of a foreign language is that it involves a position of exteriority and an encounter with linguistic otherness. The second dimension of their analysis conceptualizes minor literature as a form of disordered language, as a 'bégaiement de la langue', where the author's style makes language stutter (*Critique et clinique* 135). Understood in its most literal sense, the stutter deforms the structures of ordinary language: the course of speech is disrupted, its normative 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.⁴ Whether the language of minor literature is conceptualized as a 'langue étrangère' or a 'bégaiement de la langue', in both instances language performs differently, undoing the power structures of a major discourse through its systemic disruption. Both formulations gesture towards a notion of statelessness, where the author ventures beyond the familiarity of a linguistic homeland, seeking out strange and foreign realms beyond.

Olivier Cadiot

Playing with conventions of form, voice and genre, Olivier Cadiot's oeuvre is experimental and heterogeneous, encompassing books of poetry, novels, musical collaborations and adaptations of texts as operas and plays. He began his career writing poetry, publishing his first book, *L'art poétique*, in 1988. His second book, *Futur, ancien, fugitif* (1993), was a hybrid text, what Cadiot calls a 'roman par poèmes' ('Cap au mieux' 3). From the mid-1990s to the present day, he has published predominantly novels: *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). Despite this movement into prose, the poetic dimension of Cadiot's work has remained throughout his literary career, and, I would argue, is apparent in his collaborations with the French musician Rodolphe Burger. The three albums Burger and Cadiot produced with Dernière bande – *Welche: On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage* (2000), *Hôtel Robinson* (2002) and *Psychopharmaka* (2013) – sit at the intersection between music, poetry and audio-visual art. Born in 1956, Cadiot began writing in a period when Deleuze and Guattari formed a significant part of the intellectual and philosophical Zeitgeist. As a young man, Cadiot attended Deleuze's lectures at Vincennes, and he frequently alludes to the influence of the philosopher on his own writing. In a recent interview with Nathalie Wourm, he stated: 'Le Deleuze des années 1980 m'a donné de l'énergie. Il a été comme un coach pour moi' (*Poètes français* 34). The following discussion will trace how Deleuze and

⁴ In *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari develop a distinction between the vertical or hierarchical organization of an arborescent (tree root) structure and the horizontal, flat or non-hierarchical structure of the rhizome. The term 'rhizome' is derived originally from botany and describes an 'elongated, usually horizontal, subterranean stem which sends out roots and leafy shoots along its length' (definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2010). A rhizome, examples of which can be found in include grasses, ginger and other common plants, has no beginning or end, and no pivot or centre; each point must be connected to any other, and upon rupture, the plant will start up again and proliferate laterally. Deleuze and Guattari use the term to refer to systems defined by multiplicity, a lack of linear unity and 'principes de connexion et d'hétérogénéité' (*Mille plateaux* 13).

Guattari's notion of deterritorialization plays out in both Cadiot's earliest collection of poetry, *L'art poétique*, and in his collaboration with Burger on the album *Welche: On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage*. In both instances, Cadiot uses ready-made language, employing cut-ups and sampling techniques that rework dominant discourses, making them 'minor'. Both exhibit an interest in foreign language, in multilingual play, and see the language of the text or track as stuttered and disordered.

L'art poétique

L'art poétique presents a collage of cut-ups from grammar textbooks, dictionaries and other reference works, interspersed with citations from canonical writers. The source texts Cadiot uses are not only French, but English, Latin, Italian and Hualapai (a Native American language from Arizona); the multilingualism of the subsequent poems compounds the disorientating reading experience elicited by the discontinuous assemblage of cut-ups. By transplanting the linguistic fragments from their original context, Cadiot explores the tension between the grammaticality of the original source of the cut-ups and the agrammaticality of their novel arrangement in the poem. To illustrate this in practice, the following passage is taken from a section of *L'art poétique* entitled 'L'anacoluthé' (anacoluthon being the rhetorical term for a sentence that subverts normal word order).

A *white-sailed* ship
faire beau, venter un peu

– Elles (maigrir) – Il (tomber)
nuit... belle
And ¹every²one did ³swink [⁴silence]
And ⁵every⁶one did ⁷sweat [⁸silence]

(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

(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 as bracketed verbs ('maigrir'), '(tomber)', italicized 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 ¹every²one did ³swink [⁴silence]'), 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 a given grammar exercise ('fill in the blanks', 'conjugate the verb'), is a right or wrong answer. In such a way, Cadiot foregrounds the notion of prescriptive grammar, where linguistic textbooks operate as symbols and tools that feed into a broader linguistic ideology of a standard, national language. Here, grammar is not only a constituent feature of linguistic structure, but operates, to use the poet Emmanuel Hocquard's phrase, 'comme la Loi, [...] comme un monopole d'Etat' (15). It functions as a tool that serves to regulate language, insisting on conformity to a standard elaborated by, and associated with, a dominant socio-political group. It is one of the most apparent ways in which language is controlled, where particular linguistic variables connote levels of education, socio-economic background and so on (think: 'I ain't' versus 'I am not', 'me and John' versus 'John and I'). This linguistic standard, predicated on a 'correct' use of grammar, constitutes a very clear example of a Deleuzo-Guattarian 'langue majeure' or 'territoire', and it is unsurprising then that Deleuze and Guattari begin their discussion in 'Postulats de la linguistique' by evoking the grammar classroom (*Mille plateaux* 95–6).

Having foregrounded the territorializing nature of prescriptive grammar, Cadiot then initiates a process of deterritorialization, rendering the grammar book cut-ups agrammatical in their novel arrangement in the text. In the passage shown, and throughout *L'art poétique*, the centripetal force of grammar and centrifugal force of agrammaticality are highlighted precisely through their polarization: the residual 'grammaticalité' of the exercise book cut-ups are juxtaposed with the subsequent 'agrammaticalité' of the poem – its discontinuous syntax, anacoluthons and grammatically 'incorrect' forms. For example, when re-analysed 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 poétique* as a whole) is one of dysfluency and discontinuity. The reader is impeded by the strange syntax of the transplanted cut-ups, compounded by the lack of coherent narrative, the unclear relationship between one constituent of the passage and the next, the suspension of reference and the subversion of traditional lyric voice. This discontinuity, which is rhythmic, syntactic and typographical, creates an elliptical effect: the reader is involved in a continuous process of attempting to construct meaning or significance in the combination of cut-up words and phrases. Indeed, however paratactic or fragmented the passage above may be, the reader can decipher the bare bones of a narrative: a journey, a voyage at sea, a sudden explosion, an unnamed character who reflects on his youthful adventures and so on. Often, the otherwise flat or affectless phrases of the textbook examples are combined in such a way as to hint at more profound significations. The very fact that the cut-ups are relocated to the literary space of the poem multiplies the possible interpretations 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 number of literary and non-literary resonances appear, with 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, and the text continuously resists interpretation, just as quickly as it invites it. The omnipresence of grammar book phrases, which operate as mere illustrative examples with little communicative force, serves to continually disrupt the quest for meaning in the text, and compels the reader to focus on the formal properties of the words in front of them, on the signifiers not the signifieds. This is reinforced by Cadiot's selection of cut-ups drawn from semantically weak lexical fields, and his frequent use of the most clichéd textbook examples: descriptions of the weather: 'faire beau' (135), 'le ciel est bleu' (232), or various glimpses of the mundane comings and goings and reductive emotional life of the protagonist: 'Pierre est heureux' (55), 'Pierre est malade' (55) 'Pierre ne vient pas'

(184).⁵ In such a way, Cadiot deliberately exploits a tension between a hermeneutical and anti-hermeneutical approach to the text, between signification and meaninglessness, depth and surface.

This brief analysis highlights some initial ways in which language is deterritorialized in Cadiot's poetry. Firstly, the grammaticality of the major language is radically undermined by the agrammaticality of the text; discontinuous syntax, parataxis, grammatical omissions and 'incorrect' forms see the major language of the grammar book examples made minor in the poem. Secondly, the normative reading process is destabilized, rendered foreign and strange as the text oscillates between provoking and resisting interpretation. Cadiot's use of the cut-up lends itself particularly well to Deleuze and Guattari's conception of deterritorialization, 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 instance the ideologies and assumptions about language that lie behind the linguistic reference works. 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. 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. The most pervasive form of authority that is consistently undermined in *L'art poétique* is that of the literary canon. The text is filled with references to major literary figures – Ovid, Shakespeare, Hugo and Proust, to name just a handful – and involves 'un pillage désinvolte de la tradition littéraire', as Alain Farah suggests (79). Following in the lineage of Lautréamont in *Poésies*, Cadiot systematically undermines these literary authorities, as well as the conventional use of citations and epigraphs, by choosing the most clichéd or banal passages from their works. Prosaic quotations, such as 'Serait-il trop tard pour que je revienne chez vous? (PROUST)' (95), appear in the text 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. Often, 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). Evoking Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Boileau's *L'Art poétique* and Queneau's *Pour un art poétique*, the title *L'art poétique* is, as Prigent points out, 'parodique' (*Ceux qui merdRent* 241). It reworks the conventional literary formula of an 'ars poetica', critiquing the literary pretensions that lie behind the quest to outline a definitive poetics, 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 (*Ceux qui merdRent* 242). Here, we find a further example of Cadiot's subversion of the established codes of a given discourse; in this instance, it is the 'langue majeure' of literary tradition that is continuously undermined. Such a gesture is significant, perhaps all the more so in the French tradition, where the nation-state, its language and its literary canon have historically been so closely intertwined.

⁵ Lia Kurts argues convincingly that Cadiot exploits these semantically weak lexical fields to foreground the conventions of grammatical instruction – 'l'acte d'enseignement, l'acte de transmission de compétences grammaticales' (35–6).

Welche

Cadiot's collaborations with Burger on the albums *Welche*, *Hôtel Robinson* and *Psychopharmaka* see the translation into a performed, auditory medium of many of the same themes and concerns of his earlier poetic project in *L'art poétique*. The albums present heteroglossic collages that assemble speech, ambient noise, sound effects and music. Cut-ups are transposed into a phonic medium as pre-recorded samples, and the samples used originate from a number of disparate sources: Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza, Kurt Schwitters performing at the Cabaret Voltaire, Henry Miller speaking in broken French. The multilingualism of *L'art poétique* is sustained in Cadiot's musical collaborations, which use French, English and German, alongside *Welche* and a Breton dialect from L'Île de Batz. While this multilingual dimension of Cadiot's work might be read as an exploration of the conceptual notion of a foreign mode of literary language, with actual foreign language operating as a marker of radical linguistic otherness, we might also interpret it as a further transgression of the usual institutionalized boundaries between different national languages. Across the albums, we can trace similar themes of major and minor languages, linguistic states and statelessness, particularly in *Welche*, which formed part of a broader language conservation project that attempted to record and promote awareness of a 'langue en voie de disparition'. 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 a thousand or so speakers left. Given its geographical situation, Alsace 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.⁶ 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 standardization, often linked to nationalism. Indeed, as alluded to above, the relationship between the French state, standard French and regional languages has historically been a divisive and political issue, with the debate continuing to this day. In 2008, when the French parliament elected to recognize minority languages within the Constitution by including the phrase 'Les langues régionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France', the decision was met with controversy.⁷ In a heated response, the Académie française issued a declaration, reiterating the words from the Constitution, 'La langue de la République est le français', and describing the new amendment as an 'atteinte à l'identité nationale', that would have '[des] conséquences [...] graves' ('La langue de la République'). Just as Deleuze and Guattari introduce their discussion of major languages and minor literature through the consideration of authors in distinct socio-linguistic situations (Kafka, a Czech Jew writing in German; Beckett, an Irishman writing in French; *Mille plateaux* 123), so too the politically charged socio-linguistic context of Cadiot and Burger's project frames the centrality of a broader exploration of language, variation and power in their work.

The interviews Burger and Cadiot conducted with the *Welche* speakers Monsieur Humbert, Madame Rosa, Madame Bauman and Monsieur Baradal were then reworked into the five tracks of the album. The phonological variants of their regional accents represent a very tangible expression of the variation that Deleuze and Guattari suggest a minor use of language will carve into the major language (*Mille plateaux* 133). The motif of the accent, and the wider theme of the foreign, appear not only in the *Welche* accents, but also in the track 'Try

⁶ In the promotional material for the album, *Welche* is described as being, historically, a language of resistance: 'Durant la dernière guerre, le *welche* a survécu comme une résistance à la dictature linguistique allemande' ('*Welche*: Biographie'). See Dennis Ernest Ager's *Sociolinguistics and Contemporary French* for further detail on the socio-linguistic history of Alsace (50).

⁷ Article 75-1 of the *Constitution de la Cinquième République française*.

to understand', which overlays Jack Spicer reading in his native US 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', standard French is translated into Welche.⁸ 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 Orbe 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* ('Olivier Cadiot et Rodolphe Burger'). 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 or 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 sound (laughter, exclamations, the inhalation of breath). Reminiscent of earlier Dada performances, which Cadiot and Burger evoke directly in their work, *Welche* experiments with the limits of sense, extracting from language its constitutional rhythms, tones and timbres. In such a way, it offers a prototypical example of the stuttering that Deleuze and Guattari describe in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*. Here they evoke how 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). As the linguistic becomes non-linguistic, language extends to its limits, is deterritorialized 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 recognizable, 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. Here, the ambiguity of Cadiot and Burger's gesture resonates with an ambiguity in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis. In accentuating the deterritorializing, 'minor' force of certain forms of literary language, Deleuze and Guattari offer an account of actual minority languages that could well be criticized for its lack

⁸ In the 'cinépoème' of the track 'Tante Elisabeth', a traditional Welche song is accompanied by standard French subtitles, translated by Cadiot. In 'Zo Love', Cadiot's poems were translated from standard French by a Welche speaker.

of nuance. As alluded to above, they argue that minority languages and dialects either aspire to the status of major ones, progressively adopting the variation-suppressing properties of a major language in their desire for official, administrative recognition, or, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest of 'le black-english' in relation to standard American English, they represent a further example of the same carving of minority into a major language as found in minor literature (*Mille plateaux* 129–30). What is lacking from their account is a consideration of how minority languages might differ from the subversive language of minor literature, a distinction which, due to the different socio-political stakes, appears important. In Cadiot and Burger's project, the tension between the very immediate, political questions surrounding the status of minority languages, and the 'minorizing' effects of literary or artistic creation, is highlighted in their provocative use of the Welche 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 track was made into a 'cinépoème', produced by the poet Pierre Alferi.⁹ In the video, the lyrics of the Welche 'chanson', translated by Cadiot into standard French, run along the bottom of the screen as subtitles. The video 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 of the clip: the rotating steps of a waltz, a model bed spinning on a trapeze and a dancer twirling fabrics into circles. In *Mille plateaux*, the ritournelle forms a key part of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of territorialization and deterritorialization.¹⁰ 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, stabilizing effect; it creates order out of chaos; 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' can also be deterritorializing; it has no beginning or end but is rather involved in a constant production of variations. It offers, therefore, new lines of flight that move outside of the familiar, repeating, but repeating differently with each variation.

The oscillation between the territorializing and deterritorializing dimensions of the ritournelle can be traced throughout '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 recognizable and the strange. The montage of images has a disorientating 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 French subtitles 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

⁹ 'Tante Elisabeth' can now be found in Alferi's *Cinépoèmes & films parlants* (2003) and is available online: 'Rodolphe Burger et Olivier Cadiot – Tante Elisabeth.' *YouTube*, uploaded by Numéro Six, 22 April 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNNw1h-kFqI>.

¹⁰ For Deleuze and Guattari's full account of the ritournelle, see the chapter 'De la ritournelle' (*Mille plateaux* 381–433).

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 territorializing 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.

Conclusion: Poetry, genre and statelessness

If, as I hope to have shown, we might employ the notion of linguistic states and territories to explore the experimental use of language in Cadiot's oeuvre, then we might also look to the 'incertitude générique' of his work for one further manifestation of a form of statelessness (Rabaté 86). While Cadiot attributes *L'art poétique* the straightforward title of a 'livre de poésie', from the off, the poet's intention was to destabilize the conventions of the genre within which he so firmly located the text. As Nathalie Wourm suggests, in constructing poems from grammar book cut-ups, Cadiot sought to 'déhierarchiser les genres [...] déloger la poésie de ses quartiers traditionnels pour en réinterroger la définition, pour la décharger de cette définition' (*Poètes français 4*). Cadiot's later collaborations with Burger and Alferi bring these generic questions into sharper focus, involving, as their comments in interviews suggest, a two-fold investigation into the limits of music and the limits of poetry.¹¹ Sitting at the intersection of different media, experimenting with the linguistic and the non-linguistic, the auditory and the visual, the albums interrogate the locus of poetry, re-examining its constituent features. If poetry no longer has to be written or sensical or linguistic, if it can be composed from cut-up dictionary entries or segmented audio recordings, then what, after all, *is* poetry? This question has preoccupied poets across the twentieth century, and Cadiot is hardly the first to consider them. The pervasive references to Dada on the album *Psychopharmaka* pay homage to the experimental performance poetry of his predecessors, which, in radically redefining the parameters of poetic form and language, left a lineage of poetic practice characterized by the questioning of its very boundaries. This experimental, self-questioning reflex has resulted in a displaced, stateless quality that, I would argue, defines poetry in the contemporary period. Indeed, the poet and critic Jean-Marie Gleize sees contemporary poetry's tendency for self-interrogation, its 'identity crisis' so to speak, as constitutional. He writes:

« 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 [...], celle de sa relation à son histoire [...], 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. (*A noir* 102)

¹¹ Cadiot and Burger evoke how the albums addressed two principal questions: 'Comment fabriquer des chansons par d'autres moyens' ('Olivier Cadiot et Rodolphe Burger'), and 'Comment une chanson peut-elle devenir accueillante pour la poésie ?' ('Une petite guérilla intérieure' 55).

As Gleize points out, since the nineteenth century, poetry has been a locus for experimentation, wherein the conventions and norms of the genre are systematically dismantled and revised. In turn, this experimental, difference-seeking dimension of modern poetry means that poetic language has come to be seen as a continuously 'othered' discourse. It is constituted precisely by its difference or derivation from existing linguistic forms, which leads Prigent to suggest that we might find in Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'déterritorialisation' a definition for poetic language itself ('Deleuze / « Poésie »'). In such a way, contemporary poetry acquires a stateless quality, in both its deterritorializing language and its unstable generic status; it inhabits a nomadic space, constantly constructed in relation to a state that it is not, and to a territory that it has moved beyond.

Références


- Ager, Dennis Ernest. *Sociolinguistics and Contemporary French*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620768>
- Alferi, Pierre. *Cinépèmes & films parlants*. Aubervilliers: Les laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, 2003. Print.
- Burger, Rodolphe and Olivier Cadiot. *Hôtel Robinson*. Dernière bande, 2002. CD.
- Burger, Rodolphe and Olivier Cadiot. *Psychopharmaka*. Dernière bande, 2013. CD.
- Burger, Rodolphe and Olivier Cadiot. 'Une petite guérilla intérieure.' *Vacarme*, 52: 54–8, 2010. Print. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/vaca.052.0054>
- Burger, Rodolphe and Olivier Cadiot. *Welche: On n'est pas indiens c'est dommage*. Dernière bande, 2000. CD.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Fairy queen*. Paris: P.O.L., 2002. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Futur, ancien, fugitif*. Paris: P.O.L., 1993. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *L'art poétique'*. Paris: P.O.L., 1988. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Le Colonel des Zouaves*. Paris: P.O.L., 1997. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier, Philippe Mangeot and Pierre Zaoui. 'Cap au mieux: entretien avec Olivier Cadiot.' *Vacarme*, 45(2008): 4–12. Print. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/vaca.045.0004>
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Providence*. Paris: P.O.L., 2014. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*. Paris: P.O.L., 2002. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Un mage en été*. Paris: P.O.L., 2010. Print.
- Cadiot, Olivier. *Un nid pour quoi faire*. Paris: P.O.L., 2007. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Critique et clinique*. Paris: Minuit, 1993. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 'Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui.' *Logique du sens*. Paris: Minuit, 1969. Appendix 4. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Minuit, 1975. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Mille plateaux*. Paris: Minuit, 1980. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1991. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Le monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, La prothèse d'origine*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.
- Farah, Alain. *Le Gala des incomparables : invention et résistance chez Olivier Cadiot et Nathalie Quintane*. Paris: Garnier, 2013. Print.
- Game, Jérôme. 'La Répétition différenciante dans la poétique deleuzienne : bégaiement et ritournelle.' *Deleuze et les écrivains. Littérature et philosophie*, edited by Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet. Nantes: Cécile Defaut, 2007, pp. 401–20. Print.
- Game, Jérôme. 'Olivier Cadiot, or the Stuttering Self.' *Poetic Becomings: Studies in Contemporary French Literature*. Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 151–88. Print.
- Gleize, Jean-Marie. *A noir: poésie et littéralité: essai*. Paris: Seuil, 1992. Print.
- Hocquard, Emmanuel. *Tout le monde se ressemble*. Paris: P.O.L., 2001. Print.

- Kelly, Michael G. 'Poetry as a foreign language: unhoused writing subjects in the *extrême contemporain*.' *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 47(4): 393–407, 2011. Print. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/cqr034>
- Kurts, Lia. 'Olivier Cadiot ou La Poétique des objets trouvés.' *Formes et normes en poésie moderne et contemporaine*, edited by Laurence Bougault and Judith Wulf, 2011. http://www.styl-m.org/pdf/Bougault_WulfFORMESETNORMES.pdf. pp. 31–58. Accessed 3 December 2017.
- 'La langue de la République est le français.' *Académie française*, 12 June 2008. <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/actualites/la-langue-de-la-republique-est-le-francais>. Accessed 1 August 2018.
- Lynch, Eric. 'Unidentified Verbal Objects: Contemporary French Poetry, Intermedia, and Narrative.' Doctoral thesis, The City University of New York, 2016.
- 'Olivier Cadiot et Rodolphe Burger: nouvelle géographie sonore.' *L'Atelier du son*, France Culture, 6 July 2012. <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/latelier-du-son/olivier-cadiot-et-rodolphe-burger-nouvelle-geographie-sonore>. Accessed 3 December 2017.
- Prigent, Christian. *Ceux qui merdRent*. Paris: P.O.L., 1991. Print.
- Prigent, Christian. 'Deleuze / « Poésie ».' *Sitaudis*, 5 October 2015. <http://www.sitaudis.fr/Incitations/deleuze-poesie.php>. Accessed 3 December 2017.
- Prigent, Christian. 'On ne fait pas de poésie sans casser d'œufs, Note sur la poésie, en parcourant Deleuze.' *Deleuze et les écrivains. Littérature et philosophie*, edited by Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet, Nantes: Cécile Defaut, 2007, pp. 429–42. Print.
- Rabaté, Dominique. 'Polyphonie du solitaire: le Robinson d'Olivier Cadiot.' *Nuove solitudini. Mutamenti delle relazioni nell'ultima narrativa francese*, edited by Matteo Majorano, Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012, pp. 83–97.
- Renaud, Jean. 'Le Monologue extérieur d'Olivier Cadiot.' *Critique*, 677: 763–75, 2003. Print.
- 'Rodolphe Burger et Olivier Cadiot – Tante Elisabeth.' *YouTube*, uploaded by Numéro Six, 22 April 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNNw1h-kFqI>. Accessed 3 December 2017.
- 'Welche: Biographie.' *Ici d'ailleurs*. <http://www.icidailleurs.com/index.php?route=product/category&path=68>. Accessed 3 December 2017.
- Wourm, Nathalie. 'Non-readings, Misreadings, Unreadings: Deleuze and Cadiot on Robinson Crusoe and Capitalism.' *Stealing the Fire: Adaptation, Appropriation, Plagiarism, Hoax in French and Francophone Literature and Film*, edited by James T. Day, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, pp. 177–90. Print. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042031654_014
- Wourm, Nathalie. *Poètes français du 21ème siècle: entretiens*. Leiden: Rodopi, 2017. Print. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004342163>

How to cite this article: Sainsbury, D 2019 Language and Statelessness in the Poetry of Olivier Cadiot. *Modern Languages Open*, 2019(1): 12 pp. 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.219>

Published: 01 November 2019

Copyright: © 2019 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

 *Modern Languages Open* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Liverpool University Press.

OPEN ACCESS 