

**The Coquetterie of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's
Translator's Note in *Selections from Paroles***

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2020441

2024



Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to construct this study of Ferlinghetti's Translator's Note without the cooperation of Rebecca Flore, Special Collections Metadata Librarian, University of Chicago, who kindly cross-referenced and photographed the peri- and paratexts in the 1958 Pocket Poet's Edition of *Paroles*. To her I extend my heartfelt thanks.

Similarly, I thank my supervisor, Dr Paul Wright, whose balanced and open-minded approach allowed the exploration of this project.

Finally, it is with love and appreciation that I acknowledge my 'sounding boards,' both online and at home.

Abstract

Lawrence Ferlinghetti's translation of selected poems from Jacques Prévert's *Paroles* was first published by City Lights in the Pocket Poet series in 1958. This, and subsequent editions published in 1965 and 1990, all contain a paratext written by the translator. Part One of this dissertation contains a detailed comparative textual analysis of the three published versions of this preface, and other elements of the publisher's peritext. This examines the versions for any textual variations, and acts as a springboard in Part Two to unlock the potential of Ferlinghetti's Translator's Note, potential which can be found both inside and beyond any preconceived boundaries of the paratext. Gérard Genette's thesis that a 'paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text' is also called into question.

In examining the mythology which both Ferlinghetti and Prévert construct around their work, similarities in their narrative are uncovered, and their shared pairing of strong self-belief and relaxed indifference comes to the fore. Despite a hesitancy to credit Ferlinghetti as a reliable narrator, the story of finding Prévert's words of resistance scribbled on a tablecloth at the close of World War II adds value and cultural significance to his translations. Ferlinghetti's extended metaphor of occupation and resistance allows him to justify and promote his own ideology in the suggestion that writers of dissent can be seen as freeing or liberating forces. Despite the elasticity of its borders, the Note is littered with clues leading back to the 'text'. However, the definition of 'text' can also be considered as elastic, not limited simply to the poems translated in this volume, but also encompassing Ferlinghetti's work as a poet and publisher of works of 'international, dissident, insurgent ferment.'

Introduction

The bilingual edition of Ferlinghetti's selected translations of *Paroles* by Jacques Prévert (City Lights, 1990, but first published in 1958 without the original French) is accompanied by 'a certain number of verbal messages or other productions' such as a title, back cover 'blurb' and a translator's note, written by the editor and translator himself. These 'messages' bookend the poetry, and generally serve as a paratext, in Gérard Genette's sense, to 'extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, both in the usual sense of this verb and also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book.'¹ Certain features need to be considered and questions asked of a paratext, says Genette, so to 'define the status of a paratextual message.'² These questions concern themselves with the *where*, *when* and *how* the message is written, *for whom* it is written and *for what* purpose. Ultimately though, he concludes, a paratext is 'dedicated to the service of something other than itself':

Whatever coquettishness or paradoxical reversal he puts into it, the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence.³

A paratext acts as a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back.'⁴ Therefore, Ferlinghetti's Translator's Note can be seen as a hallway with direct passage to the poetry, but also as an entrance hall with many smaller doors leading away from it into a maze of new messages. These are the thresholds I wish to cross in the course of this dissertation. If Genette's thesis is true, then by keeping a hand on the left-hand wall as we traverse the maze (assuming Ferlinghetti has been fair), each door we traverse will inextricably lead us back to the poetry. In attempting to disengage the paratext from its text, I shall put this thesis to the test.

The 'first City Lights bilingual edition'⁵ opens with a note from the translator in the form of a preface. This Translator's Note provides a 'when' and a 'where' as it is signed by Ferlinghetti, dated 1990 and situated geographically in San Francisco. The body of the translations,

¹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Literature, Culture, Theory, 20 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.

² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 4.

³ Ibid. p. 10.

⁴ Ibid. p. 2.

⁵ Jacques Prévert and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Paroles: Selected poems*, Pocket Poets Series, No. 9, 1st bilingual edn (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990). Subsequently referred to as *Paroles* (1990). Information taken from copyright page.

however, were completed years before, many having been published in various periodicals between 1952 and 1957.⁶ This temporal gap between the initial date of publication and the date of the Translator's Note (1990) raises questions as to the purpose and intended audience of this Note. Prefacing the poems with a translator's note in a bilingual edition makes sense, as the inclusion of the original French potentially opens the text to a new readership. But at the same time, and conversely, the fact that the Note is dated hints at previous incarnations of this preface. This suggestion is confirmed in Neeli Cherkovski's biography of Ferlinghetti. On the subject of *Paroles*, Cherkovski comments that Ferlinghetti 'wrote an introduction to the poems that gave remarkable insight into his own writing, as well as that of Prévert's'.⁷ As the Cherkovski biography was written in 1979, it is clear that the preface existed prior to the 1990 edition. The version to which Cherkovski must refer is the 1958 City Lights edition, as this is the edition listed in the works of Ferlinghetti he includes towards the rear of the publication.⁸ This calls into question any initial assumptions about audience and purpose. The addition by Ferlinghetti of a temporal stamp to the Note also suggests a revision has taken place. What is not evident is what these revisions reveal, if anything.

Bill Morgan has tracked the editorial changes to this translator's note.⁹ *Paroles* was first published by City Lights in the Pocket Poet series, bearing the number 9, in 1958. Morgan confirms the presence of a translators note on pages 3-6 of this edition, which is not dated but is signed *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*.¹⁰ Morgan records that this edition was reprinted seven times

⁶ Bill Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a Comprehensive Bibliography to 1980* (New York: Garland Pub., 1982), pp. 121-124.

Bill Morgan logs when and where Ferlinghetti's translations first appeared in print. This bibliography, as Morgan himself writes, is 'intended as a complete guide to Ferlinghetti's work' and traces 'the evolution of poems over a period of revisions.' He notes that eight translations of Prévert's *Paroles* were published in *Inferno* no. 6 and 7 in May and June 1952, pp. 12-18; four appeared in *Goad* vol 2, no. 1 in January 1953; six were included in *City Lights* no. 3, Spring 1953 pp. 49-50. 'Sunday' was also printed here, says Morgan, but was not included in Ferlinghetti's *Paroles*; four were published in *Contact, an international magazine of poetry*, May and August 1953; two were printed in *California Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 22, Winter 1953; one translation featured in *Miscellaneous Man* no. 10 in January 1957.

⁷ Neeli Cherkovski, *Ferlinghetti, a Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), p. 121.

⁸ Cherkovski, *Ferlinghetti*, p. 242.

⁹ Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 121.

¹⁰ Jacques Prévert and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Selections from Paroles*, Pocket Poets Series, No. 9 (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1958). Subsequently referred to as *Paroles* (1958).

A copy of the 1958 preface was obtained from the Special Collections Metadata Librarian, Rebecca Flore, at the University of Chicago, who kindly sent photographs of the Translator's Note and publication information. Flore checked the two copies which were in the collection, and both had an identical Translator's Note and identical publication information, but she was unable to confirm which print run the copies were from. Morgan records that there were two previous versions of the Note up to 1980. The bilingual edition followed with a new Note dated 1990. The version supplied by Flore differs

up to October 1974, but that from the fourth reprinting ‘there is a revised translator’s note which is identical to the translator’s note in the first English edition’.¹¹ The ‘first English edition’, as noted above, appeared in 1965, and was published by Penguin.¹² ‘English’, here, is used by Morgan to distinguish between the American edition and the British edition. The British edition, signed L.F. and dated ‘San Francisco, 1964’, included the addition of Prévert’s original French and was out of print by 1973, according to Morgan’s research. Morgan’s bibliography does not extend to the City Lights bilingual edition published with the same Pocket Poets number (9) in 1990.¹³

Initially, I carried out a detailed comparative textual analysis of the three versions of the Translator’s Note and the front and back cover information. These analyses are presented in the first section of this dissertation, and cover the where, when and how suggested by Genette. In performing such a textual comparison, my intention was not, as Jerome J. McGann puts it, to ‘establish a text which, in the now universally accepted formulation, most nearly represents the author’s original (or final) intentions’,¹⁴ but merely to methodically examine the published versions for any textual variations. I am not seeking to produce a critical edition which exposes

from the version in the Penguin edition (dated 1964), therefore I can conclude that the University of Chicago copies must be earlier than the fourth reprinting, which Morgan records as having a revised Note. The copy is not a first edition, as the publication information states: ‘First published in this edition: July, 1958, by arrangement with the Librairie Gallimard.’ Flore’s copy is very likely to be a third reprint, as this publication information appears, according to Morgan (p. 124.), from the third printing in 1963. Prior to this, he writes, the publishing date was recorded as December 1958.

There is one anomaly in the records, however. The University of Chicago library record states that these copies include a translator’s note dated 1964. It is clear from lexical differences between the copy supplied by Flore and the Penguin edition that Flore’s copy must predate the fourth print run which, according to Morgan (p. 124) included a ‘revised translator’s note which is identical to the translator’s note in the first English edition’, dated 1964. The evidence provided by Morgan suggests that this is at worst false and at best the latest date that the copy could have been published, although that just serves to confuse. I have chosen to use the lexical evidence rather than be concerned by the date in the library record system. Subsequently, Flore has agreed with my findings and has removed the comment from the library record.

¹¹ Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 124.

This does not cover any possible manuscripts that exist. According to the Bancroft Library archives at the University of California, Berkley (Lawrence Ferlinghetti papers, BANC MSS 90/30 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley), a text of the Translator’s Note dated 1964 exists, along with correspondence pertaining to the publication of *Paroles*. Unfortunately, this archive is only open to in-person research, and so have been unable to include these documents in this dissertation.

¹² Jacques Prévert and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Selections from Paroles*, Penguin Modern European Poets, D 84 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1965). Subsequently referred to as *Paroles* (1965) when referring to the publication in general and *Paroles* (1964) when referring to the version of the translator’s Note found within. The 1965 Penguin edition is not mentioned by Cherkovski. The likely reason is that it was not for sale in the United States for copyright reasons.

¹³ *Paroles* (1990).

¹⁴ Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 15.

and eliminates errors, as McGann defines the role of the textual critic, nor to decide upon the ultimate version, but to simply break down the text to expose the linguistic differences between them.

Ferlinghetti has produced three versions of his Translator's Note, two of which have also been edited by him in his role as publisher. In presenting the argument put forward by Fredson Bowers, McGann writes that it makes no difference whether 'the author oversaw and accepted' editorial intervention from an outside agent. This is still 'regarded as corruption of the authoritative text.'¹⁵ On the other hand, he argues, the author can change their mind. These changes may, he says, 'reflect accommodations to changed circumstances and sometimes to changed publics.'¹⁶ María Carmen Toledano-Buendía agrees that a reason for revising translator's notes is to 'ensure the translation is suitably adapted to a given reception context':

The new cultural and communicative situation in which the text is embedded require the translator to provide information that adapts the text to the target receiver's expectation and needs.¹⁷

This could explain the revision of the Note for each of the three published editions, especially as the revisions are dated. Alternatively, it could suggest, as McGann has theorized, a change in Ferlinghetti's thinking towards his work. By 'work' I am not merely referring to his translations of the poems in *Paroles*, which, according to Morgan, remain unchanged between the first edition (1958) and the second edition (Penguin, 1965),¹⁸ but to his work in the broader context of his role as publisher.

The job of the editor, as McGann summarizes, is 'to rescue the work from the chaos of conflicting and secondary authorities and agents – including the author's own secondary thoughts.'¹⁹ As publisher, editor **and** translator of *Paroles*, Ferlinghetti is bound to the text as he sits both inside and outside; inside as translator and outside as publisher. However, because of these dual roles, which see Ferlinghetti produce the paratextual messages from the

¹⁵ McGann, *A Critique*, p. 20.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 32.

¹⁷ María Carmen Toledano-Buendía, 'Listening to the Voice of the Translator: A Description of Translator's Notes as Paratextual Elements', *Translation & Interpreting*, 5.2 (2013), 149–62 (p. 152).

¹⁸ Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, pp. 121–24.

Although the translations remain the same, from the second printing of the first edition (1958, 2nd reprinting 1961) there is a change in the order of the poems. 'Hard Times' moves from pp. 68-71 to pp. 20-23. There were alterations to the text of some translations between their first publication in periodicals (see note 6) and the first edition of *Paroles* (1958). Morgan does not comment on the 1990 edition as his work was published prior to the appearance of this edition.

¹⁹ Jerome McGann, 'The Socialization of Texts', in *The Book History Reader* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 68.

Translator's Note down to the front cover design, the lines between the outside and inside are even more blurred, especially if we consider J. Hillis Miller's comments which Genette takes on board as a starting point for his study. He describes the activity of the paratext, as being 'simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and outside.' He continues:

It is also the boundary itself, the screen which is a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside. It confuses them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them and joining them.' ²⁰

As Buendía argues, there is much 'unfulfilled potential' in the data contained within translator's notes.²¹ In this vein, I intend to use the factual, textual comparisons included in the first part of this dissertation as a springboard to explore the potential of Ferlinghetti's Translator's Note. This I present in the second section of this dissertation. By listening to the translator's voice in these paratexts, I shall consider how any historical changes, errors introduced, or opinions revised expose the author's relationship to the texts he translated just 'for fun'²² right at the beginning of his career as a writer and publisher. In exploring the potential of the Translator's Note, I intend to question Genette's thesis that 'the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text'.²³

²⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 1.

²¹ Buendía, 'Listening to the Voice of the Translator', p. 150.

²² *Paroles* (1990), p. iv.

²³ Genette loc cit.

Part One:**Textual Comparison of Paratextual Information**

1. Textual Comparison of the Translator's Note in the Three Published Versions

Here follows a textual comparison of the three published versions of the Translator's Note. Version one covers the 1958 first edition and the three reprints thereof and shall be referred to in this section as 1958;²⁴ version two covers the Penguin (1965) edition as well as reprints four to seven of the City Lights publication and shall be referred to as 1964 when referring to the text of the Note, as this is the date Ferlinghetti uses in his signature at the end of the Translator's Note, or 1965 when referring to the publication in general;²⁵ version three is the 1990 bilingual edition and shall be referred to as 1990.²⁶ Words, phrases or punctuation marked in bold type, or which are underlined, are to highlight differences in version, unless otherwise indicated. Both may appear in a quotation where more than one change has been recognised. Quotations will be written as in the version quoted, with spacing, punctuation and spelling as written wherever possible. The comparison of the three versions will be dealt with chronologically and page numbers will be referenced in brackets.

²⁴ *Paroles* (1958).

²⁵ *Paroles* (1965). For the purposes of this textual comparison, I am using the Penguin edition as printed and distributed in the United Kingdom. Comments regarding differences in punctuation refer to this edition only and may differ to the City Lights reprints 4-7 due to differences in house style between the two publishers as well as variances between British and American English usage.

²⁶ *Paroles* (1990).

The title of this preface is ‘Translator’s Note’ in 1958 (p. 3) and 1990 (p. i), written in uppercase and in a larger font size to the main body of text. The Translator’s Note in the 1965 edition is renamed ‘Introduction’ and is printed in italics in the same font size as the main text (p. 9). In 1958 and 1990, the Translator’s Note is placed after the copyright information and before the contents. In 1965, it is placed after the contents page and acknowledgments.

The opening of the Translator’s Note remains intact in all three versions: ‘I first came upon the poetry of Jacques Prévert written upon a paper tablecloth in St. Brieuc in 1944.’ The only difference can be found in the typography. The earliest version (1958), assuming that, due to lack of evidence to the contrary, the reprints followed the same typesetting, begins in the uppercase: ‘I FIRST CAME UPON the poetry of [...]’ (1958, p. 3). In all three versions, Ferlinghetti tells us that there is ‘no doubt’ that this is ‘at the root’ of his desire to share the poetry of Prévert with the American reader (1958, p. 3), and with England, also (1964, p. 9; 1990, p. i):

This so romantic, sentimental circumstance is no doubt at the root of **my present effort** to perpetrate Prévert upon America. (1958, p. 3)

From version two (1964), ‘my present effort’ becomes ‘my effort’ (1964, p. 9; 1990, p. i) and ‘upon America’ becomes ‘upon England and America’. (1964, p. 9; 1990, p. i)

Bits and pieces of Prévert’s poetry have been published in anthologies and periodicals **in this country**, and I have surveyed most of them with a watering eye. (1958, p. 3)

From 1964, ‘in this country’ becomes ‘in English’. (1964, p. 9; 1990, p. i)

When commenting on existing translations, Ferlinghetti slightly changes the wording between versions. ‘**Generally speaking**, he has suffered atrociously from constipated translation and trivial choice of poems’ (1958, p. 3). This he rewrites as ‘**[g]enerally**, he has suffered [...]’ (1964, p. 9; 1990, p. i)

And the poem on the paper tablecloth is perhaps as typical of the way Prévert got around in France in the mid-Forties as it is of his poetry itself — a poetry (his worst critics will tell you) which is perfectly suited to paper tablecloths, and existing always on as fine a line between sentiment and sentimentality as any that Charlie Chaplin ever teetered on. (1958, p. 3)

The em dash is used in both 1958 (above) and 1990 (p. i) with white spaces either end, whereas in 1964 (p. 9), the shorter en dash is employed, again with white spaces on both sides. The rest of the sentence remains unchanged.

At the beginning of paragraph two, Ferlinghetti changes ‘Americans’ (1958, p. 3) to ‘us’ (1964, p. 9; 1990, p. i):

What Prévert may mean to **Americans** is naturally quite a different thing than what he has meant to the French. Many of the poems in **PAROLES** grew out of the Occupation, out of the war years in France, and it is plain that ‘paroles’ **could mean both** Words and Passwords. (1958, p. 3)

Here, the title word ‘paroles’ is written in uppercase in 1958 (p. 3) and 1990 (p. i), but in italics in 1964 (p. 9). From 1964, Ferlinghetti clarifies what he means by ‘war years’, writing ‘Second World War’ in 1964 (p. 9) and ‘World War II’ in 1990 (p. i). In both 1964 and 1990, there is an inversion of what he says in 1958 (p. 3) — the poems ‘grew out of the Second World War and the Occupation in France’ (1964, p. 9) and out of ‘World War II and the Occupation [...]’ (1990, p. i).

Ferlinghetti continues, ‘it is plain that ‘ **paroles** ’ could mean both Words and Passwords’ (1958, p. 3), using single inverted commas with white space between the inverted commas on both sides of the word ‘paroles’. In 1964 (p. 9), these white spaces are omitted; in 1990 (p. i), double quotation marks are used without additional white spaces. From 1964, Ferlinghetti omits ‘could’:

[...]and it is plain that ‘paroles’ **means** both ‘words’ and ‘passwords’. (1964, p. 9)

In 1990 (p. i), he sticks with his omission of ‘could’ but reverts to using capitalisation in ‘Words and Passwords’, which had been replaced with quotation marks (single inverted commas) in 1964 (p. 9).

In all three versions, Ferlinghetti says that ‘Prévert spoke particularly to the French youth immediately after the **War**.’ What follows, however, differs. In 1958 (p. 3), Ferlinghetti finishes the line by stating ‘if ever there was a generation that was Beat, this was it.’ This ending is removed in 1964 (p. 9). He writes:

Prévert spoke particularly to the French youth immediately after the **war**, especially to those who grew up during the Occupation and felt totally estranged from Church and State.

Another difference to note is the capitalisation of ‘war’. The capital ‘W’ is removed in 1964 (p. 9) and reinstated in 1990 (p. i). Apart from this, the 1964 and 1990 versions are the same.

America has been occupied by different forces, with **its** own kind of resistance movement in **its** writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper **middleclass** ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities of church and state. (1958, p. 3)

Since then **we** have had **our** own kind of resistance movement in **our** writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper **middle class** ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities. (1964, p. 9)

Between 1958 and 1964, ‘America’ and ‘its’ becomes ‘we’ and ‘our’. In 1964 (p. 9), Ferlinghetti also removes the phrase ‘America has been occupied by different forces’ and ‘church and state’ are disconnected from ‘tribal insanities’, having been placed in the previous line with added capitalization. Version three (1990, p. i) mirrors version two (1964, p. 9) apart from the elision of ‘middle’ and ‘class’, which also occurs in version one (1958, p. 3):

Since then we have had our own kind of resistance movement in our writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper **middleclass** ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities. (1990, p. i)

The paragraph continues:

Prévert is one of those who **holds** onto your sleeve and says ‘Don’t go for it . . . keep out of it.’ (1958, p.3)

In 1964 (p. 9), Ferlinghetti adds a line, ‘Prévert was saying it in the thirties.’ The line continues as in 1958 above, but here Ferlinghetti replaces ‘Prévert’ with ‘he’ and ‘[...]one of those who **holds**[...]’ (1958, p. 3) becomes ‘[...]one of those who **hold**[...]’ (1964, p. 9). In the same vein, ‘says’ becomes ‘say’. A colon is also added before the quotation:

Prévert was saying it in the thirties. He is one of those who **hold** onto your sleeve and **say:** ‘Don’t go for it . . . keep out of it.’ (1964, p. 9)

In 1990, some of these changes are reversed. Ferlinghetti reinstates the second ‘Prévert’ and the third person singular ‘holds’ and ‘says’, but maintains the colon:

Prévert was saying it in the **Thirties**. **Prévert** is one of those who **holds** onto your sleeve and **says:** “Don’t go for it . . . keep out of it.” (1990, p. i)

An addition is the capitalisation of ‘Thirties’ and the double quotation marks instead of the single inverted commas.

All three versions continue with:

At his best he simply shows you something and lets you draw your own conclusions. At worst, he draws them for you with too maudlin a touch, as in ‘**Human Effort**’ which begins wonderfully with what the eye sees: (1958, pp. 3-4)

The two textual differences in 1964 and 1990 concern ‘Human Effort’. In 1964 (p. 9), a comma follows the title of this poem before the ‘which’; in 1990 (p. ii), the single inverted commas are replaced with double quotation marks and the second comma is absent.

Ferlinghetti’s partial translation of the poem ‘Human Effort’²⁷ follows in all three versions. In 1958 (p. 4), it is inset on the next line without any additional paragraph spacing. Equally, there is no additional paragraph spacing before the start of the subsequent paragraph. In 1964 (p. 3), there is an additional paragraph space before the poem and a double paragraph space after the poem. In 1990 (p. ii), the additional spacing is also present but is an equally sized, single space at either end of the poem. In 1958 and 1990, the font is the same in size and style. In 1964, the poem is presented in a smaller font. All three versions end in an ellipsis. In 1958 (p. 4), this is a three-dot ellipsis, with spaces either side of the ellipsis and in between each dot. In 1964 (p. 10), there is a three-dot ellipsis, which is presented as three circles increasing in size. In 1990 (p. ii), there is a four-dot ellipsis, or possibly an ellipsis followed by a full stop.

There is a slight variance to the translation of ‘Human Effort’ between versions. Line two reads: ‘is not this handsome young man smiling’ in 1958 (p. 4) but ‘is not this handsome smiling young man’ in 1964 (p. 9) and 1990 (p. ii). In 1958 and 1964, there is a line break which is removed in 1990:

Human effort doesn’t carry a small child on its right
shoulder (1958, p. 4; 1964, p. 10)

Human effort doesn’t carry a small child on its right shoulder (1990, p. ii)

All three versions then continue with the same wording:

But he goes on to tell what human effort really is, and we are treated to triteness about the low-salaried proletariat which at least discouraged this translator from finishing the poem. (1958, p. 4; 1964, p. 10; 1990, p. ii)

Ferlinghetti also leaves the next sentence intact:

Perhaps, unhappily, such observations are still not trite in France, while we look down upon them from our too **wellfed** heights, as complacent as any **cochon** Prévert attacks. (1958, p. 4)

The French word ‘cochon’ is used in all three versions, italicized in 1958 (p. 4) and 1964 (p. 10), but not in 1990 (p. ii), where it is printed in the same font as the main body of the text and

²⁷ Jacques Prévert, *Paroles*, Collection Folio, 762 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 97. Original title: ‘L’Effort Humain’.

is not italicized. In 1958 (p. 4), ‘wellfed’ is spelled without the hyphen, but is hyphenated – ‘well-fed’ – in 1964 (p. 10) and in 1990 (p. ii).

The middle section is that which deviates the most from the 1958 Translator’s Note.²⁸ The middle section (1958, p. 4) thus begins with reference to the views of Gaëton Picon, citing his book published in 1949:

In the view of French critics (such as Gaëton Picon in PANORAMA OF NEW FRENCH LITERATURE) **Prévert is the voice of the wise street-urchin** — precocious, mocking, bitter, dupe of nothing and no-one. (1958, p. 4)²⁹

In 1964 (p. 10) this has been modified to:

He was born in 1900. In the late forties, the French critic Gaëton Picon **wrote** that Prévert was ‘the only authentic poet who, up to the present time, has known how to break through the limits of a more-or-less specialized public.’ Prévert (**as Picon put it**) is the voice of the wise street-urchin – precocious, mocking, bitter, dupe of nothing and no-one. (1964, p. 10)

In addition to the changes in wording above, 1964 sees the use of the en dash in contrast to the em dash in 1958. Secondly, Ferlinghetti is writing the views of Picon in the past tense in 1964 (p. 10), (‘Picon wrote’ and ‘as Picon put it’), whereas he uses the present tense in 1958 (p. 4) (‘In the view of French critics [...] Prévert is the voice of the wise street-urchin[...].’).

The 1958 version continues:

He is even compared to Daumier for the way he unmaskes and deflates judges, generals, presidents, **popes, academicians** — all those he thinks keep us from joy. Man is ‘destined for joy’ (as Picon puts it) but there’s a permanent conspiracy against it. Prévert always denounces the conspiracy. (pp. 4-5)

But in 1964:

He is even compared to Daumier for the way he unmaskes and deflates judges, generals, presidents, **popes and academicians** – all those he thinks keep us from joy. Man is destined for joy but there’s a permanent conspiracy against it. Prévert always denounces the conspiracy. (p. 10)

²⁸ Middle section 1958: pp. 4-5, starting with the final paragraph, up until the end of the penultimate paragraph on p. 5; 1964: Last 2 paragraphs p. 10 to the end of the penultimate paragraph p. 11; 1990: Final paragraph p. ii to end of the penultimate paragraph of page iii.

²⁹ ‘Panorama of New French Literature’ is printed in uppercase letters (small capitals) but in the same size as the lowercase text, not that of capital letters (large capitals).

Again the 1958 em dash (p. 4) is replaced with an en dash in 1964 (p. 10). The comma between ‘popes’ and ‘academicians’ (1958, p. 4) is replaced with ‘and’ (1964, p. 10). The quotation from Picon in 1958 (p. 4), ‘destined for joy’, is assimilated into the text without quotation marks in 1964 (p. 10), and the bracketed reference to Picon is removed. The 1990 version (pp. ii-iii) is identical to 1964 (p. 10).

At this point in the Translator’s Note, the 1958 version contains passages which are not present in later versions in any form:

Thus his poetry is really far from Beat. His language may be street-talk, but it is not that of the hipster, and it would be false, for instance, to translate his ‘Compagnons des mauvais jours’ as ‘sad scene cats’ instead of ‘badtime buddies.’ (1958, p. 5)

This passage, which completes the paragraph after ‘Prévert always denounces the conspiracy,’ is replaced in 1964 and 1990 with a new paragraph, beginning after the same line:

Today that is no longer enough, and I for one would have liked Prévert to go much, much further in his denunciations, as many younger poets now have. It would seem that the enormous success of **Paroles (several hundred thousand copies in print)** went to the wrong part of his head. In his later books, instead of becoming more profound, he allowed his naturally cinematic eye too easy a passage over the still-astounding surface of the world. While below the surface others began digging a world the most omnivorous eye could never reach. (1964, pp. 10 – 11)

By 1990, the quoted number of copies in print is updated from ‘several’ to ‘seven’ hundred thousand. The title word ‘paroles’ remains in italics in 1964 and in uppercase in 1990 as previously noted.

It would seem that the enormous success of **PAROLES (seven hundred thousand copies in print)** went to the wrong part of his head. (1990, p. iii)

What follows in 1958 (p. 5) is a long paragraph which takes up much of the page. There are both comparable and disparate elements which I shall attempt to break down in what follows. However, in order to appreciate the scope of the variation in content, the complete paragraph is printed in the footnotes along with the comparable paragraphs from 1964 and 1990.³⁰

³⁰ Paragraphs in full:

This doesn't mean, on the other hand, that Prévert is no more than the Edgar Guest of contemporary French mores, as one American poet has said, ‘standing in the same relation to the temper and vocabulary and allowable chic emotions of his day as did E. Guest to his. . . with a tinpanalley ear for a cadence . . . and the cheapest mind this side of Hollywood, with the least integrity and the most eagerness to fake and crib and puff himself up. . . .’ To this I can only answer that what is relevant to

This doesn't mean, on the other hand, that Prévert is no more than the Edgar Guest of contemporary French mores, as one American poet has said, 'standing in the same relation to the temper and vocabulary and allowable chic emotions of his day as did E. Guest to his. . . with a tinpanalley ear for a cadence . . . and the cheapest mind this side of Hollywood, with the least integrity and the most eagerness to fake and crib and puff himself up. . . .' (1958, p. 5)

In 1964, Ferlinghetti writes:

There are those who have always considered Prévert no more than a surrealist clown with (as one American poet has said) 'a tinpanalley ear for a cadence, and the cheapest mind this side of Hollywood, with the least integrity, and the most eagerness to fake and crib and puff himself up.' (p. 11)

The 1958 reference to Edgar Guest, underlined above, is removed in 1964 and replaced with '[t]here are those who have always considered Prévert no more than a surrealist clown [...].'

The quotation 'a tinpanalley ear for a cadence, and the cheapest mind this side of Hollywood, with the least integrity, and the most eagerness to fake and crib and puff himself up' is not

his poetry is what he sees. He is the poet as 'see-er' (if not as seer). 'He writes,' Picon says, 'As one talks while walking, with all the sudden pauses, accelerations, vehemencies, friendly or irritable gestures.' And 'la poésie est dans la démarche.' It's truly said that Prévert was a Surrealist. Surrealism was supposed to be a new way of seeing, but what they saw was Nothing. They saw Dada, whereas Prévert always had his eye focused on the human scene. The depopulated world of the non-objective painter is not for him, and for an American parallel one thinks of Ben Shahn rather than any fashionable spawn of Jackson Pollock. There also are parallels among painters and poets in San Francisco today. (Among the painters, I think of James Weeks and the young Mike Nathan, the latter is a great unrecognised talent — his eye is mad and it sees, it sees and is mad.) And Prévert has words for them . . . new contact lenses for the blind . . . the poet a seeing-eye dog in the street. (1958, p. 5.)

There are those who have always considered Prévert no more than a surrealist clown with (as one American poet has said) 'a tinpanalley ear for a cadence, and the cheapest mind this side of Hollywood, with the least integrity, and the most eagerness to fake and crib and puff himself up.' And he is finally put down by today's poets and critics for committing the cardinal crime of too much clarity in a world whose very Absurdity (cf. Camus' Myth of Sisyphus) Absurdly cries for an expression of that Absurdity in all its arts.

Still there are many so-called poets around these days who have need of such a seeing-eye dog in the street. Prévert remains a great 'see-er' if not a great seer. He writes as one talks while walking, and 'la poésie est dans la démarche.' His ubiquitous eye enumerates the ordinary world with a 'movement transfigurateur.' In this there is some superficial reason for calling Prévert the Picasso of modern French poetry, and Prévert's 'La Crosse en l'air', centred upon the Spanish Civil War, parallel's Picasso's Guernica. And, of these two works, I for one prefer Prévert's. (1964, p. 11.)

The 1990 version is the same in content but with changes to punctuation and typography (double quotation marks, non-italicized text), and so is not printed here in full.

removed, although the ellipsis (present in 1958, p. 5) is absent after ‘cadence’ and ‘puff himself up’ in the 1964 version. (p. 11)

The passage is the same in 1964 and 1990, only with a change to the punctuation which includes a capital letter for ‘Surrealist’ and a colon before the quotation, with double instead of single quotation marks: ‘[...] (as one American poet has said): “a tinpanalley ear for a cadence [...]”’ (1990, p. iii)

This passage follows the quotation in 1964:

And he is finally put down by today's poets and critics for committing the cardinal crime of too much clarity in a world whose very Absurdity (cf. Camus’ Myth of Sisyphus) Absurdly cries for an expression of that Absurdity in all its arts. (1964, p. 11)

This is an addition to the 1964 version and is not present in 1958. It is retained in 1990 (p. iii), with only one difference in ‘cf.’ is written ‘Cf.’ with a capital letter.

After a ‘tinpanalley ear for a cadence’, the 1958 version continues:

To this I can only answer that what is relevant to his poetry is what he sees. He is the poet as ‘see-er’ (if not seer). ‘He writes,’ Picon says, ‘As one talks while walking, with all the sudden pauses, accelerations, vehemencies, friendly or irritable gestures.’ And ‘la poésie est dans la démarche.’ (1958, p. 5)

There is a comparable paragraph in 1964, which follows on from the inserted passage ending ‘of that Absurdity in all its arts’:

Still there are many so-called poets around these days who have need of such a seeing-eye dog in the street. Prévert remains a great ‘see-er’ if not a great seer. He writes as one talks while walking, and ‘*la poésie est dans la démarche.*’ (1964, p. 11)

Ferlinghetti retains the comment about Prévert being a great ‘see-er’. He brings forward the idea of ‘the seeing-eye dog in the street’, which doesn’t appear until the very end of the long paragraph in 1958 (p. 5).³¹ The quotation from Picon has been shortened and is not directly attributed to him, and nor is the French phrase, ‘*la poésie est dans la démarche*’, here italicized, which follows.

³¹ See full paragraph detailed in note 30.

The long paragraph in 1958 ends with a comparison between Prévert and other contemporary artists:

It's truly said that Prévert was a Surrealist. Surrealism was supposed to be a new way of seeing, but what they saw was Nothing. They saw Dada, whereas Prévert always had his eye focused on the human scene. The depopulated world of the non-objective painter is not for him, and for an American parallel one thinks of Ben Shahn rather than any fashionable spawn of Jackson Pollock. There also are parallels among painters and poets in San Francisco today. (Among the painters, I think of James Weeks and the young Mike Nathan, the latter is a great unrecognised talent - his eye is mad and it sees, it sees and is mad.) And Prévert has words for them...new contact lenses for the blind...the poet a seeing-eye dog in the street. (1958, p. 5)

In 1964, Ferlinghetti also reworks the idea of the 'eye focused on the human scene', saying his 'ubiquitous eye enumerates the ordinary world with a "movement transfigurateur"'. He removes references to Surrealism and to other artists, but links Prévert instead to Picasso, giving an example of a Prévert poem and a Picasso painting which could be studied in parallel.

His ubiquitous eye enumerates the ordinary world with a '**mouvement transfigurateur**.' In this there is some superficial reason for calling Prévert the Picasso of modern French poetry, and Prévert's '***La Crosse en l'air***', centred upon the Spanish Civil War, parallel's Picasso's ***Guernica***. And, of these two works, I for one prefer Prévert's. (1964, p. 11)

The 1990 version is identical to 1964, apart from differences in punctuation whereby single inverted commas are replaced by double quotation marks in all cases. The quoted French 'la poésie est dans la démarche' and 'movement transfigurateur' (1990, p. iii) are not italicized. In 1990, '*mouvement transfigurateur*' (1964, p. 11) is spelled differently (the 'u' being removed) and becomes "movement transfigurateur" (1990, p. iii). *Guernica* (1964, p. 11) is not italicized in 1990, but placed between double quotation marks: "Guernica." (1990, p. iii)

The last paragraph in 1958 reads:

The poems **included here** comprise about half of the complete **PAROLES**, Prévert's original publisher having reserved the rights to a complete American edition. (1958, pp. 5-6)

The title word 'paroles' is printed in uppercase but is reduced in size to the height of the lowercase text, similar to the quoted title of Picon's 'Panorama of New French Literature' in an earlier paragraph (1958, p. 4). Previously, 'paroles' was printed in uppercase, but in the larger size as per capital letters (1958, p. 3).

The 1964 version concludes:

The poems **herein** comprise about half of the complete *Paroles*. (1964, p. 11)

‘Included here’ (1958, p. 5) becomes ‘herein’ and there is an omission of the statement regarding publishing rights. ‘Paroles’ is italicized rather than being printed in uppercase.

In 1990, ‘paroles’ is printed in uppercase with the font size equating to the capital letter (p. iii).

The 1958 version continues and concludes:

There are certain early long poems which should have been included, but they remain better in French than in any English version, and this may well be said of all the poems here. A poem can be finished, a translation only abandoned. . . . We tend to forget that English is not a Romance language. . . . (1958, p. 6)

In 1964, the sentence regarding ‘early long poems which should have been included’ is extended to give examples and a reason for their exclusion is given:

There are certain early long poems upon which his original reputation was founded in the thirties, (notably ‘*La Crosse en l’air*’, ‘*Souvenir de famille*’, ‘*Tentative de description d’un dîner de Têtes à Paris-France*’) which should be here, but they are especially loaded with *jeu de mots* impossible to translate and outdated topical allusions impossible to explain. They remain better in French than in any English version – which may be said of all the poems here. A poem can be finished, a translation only abandoned. . . . We tend to forget that English is not a Romance language. . . . (pp. 11-12)

In 1990, ‘thirties’ is given a capital letter, to become ‘Thirties’ (pp. 3-4). The titles of the poems are not italicized and are placed within double quotation marks. The capitalisation of the titles of the poems is altered, so that ‘*La Crosse en l’air*’, ‘*Souvenir de famille*’, ‘*Tentative de description d’un dîner de Têtes à Paris-France*’ (1964, p. 11) become “La Crosse en L’Air,” “Souvenir de Famille,” and “Tentative de Description d’un Dîner de Têtes à Paris-France”. (1990, pp. iii-iv)

A final paragraph is added in 1964:

I translated these poems for fun some **15 years ago**. They’re still worth it. (1964, p. 12)

In 1990, this final paragraph is updated and extended:

I translated these poems for fun some **40 years ago**. They’re still worth it. **They’re still as alive and relevant as the day they were written.** (1990, p. iv)

The 1958 Translator's Note is signed '—Lawrence Ferlinghetti' in smaller font and is not dated. It is placed on the right-hand side underneath the text. (1958, p. 6)

The 1964 Translator's Note is signed 'L.F.' and placed on the right-hand side underneath the text. On the following line, placed on the left-hand side, Ferlinghetti adds (in italics) a date and a place to the Translator's Note: 'San Francisco, 1964.' The font size is the same as in the main text. (1964, p. 12)

The 1990 Translator's Note is signed with his full name '— Lawrence Ferlinghetti' and placed on the right-hand side underneath the text. There is a space between the em dash and his name which is not present in 1958. He places the Translator's Note in 'San Francisco, 1990' (italicized). This is placed directly below his name. The font size is the same as in the main text. (1990, p. iv)

At the bottom of the final page, Ferlinghetti includes thanks and acknowledgments. In 1964, these are placed at the top of the left-hand page before and opposite the Translator's Note. All three are identical in content:

Thanks are offered to the following for their aid and information in the preparation of this volume: Marie Ponsot, Jeanne Burrous, Henri Marie-Rose, Blanche A. Price, Mary Lapsley, Richard McBride, and Gérard Cleisz. (1958, p. 6; 1964, p. 8; 1990, p. iv)

2. Textual Comparison of the Publisher's Peritext: The Front and Back Cover Information ('Blurb') in the Three Published Versions

Here follows a textual comparison of the three published versions of the front and back cover information ('blurb'). The cover photographs (2.iii, figures 1-3) speak for themselves and deal with the obvious visual differences, including those of layout, colour and design. My primary concern, however, is with the textual differences between the three.

Version one covers the 1958 first edition and the seven reprints thereof and shall be referred to as 1958 in this section;³² version two covers the Penguin (1965) edition and shall be referred to as 1965;³³ version three is the 1990 bilingual edition and shall be referred to as 1990.³⁴ Words, phrases or punctuation marked in bold type, or which are underlined, are to highlight differences in versions, unless otherwise indicated. Both may appear in a quotation where more than one change has been recognised. Quotations will be written as in the version quoted, with spacing, punctuation, spelling and typography (excluding font) as written wherever possible.

Note: The publisher's peritext also extends to the titles and intertitles, copyright information, contents pages and the flyleaf. Some of the differences in this regard have been covered within the body of Part Two.

³² *Paroles* (1958).

As Morgan does not say otherwise, it can be assumed that the front and back covers remained the same for all seven reprints in the United States. Morgan, *Ferlinghetti* (1982).

³³ *Paroles* (1965).

In writing on the publisher's peritext in this section, the Penguin edition shall be referred to as '1965', the date of publication. This differs from the date used in Part One, Section 1, 'Textual comparison of the Translator's Note in the three published versions', where I have used the date 1964. 1964 is the date the Translator's Note was signed and encompasses not only in the 1965 Penguin edition, but also reprints 4 – 7 of the City Lights editions.

³⁴ *Paroles* (1990).

2.i The Front Cover

The title of the text printed on the cover is ‘Paroles,’ written in uppercase in both 1958 and 1990. In 1965, the title is ‘Selections from Paroles’. The author is given as ‘Prévert’ on all three versions. In 1958 and 1990, this is written in uppercase with the accented ‘É’. In 1965, Prévert is written in lowercase, as is the title, beginning with a capital letter. In 1965, the author precedes the title. In 1958 and 1990, the title precedes the author.³⁵

Additional information on the front cover includes the series (‘The Pocket Poets Series’) at the top of the page and ‘Number Nine’ at the bottom, written in uppercase (1958); ‘Penguin Modern European Poets’ (1965). The series information is printed at the bottom of the back cover in 1990, where ‘Number Nine’ becomes ‘No. 9’ and ‘The’ is removed from ‘Pocket Poets Series’. This information is no longer printed in uppercase but includes capital letters at the beginning of each word.

The price features on the front cover of the Penguin edition (1965) and on the back cover of the City Lights editions (1958, 1990). The 1965 edition also features the following: ‘Cover photograph by Chris Marker (Snark International)’ and ‘*For copyright reasons this edition is not for sale in the U.S.A.*’³⁶ The 1990 edition includes a barcode and ISBN.³⁷ It also features the title of the book and highlights that it is a ‘New Bilingual Edition’ (in uppercase) and

³⁵ Photographs of the 1958 edition kindly provided by Rebecca Flore, University of Chicago Library. Copyright as per each edition. Morgan provides a written description of the 1958 front and back covers, which also includes a description regarding visual layout (Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 122.):

Binding: Bound in stiff wrappers. Across the front cover : ‘ [right] THE POCKET POETS SERIES | [inside a black triangle in white] PAROLES | PRÉVERT | [right out of rectangle] NUMBER NINE’. Up the spine: ‘ [in a white panel on a black spine] PAROLES PREVERT’. Across the back cover: ‘ [inside a white rectangle left] \$1.00 | [12 lines about the author and an advertisement for 8 titles inside a white rectangle] ’. All edges trimmed.

³⁶ Morgan provides a written description of the 1965 front and back covers (Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 124):

Binding: Bound in stiff wrappers. Across the front cover : ‘ [in strong purplish red (255)] Penguin Modern European Poets 3’6 | [left in strong purplish red] Prévert | [in strong purplish red] Selections from Paroles | [photograph of a one-man band in moderate violet (211)] ’. Across the spine all in strong purplish red : ‘ [publisher’s device] | [down the spine] Penguin Modern European Poets Prévert Selections from Paroles [across spine] D84 ’. Across the back cover offset right : ‘ [in strong purplish red] [4-line poem in French] | [in strong purplish red] [4-line translation of poem in English] | [photograph of a one-man band in moderate violet and strong purplish red overprinted with 8 lines in white about the book] ’. All edges trimmed.

Morgan does not mention the photographer or the copyright information.

³⁷ This was published after Morgan completed his bibliography of Ferlinghetti’s work and no written description of this exists to my knowledge.

‘Translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti’ (in italics). The name of the translator is missing from the cover text in 1958.

2.ii The Back Cover ('Blurb')

The back cover 'blurb' in 1958 and 1990 begins with the following sentence:

In the years immediately following World War II, **JACQUES PREVERT** spoke more directly to and for the French who had come of age under the Occupation than any other contemporary poet, if the enormous success of *PAROLES* is any indication. (1958)

In the years immediately following World War II, **Jacques Prévert** spoke directly to and for the French who had come of age during the German Occupation. (1990)

In 1958, 'Jacques Prevert' is written in uppercase letters. The 'E' is not accented in the uppercase.³⁸ The sentence continues in 1958, saying that Prévert 'spoke more directly...than any other contemporary poet', whereas in 1990 he 'spoke directly'. In both versions, he speaks 'to and for the French,' but they came of age '**under** the Occupation' in 1958 but '**during** the German Occupation' in 1990. The 'Occupation' is clarified in 1990 with the addition of 'German'.

The 1958 edition continues: 'First published in 1946, **it was almost immediately reprinted, and by 1952 there were 200,000 copies in print.**' In 1990, '200,000 copies' in print' ('by 1952') becomes 'several hundred thousand copies' in print by the time the book was first published in 1958. The fact that the original text was 'almost immediately reprinted' is removed.

In 1990, the text is extended to include information of where *Paroles* was first published:

First published in 1946 **by Les Editions de Minuit, a press with its origins in the Underground,** *PAROLES* met with enormous success, and there were several hundred thousand copies in print by the time these first translations in English were published by City Lights in 1958. (1990)

In 1965, the 'blurb' begins with the poem 'Autumn' which features in the selection (pp. 98-99.):

³⁸ The removal of accents in capitalised letters in French is a source of debate. However, L'Académie Française, a government body which seeks to standardise and protect the French language, insists that accents are necessary on capital letters: '[...] l'Académie française rappelle la nécessité d'accentuer toutes les lettres qui doivent l'être, y compris les majuscules.' Académie Française, *E Accentué, Perpendiculaire, Cédillé Ou Crochu* (2020) <<https://www.academie-francaise.fr/e-accentue-perpendiculaire-cedille-ou-crochu>> [accessed 30 April 2024].

There are inconsistencies, however, as the E is accented on the front cover. On the spine, the accent is missing (Morgan, *Ferlinghetti*, p. 122.).

Un cheval s'écroule au milieu d'une allée / Les feuilles tombent sur lui / Notre amour
frissonne / Et le soleil aussi

*A horse collapses in the middle of an alley / Leaves fall on him / Our love trembles /
And the sun too*³⁹

The Penguin (1965) 'blurb', from a purely textual point of view, is not comparable with the City Lights versions:

Jacques Prévert is a contemporary master of the plain but telling word. *Paroles* is his central work. This selection with translations from Lawrence Ferlinghetti shows both Prévert's violently anarchic moods and the lyricism that makes him a poet of the people. (1965)

All three versions end in a different manner. The 1990 edition ends with:

Today Prévert speaks out in a voice still attuned to our times, for the human condition (which is always his focus) has not changed. In fact, man's inhumanity to man would seem to have intensified, making these poems ever more touching, ever more prescient. (1990)

In 1958, the text ends with:

Yet the present volume is the first book by Prévert to be published in the United States — a curious fact, considering the affinities that exist between his best writing and such American 'poetry of dissent' as that emanating from various literary undergrounds here. (1958)

³⁹ The layout of the translated poem on the back cover does not correlate to its layout within the text. The French layout is given priority on the back cover, the translation being made to mirror the original. Full stops are absent from the poem on the back cover, although they are present after 'aussi' and 'too' within the body of the text.

2.iii Front and Back Cover Photographs

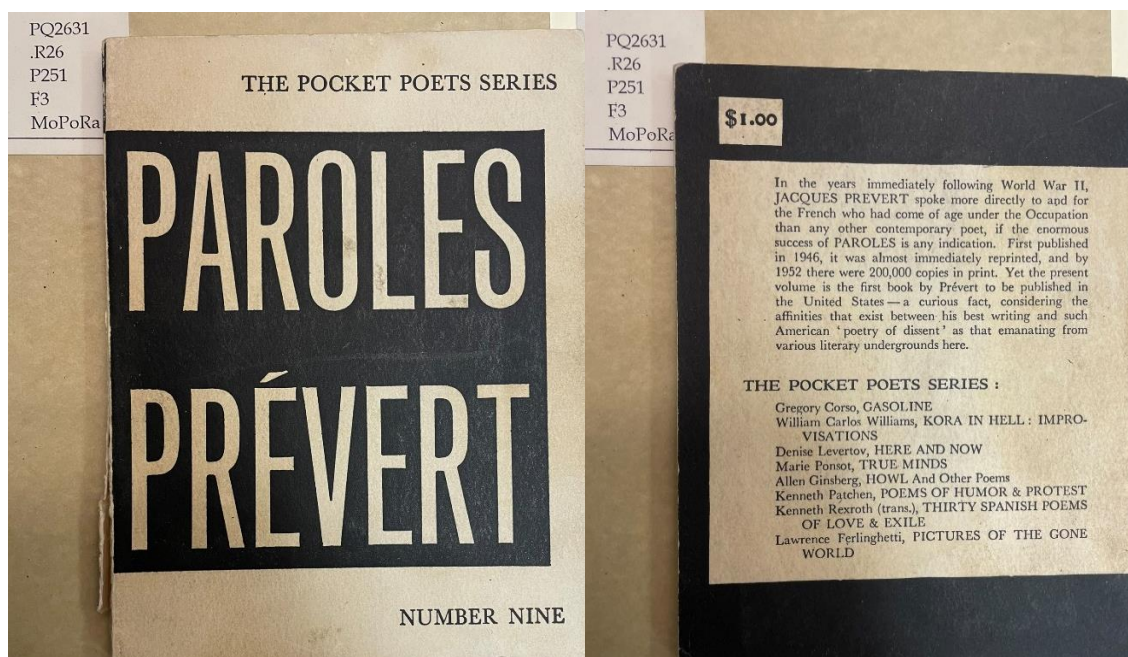


Figure 1: 1958

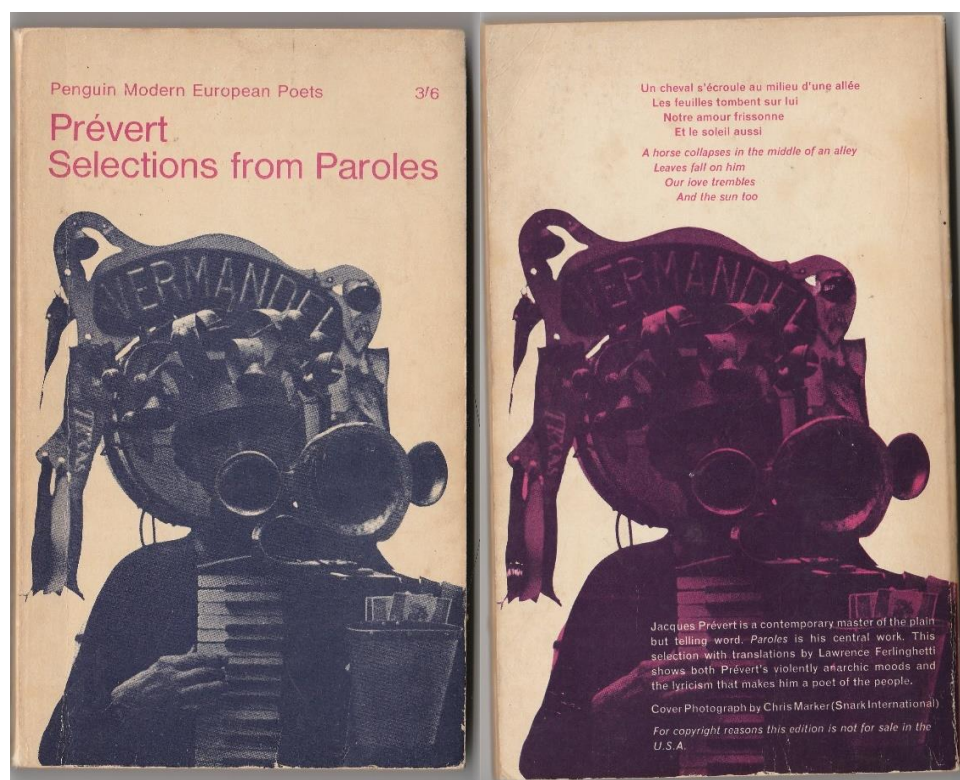


Figure 2: 1965

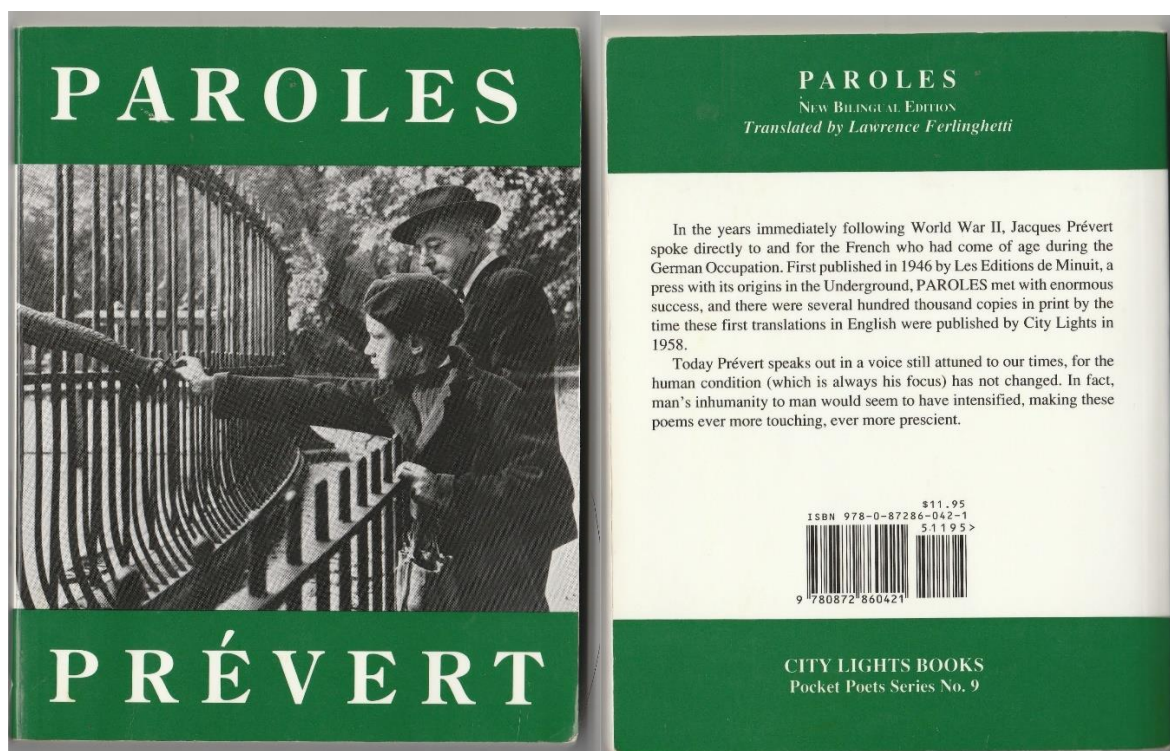


Figure 3: 1990

Part Two:**Beyond the Text: Exploring the ‘Unfulfilled Potential’ of the
Translator’s Note**

The remit of a detailed textual analysis of the like completed in Part One is to compare the linguistic content of the text and lay bare any linguistic changes; it deals with the linguistic content and how it has been altered by its author between versions. As Ferlinghetti signed off each Note with a time and place, it also delivers a ‘when’ and a ‘where.’ What a textual comparison cannot do, however, is deal with the ‘why.’ I intend to use the factual, textual comparisons included in the first part of this dissertation as a springboard to explore the ‘unfulfilled potential’, as Buendía calls it, of Ferlinghetti’s Translator’s Note.⁴⁰ This I present in this second section of this dissertation.

In conducting a comparison of the three versions of the Translator’s Note, many questions have been raised and some anomalies have been brought to light that inspire further investigation. By listening to Ferlinghetti’s voice in the Translator’s Note, I shall follow his lead into the ‘beyond text’ to reflect upon the author’s relationship to the texts he translated just ‘for fun’⁴¹ right at the beginning of his career as a writer and publisher. With this in mind, I shall question if there is any extra value in the Translator’s Note which casts doubt on Genette’s claim about the relationship between text and paratext.

Firstly, let us break down Genette’s statement:

Whatever coquettishness or paradoxical reversal he puts into it, the paratextual element is always subordinate to “its” text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence.⁴²

The Translator’s Note is the ‘paratextual element’ we are studying, and it is presented in the form of a preface. As Genette defines, the word ‘preface’ designates ‘every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it.’⁴³ The title of this preface is ‘Translator’s Note’ in 1958 (p. 3) and 1990 (p. i). The translator’s preface in the 1964 edition is renamed ‘Introduction’ (p. 9).⁴⁴ As Ferlinghetti is not the author of the poetry and his name does not

⁴⁰ Buendía loc cit.

⁴¹ Ferlinghetti loc cit.

⁴² Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 10.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 161.

⁴⁴ References to versions of the Translator’s Note are as in Part 1: *Textual Comparison of the Translator’s Note in the Three Published Versions*. Version one covers the 1958 first edition and the three reprints thereof and shall hereafter be referred to as 1958; version two covers the Penguin (1965) edition as well as reprints four to seven of the City Lights publication and shall be referred to as 1964, as this is the date Ferlinghetti uses in his signature at the end of the Translator’s Note; version three is the 1990 bilingual edition and shall be referred to as 1990. Page numbers will be referenced in brackets.

appear on the front cover as author, it may seem logical to classify the Note as allographic: written by a third party (the translator-Ferlinghetti) and not the author (Prévert), as Genette suggests. This, he insists, renders it ‘subordinate’ to “its” text’. “Its” text’ refers to the body of translations produced by Ferlinghetti from Prévert’s originals.

However, Genette himself muddies the waters in a footnote. The preface, he writes, ‘ceases to be allographic’ if the ‘translator-preface-writer comment[s] on, among other things, his own translation.’⁴⁵ In this case, the preface becomes authorial. As Buendía argues, just as a translation can ‘become independent from its source text to such an extent that it even exceeds the original,’⁴⁶ translator’s notes may be uncoupled from their translations to become ‘peritextual appendices that are considered autonomous digressions close to critical metatexts.’⁴⁷ A precedent was set for this by Walter Benjamin, as Babar Kahn points out. Kahn argues that Benjamin’s ‘The Translator’s Task’ can be looked upon as ‘an extratextual phenomenon given that it is a metadiscourse par excellence on translation that is almost always published independently of the translated Baudelaire poems that it is supposed to form a preface to.’⁴⁸

As regards Genette’s statement that ‘the paratextual element is always subordinate to “its” text’, I understand the term ‘subordinate’ to mean two things: the paratext is only of value in relation to its text, that is to say the Translator’s Note is only of value in relation to the body of translations; and, placed in order of value, the text (translations) is superior to the paratext (Translator’s Note). The idea of placing a ‘value’ on the paratext again links to its ‘appeal and existence’ and determining its value is an important aspect in our examination of the Translator’s Note.

The question of value is one which has been discussed at length in the field of translation studies and is worth mentioning here. Kathryn Batchelor has carried out a lengthy study into the use of paratexts in translation theory.⁴⁹ She provides an overview of critical works since Genette and foregrounds the value of the translator’s preface by recalling Ellen McRae’s argument that ‘translators are in a unique position to act as ambassadors between cultures . . .

⁴⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 264.

⁴⁶ Buendía, ‘Listening to the Voice of the Translator’, p. 152.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 161.

⁴⁸ Babar Khan, ‘The Paratext/Metatext Continuum. Walter Benjamin’s “The Translator’s Task” As a Paratext that is also a Metatext within a Network of Nested Textual Manifestations’, *Transletters. International Journal of Translation and Interpreting*, 4 (2020), 125–38 (p.128).

⁴⁹ Kathryn Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, Translation Theories Explored (London New York: Routledge, 2018).

their prefaces are an excellent locus for disseminating their understanding to readers.’⁵⁰ Batchelor proposes a wider methodology consisting of a set of functional definitions which can equally be applied to the study of paratexts outside the context of translation studies.⁵¹ Although I am unwilling to shoehorn the Note into a preconfigured space just for the sake of tidiness, I shall draw upon her methodology in an attempt to attribute a purpose to the Note, and question whether this adds value which may extend beyond the parameters of the ‘text’.

Let us turn firstly to Ferlinghetti’s role as a translator. As Genette clarifies, a preface may be classed as authorial if the translator comments on his own work. This kind of commentary is evident in the Note, particularly in later versions. For example, Ferlinghetti defends his choice of poems (and any omissions):

There are certain early long poems which should have been included, but they remain better in French than in any English version, and this may well be said of all the poems

⁵⁰ Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, p. 33.

⁵¹ Batchelor’s functional definitions (Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, pp. 161–62.):

- 1) Referential: identifying the work, establishing its legal and discursive fingerprint
- 2) Self-referential: drawing attention to the paratext or its elements.
- 3) Ornamental: decorating and ‘looking nice’.
- 4) Generic: categorising the work, indicating genre, establishing a ‘generic pact’ concerning the appropriate attitude of reception; includes categorisation as a translation.
- 5) Meta-communicative: explicitly reflecting on the conditions and constraints of mediated communication in general and the work’s placing in particular; includes reflections on translation and/or the difficulties of the translation process.
- 6) Informative: mediating true empirical data, clarifying internal and external relations and properties of the work, explicitly revealing intentions, removing epistemic obstacles to the reader’s understanding, including, in translation contexts, clarifying culture-specific references for a new audience; referring to other helpful information or services.
- 7) Hermeneutical: offering certain cognitive framings, directing attention, exposing certain aspects or qualities, mediating relevant contexts, instructing the understanding or interpretation — i.e. the explanation of the text’s characteristics as a result of authorial decisions and actions — and thus widening or restricting interpretative options.
- 8) Ideological: promoting a certain viewpoint; taking distance from the ideological stance of the text or, particularly in translation situations, of the author or source culture
- 9) Evaluative: claiming or demanding value and cultural significance.
- 10) Commercial: advertising, praising, selling; attracting and directing buyer’s attention; cultivating needs; referring to and recommending other products.
- 11) Legal: (a) informative (informing about legal entitlements), (b) illocutionary (symbolically establishing legal rights and obligations, formal or informal contracts and guarantees)
- 12) Pedagogical: establishing standards for behaviour.
- 13) Instructive, operational: facilitating and guiding reception and use of the product, offering orientation, suggesting, organising and structuring possible approaches to the product, recommending actions; includes navigational paratexts.
- 14) Personalisation: only for interactive paratext elements — temporarily adjusting elements to personal needs.

here. A poem can be finished, a translation only abandoned. . . . We tend to forget that English is not a Romance language. . . . (1958, p. 6)

He maintains the view that ‘a poem can be finished, a translation only abandoned. . . .’ in all three versions of the Translator’s Note. In addition, Ferlinghetti chooses to omit any textual commentary of the kind often found ‘sprinkled throughout the text’, as Buendía describes such notes inserted by the translator in footnotes or margins.⁵² These notes, according to Buendía, often offer insight into the ‘*jeu de mots* impossible to translate and outdated topical allusions impossible to explain’ (1964, p. 11; 1990, p. iv) that Ferlinghetti chooses not to translate at all.⁵³ On the one hand, this shows the strength of Ferlinghetti’s conviction in his choices, and on the other, an almost too laid-back approach, particularly with the repeated use of the ellipsis. This interplay of self-assurance and insouciance is a repeated motif in the Translator’s Note.

In this context it is possible to argue that Ferlinghetti has inserted coded messages into the Note for certain established traditional publishing houses, who doubted that there was a market for *Paroles* in America. Ferlinghetti makes use of comments he received when he set about trying to publish his translations. In 1957, James Laughlin of *New Directions* wrote:

I have always been interested in his work, but was never quite sure how meaningful it would be to readers in this country, because so much of it seems to depend on the tradition of French popular song, local colour, and local references.⁵⁴

Margaret Christie, a New York literary agent, commented that ‘readers capable of enjoying these poems would be readers who would much prefer to read them in their original French.’⁵⁵

Ferlinghetti refers back to Laughlin’s and Christie’s comments in the Translator’s Note:

There are certain early long poems which should have been included, but they remain better in French than in any English version, and this may well be said of all the poems here. (1958, p. 6)

There are certain early long poems upon which his original reputation was founded in the thirties [...] which should be here, but they are especially loaded with *jeu de mots*

⁵² Buendía, ‘Listening to the Voice of the Translator’, p. 151.

⁵³ It could be argued that Ferlinghetti has removed ‘outdated topical allusions’ in some of the changes he has made to the translators note, such as removing the artists James Weeks and Mike Nathan, (1958, p. 5), and highlighting others (Picasso, 1990, p. iii). This is not an avenue I have chosen to pursue.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Cherkovski, *Ferlinghetti*, p. 89.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Gioia Woods, “‘Reinvent America and the World’: How Lawrence Ferlinghetti and City Lights Books Cultivated an International Literature of Dissent”, *European Journal of American Studies*, 12.2 (2017), document 5, pp. 3-4 <DOI:10.4000/ejas.12041>.

impossible to translate and outdated topical allusions impossible to explain. (1964, p.11; 1990, p. iii-iv)

Although seemingly conceding the point, Ferlinghetti is arguably saying that there is still value in the collection, and that Prévert is still relevant, despite the difficulties in translation. The denial of the English-speaking reader of the chance to experience the poetry of Prévert is to disrespect the reader as well as the translator, who is sure of his own ability and secure in his judgment.

Ferlinghetti makes informed choices about how he would like the poetry to be received. Any information that he wishes to share is found within this preface and the poems can be enjoyed without any asides from the translator. The exclusion of any notes of this kind, leaving the poems as standalone entities, is evidence of the conviction that Ferlinghetti has in his work – or at the very least indicates how he thinks translated poetry should be presented. There is very little meta discourse on the process of translation, other than to dismiss, without explanation or justification, the choices of others who have attempted the same task:

Bits and pieces of Prévert's poetry have been published in anthologies and periodicals in this country, and I have surveyed most them with a watering eye. Generally speaking, he has suffered atrociously from constipated translation and trivial choice of poems. (1958, p. 3)

Although the wording changes slightly between versions, which is evidenced in the textual comparison in Part One, Ferlinghetti stands by his position that he has improved on whatever translations existed before 1958 and those which have been produced up to 1990 in the English-speaking world.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ It is unclear to whom Ferlinghetti is referring here. Sarah Lawson published her collection in one volume in 2002. Lawson (born 1943, so too young to have produced translations before 1958 when Ferlinghetti's collection first appears) discovered Prévert during her undergraduate studies at Indiana University. The back-cover 'blurb' tells us that 'the translator's notes explain some of the references and word play in the original.' Lawson herself writes in her introduction that she has 'tried anyway' to translate the untranslatable, a different approach to Ferlinghetti.

Jacques Prévert and Sarah Lawson, *Jacques Prévert: Selected Poems* (London: Hearing Eye, 2002).

A.S.J Tessimond published translations from Prévert (three of which featured in *Paroles*) in *The London Magazine* and *Encounter* in 1956 and 1958, according to Hubert Nicholson. Nicholson writes that Tessimond made twenty-five translations of Prévert, all but two are from *Paroles*. He also says that Tessimond's poetry, including four Prévert translations, featured in international publications. I can only hazard a guess that Ferlinghetti is referring to Tessimond in his comments, as the four poems published in the journals named above are not those which Ferlinghetti chose to include in his selection.

Tessimond, A. S. J., ed. by Hubert Nicholson, *A.S.J. Tessimond: Collected Poems with translations from Jacques Prévert* (Hexham: Bloodaxe Books/Whiteknights Press, 2010), p. xi.

In this, Ferlinghetti again displays both an extreme confidence and a nonchalance about his work. He is almost arrogant in his assertion that his work is better than that of others. He implies that his translation is not ‘constipated’, and his choice is not ‘trivial’. His arrogance is also present in his deference to the difficulty of translating the *jeu de mots* present in Prévert’s work, a phrase I believe he deliberately leaves in the French, not translating as ‘puns’ or ‘wordplay’, to underline his point. He shows an arrogance in simply refusing to translate ‘certain early long poems upon which his original reputation was founded in the thirties’ (1964, p.11; 1990, p. iii-iv), even if these poems are, arguably, some of Prévert’s more well-known works. In the later versions of the Note (1964, 1990), he signposts the reader towards these poems by naming them: ‘La Crosse en l’air’, ‘Souvenir de famille’ and ‘Tentative de description d’un dîner de Têtes à Paris-France’, but then ends the Note with a Gallic shrug, downplaying the technical aspects of the translator’s task. These were poems he translated ‘for fun,’ (1964, p. 12; 1990, p. iv).

Whether he undertook the process of translation ‘for fun’ or as a serious enterprise, the Translator’s Note serves to validate Ferlinghetti as a translator. The opening of the Note, which is unchanged in all three published versions, sets the scene: ‘I first came upon the poetry of Jacques Prévert written upon a paper tablecloth in St. Brieuc in 1944.’⁵⁷ ‘This so romantic, sentimental circumstance,’ as he calls it, forms the basis of Ferlinghetti’s ‘story’ of the creation of his publication of translations from *Paroles*. As a young serviceman, Ferlinghetti experienced the poetry of Prévert in the same way it was experienced by the people in occupied France, written on a scrap of something in a public place, passed from hand to hand or retold orally. This grants his translations a certain validity, particularly as he was part of the naval task force that liberated those very same people from the occupation and brought the poetry of Prévert to the United States (and England). The Translator’s Note is thus *evaluative* in Batchelor’s terms, as Ferlinghetti is claiming ‘value and cultural significance’.⁵⁸

The extended metaphor of occupation and resistance which runs through the opening page of all three versions of the Translator’s Note allows Ferlinghetti to justify and promote his *ideological* viewpoint (Batchelor) as well as the cultural significance of the Translator’s Note. In 1958, Ferlinghetti compares the Beat movement in America to the feelings of dissatisfaction amongst the French youth after World War II, saying ‘Prévert spoke particularly to the French youth immediately after the War, and if ever there was a generation that was Beat, this was it’

⁵⁷ *Paroles* (1958), p. 3; *Paroles* (1964), p. 9; *Paroles* (1990), p. i.

⁵⁸ See note 51.

(1958, p.3). He takes this further, arguing that America endures its own *Occupation* and has its own *Resistance*:

America has been occupied by different forces, with its own kind of resistance movement in its writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper middleclass ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities of church and state. (1958, p. 3)

In 1964 and 1990, Ferlinghetti maintains the idea of a resistance movement, but the shared occupation is gone: ‘Since then we have had our own kind of resistance movement in our writers of dissent’ (1990, p. i). Using direct address here instead of ‘America’ allows the reader to become part of the metaphor as collaborators in his resistance movement, here in the positive sense, being part of a community of readers, thus extending the metaphor beyond the page. The metaphor embodies both Ferlinghetti’s nonchalance, in the ‘sentimental’ and ‘romantic’ tablecloth anecdote, but also an arrogance, such as his desire to ‘perpetrate Prévert upon America’ (1958, p. 3)⁵⁹ and in the suggestion that the writers of dissent can be seen as freeing or liberating forces.

The choice of the word ‘perpetrate’ fits rather well with Ferlinghetti’s metaphor of war, occupation and resistance, but it may be better explained by Ferlinghetti’s dogged insistence upon seeing *Paroles* in print. He may demonstrate a nonchalance in his just ‘for fun’ collection of translations, but behind the scenes, he was determined to see them published. Cherkovski records that the collection ‘was the result of careful planning’,⁶⁰ and I have already mentioned that Ferlinghetti received pushbacks from the likes of Laughlin and Christie. But, unlike Prévert, who had an advocate in René Bertelé, Ferlinghetti had to battle to see *Paroles* published – or at the very least, to see it published in the way he wanted. Goia Woods describes how Ferlinghetti was incensed by Christie’s comments: ‘These are public poems’, he remonstrated. For Woods, public means that these poems are for everyone ‘beyond the borders of region, language, and class.’⁶¹ This offers an explanation as to why Ferlinghetti felt outraged that Christie believed that Prévert’s poetry should be left in French, for only those educated in French to enjoy.

Ferlinghetti wanted to make poetry accessible to all. Just like the transmission of poetry during World War II to express resistance against the occupying forces, Woods writes that Ferlinghetti and his friend Kenneth Rexroth shared the philosophy that poetry should be used as ‘a radical

⁵⁹ ‘Upon America’ becomes ‘upon England and America’ in later versions (1964, 1990).

⁶⁰ Cherkovski, *Ferlinghetti*, p. 121.

⁶¹ Woods, “‘Reinvent America and the World’”, p.4.

tool for urgent communication,' with Prévert, and more generally post-war European poetry, becoming a model for not only Ferlinghetti's own poetry but also City Lights Books. Woods argues that Prévert inspired the entire premise for Ferlinghetti's mission to facilitate 'innovative book publishing that resisted conservatism and censorship.'⁶² 'Introducing American audiences to international poems of protest, and to the beautiful urgency with which protest could be expressed, became a critical goal of Ferlinghetti's international publishing efforts,' says Woods.⁶³

The tablecloth story is part of the extended metaphor, a concrete example of a public poem. Ferlinghetti's 'creation myth' hangs upon this chance finding of a tablecloth on which someone had scribbled some words from Prévert. Ferlinghetti never hazards a guess as to who transcribed the poem onto the tablecloth, but his vagueness leads the reader to imagine it could well have been Prévert himself. Following the trail of this mythical tablecloth leads us into the broader context, against Genette's advice:

However indeterminable its boundaries, the paratext retains at its center a distinctive and undisputed territory where its "properties" are clearly manifest . . .'⁶⁴

But as Batchelor says, 'to try to define the paratext is always to negotiate around its blurry borders, both inward-facing (towards the text) and outward-facing (towards the broader context).'

⁶⁵

The broader context is important in the understanding of Ferlinghetti's Note. There is evidence in the Note which suggest that Ferlinghetti was inspired by Prévert's story, (that of the creation of Prévert's *Paroles*) and that he used this background information to further shape the extended metaphor of war, occupation and resistance which is prevalent inside the Translator's Note and beyond the Note in his signposting of contemporary writers of dissent. Whereas Prévert's 'creation myth' has been debunked over time, Ferlinghetti has held on tightly to his tablecloth, without further elaboration. I have found no evidence to support or counter the narrative he has woven into it. I, for one, would have liked to have known which poem it was

⁶² Woods, "'Reinvent America and the World'", p. 3.

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 5-6.

⁶⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 407.

⁶⁵ Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, p. 17.

he found written on it. But Ferlinghetti remained tight lipped. The tablecloth has been cemented in legend since his death in 2021.⁶⁶

In addition to similarities in the narrative, the pairing of a strong self-belief with a relaxed indifference that comes to the fore in Ferlinghetti's Translator's Note is also characteristic of Prévert. Both writers are, in some respects, very casual about their work, and both have nurtured a mythology around it based on the intervention of luck not design. It was after the publication of the second edition of *Paroles* in France (1947) that Prévert constructed his legend ('non sans une certaine coquetterie') of the cinema guy whose poetry got published by chance.⁶⁷ *Coquetterie*, in French, means to possess a certain easy, seductive charm. It can imply a vanity and an insincerity. Similarly, Ferlinghetti claims that his translations were just 'for fun,' but, conversely, we have seen that he has a strong conviction in his work. Like Prévert, Ferlinghetti has often downplayed his own importance. He has claimed to make things up for interviewers and could thus be considered an unreliable narrator. To David Meltzer he confirmed this:

It is valid for a poet who considers himself a semi-surrealist poet. If you are going to write in one manner and someone comes to you with some straight questions, why would you give them a straight answer?'⁶⁸

Prévert was similarly self-deprecating and claimed in interviews that he never wanted to publish his work. He even made up a story that he had been given Bertelé's phone number by an acquaintance who he coincidentally bumped into in the street. When Bertelé (falsely) confirmed this to journalists, the legend was born.⁶⁹ But it was not a chance encounter which sparked the publication of the collection at all. Prévert and his eventual editor Bertelé moved in the same Surrealist circles before World War II,⁷⁰ and then as part of the 'Résistance Intellectuelle'⁷¹ in Nice. In the early 1970s, Bertelé finally told the 'true' story behind the

⁶⁶ An archive of correspondence exists at the Bancroft Library to which I have no access. However, I assume that more information would have come to light if it existed.

⁶⁷ As retold by Prévert's biographer, Yves Courrière, in *Jacques Prévert: En Vérité*, Biographies NRF (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 549.

⁶⁸ David Meltzer, ed., *The San Francisco Poets* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), p. 152.

⁶⁹ Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, p. 549. According to Courrière, journalists were queuing up to interview Prévert.

⁷⁰ Christiane Mortelie writes that his contact with the Surrealists during his time living in the Rue du Château with Duhamel and Tanguy, 'did much to stimulate free associations of words and images', which he adapted to 'agit-prop' in the October Group, giving him the 'incentive to express himself with such clarity that the ordinary people would understand him.'

Jacques Prévert and Christiane Mortelie, ed., *Anthologie Prévert* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 10.

⁷¹ I use this term hesitantly as Prévert, I'm sure, would object.

publication. Bertelé had met Prévert in the South of France during the war, when he had been making a film, and Bertelé mooted the idea of editing a collection of his poetry.⁷² In fact, more than one of Prévert's circle had encouraged the publication and that circle included artists and intellectuals such as Henri Michaux and Jacques Lacan.⁷³ What seems to tally in all accounts is the difficulty that Bertelé had in collecting the poems, having to pull them 'out of the pockets' of Prévert's friends and acquaintances.⁷⁴ It also seems that Prévert had little concern about what might happen to his poetry.

The story of how *Paroles* was put together is often recounted in the introduction to works and anthologies on Prévert. Christiane Mortelier⁷⁵ and Corinne François-Denève⁷⁶ both mention that Prévert's poems were scattered amongst his friends, scribbled on scraps of paper or on a paper tablecloth in a restaurant. Likewise, the oft retold story of the tablecloth that opens the Translator's Note forms the basis of Ferlinghetti's 'story' of the creation of his publication of translations from *Paroles*. We may have stepped outside the advised parameters, but research related to the debunking of Prévert's narrative (anecdotal evidence in interviews retold by Yves Courrière and documentary evidence in the research undertaken by Delphine Lacroix⁷⁷) has uncovered certain mistruths within Ferlinghetti's paratextual information. Nonchalance may indeed be synonymous with casualness, but it can also mean carelessness, and Ferlinghetti has carelessly, or falsely, made claims about Prévert which cast further doubt on his reliability as a narrator and suggest that the tablecloth story is part of a larger metaphor which includes the mythology surrounding Prévert.

⁷² Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, pp. 550–51.

⁷³ Courrière writes that during the Occupation, Prévert fled Paris with his wife, Joseph Kosma, his mistress, Claudy, and the photographer Brassai. There, whilst staying at a vineyard in the Juraçon, he met up with other members of the October Group, alongside Jacques Lacan and his girlfriend Sylvia Bataille. (Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, pp. 442–3.) The October Group consisted of a group of young people who were looking to 'mobilize public opinion against the growing misery of the depression' through theatre. Some of its members were affiliated to the Communist Party, but as a group they kept their distance from it. Prévert especially, as he 'would not forfeit his uncompromising independence of mind.' (Prévert and Mortelier, *Anthologie Prévert*, p. 10.) Arlette Besset, a member of the October Group, and married to a resistance fighter who had worked with Prévert, had a collection of October Group scripts and leaflets, annotated around the edges with poems and notes, as was Prévert's habit. She gave everything she had collected to Lacan and Bertelé. (Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, p. 550.)

⁷⁴ Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, p. 551. Also, there was often more than one version of the same poem, often quite different, and versions which had been passed on in the oral tradition.

⁷⁵ Prévert and Mortelier, *Anthologie Prévert*.

⁷⁶ Corinne François-Denève, *Jacques Prévert, Paroles* (Editions Bréal, 2000).

⁷⁷ René Bertelé, Jacques Prévert and Delphine Lacroix, ed., *Éditer Prévert : lettres et archives éditoriales, 1946-1973*, Les Cahiers de la NRF (Paris: Gallimard, 2017).

According to Batchelor's methodology, one of the functions of a paratext is to identify the work and establish 'its legal and discursive fingerprint important for the issue of copyright.' Ferlinghetti is rather laid back about the publishing data provided in the publisher's peritext of *Paroles*. In 1958, for example, the copyright information reads:

Copyright by Les Editions du Point du Jour, Paris, 1947.

Additional information is supplied:

First published in this edition: July 1958, by arrangement with the Librairie Gallimard.

In 1965⁷⁸ and 1990, the copyright is attributed to 'Librairie Gallimard, 1949,' with the translation copyright being attributed to Ferlinghetti. *Paroles* was in fact published in its first edition by Point du Jour in May 1946, with a second edition in 1947. Both were extremely successful, but nonetheless editor Bertelé needed to attach himself to a publishing house with a more secure financial footing to survive, as costs were spiralling in the economy of post-war France. Les Éditions du Point du Jour was absorbed into Librairie Gallimard in 1949, and Bertelé effectively became a director at Gallimard. He retained a certain degree of autonomy ('l'indépendance moral'), Lacroix notes, by not being salaried, but rather earning a percentage of the profits on works he published under this subsidiary.⁷⁹ Gallimard thus owned the copyright to *Paroles* from 1949, and this justifies their appearance on the copyright page. Why Ferlinghetti uses 1947 instead of 1946 in his 1958 edition is not clear. On the back cover in 1990, he reverts to 1946.

Ferlinghetti is also quite relaxed about the copyright information of his own publications. As Morgan points out when writing of the 1958 edition (which was reprinted seven times), the 'publisher indicates that publication date was Dec. 1958, but a line in the 3rd printing states, "First published in this edition: July, 1958, by arrangement with the Librairie Gallimard."'”⁸⁰ At best this could be described as sloppy. The fact that such errors reoccur, however, hints at manipulation.

There is one piece of additional information added to the 'blurb' in the 1990 edition which I believe has been 'appropriated'. Woods argues that Prévert and 'Les Editions Minuit [sic]' forms the entire premise for City Lights books, and that Ferlinghetti's publishing venture was

⁷⁸ The Penguin edition was published in 1965, whereas the accompanying translator's note/introduction was penned in 1964. When referring to the note I use 1964, to the edition itself 1965.

⁷⁹ Bertelé, Prévert and Lacroix, *Éditer Prévert*, pp. 14-16.

⁸⁰ Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 124.

inspired by this underground publishing house which had been founded ‘in response to the censorship exercised during the Nazi Occupation.’⁸¹ Apart from the misspelling of Les Éditions de Minuit (Woods’ error, not Ferlinghetti’s), Woods could be forgiven for this assumption as he has in all likelihood taken this information from the official source - the back cover of the 1990 City Lights edition of *Paroles*: ‘First published in 1946 by Les Éditions de Minuit, a press with its origins in the Underground.’⁸² Whether Ferlinghetti or his co-editor, Nancy Peters, compiled the paratextual information for this edition cannot be established. What is clear, is that there is no evidence to substantiate this claim - in fact, only evidence to the contrary. Neither *Paroles* nor Prévert appear on the website or in the publishing catalogue of les Éditions de Minuit;⁸³ neither are they mentioned in Ann Simonin’s history of les Éditions de Minuit.⁸⁴ In addition, Lacroix has researched Bertelé and his role in creating the Point du Jour press and, through documentary evidence, has traced the development of *Paroles* by Point du Jour and later Gallimard. Prévert’s biographer, Courrière, also pieces together the creation of *Paroles* and les Éditions de Minuit does not feature.⁸⁵

I suggest that this piece of false news was planted to further extend Ferlinghetti’s metaphor of occupation and resistance into the very bones of City Lights Books. Les Éditions de Minuit had inserted a preface (entitled ‘manifesto’) into the Resistance novel *Le Silence de la Mer*⁸⁶ which was a call to allow the publication of authors banned by the Otto list,⁸⁷ which fits with Ferlinghetti’s desire to revolt against ‘conservatism and censorship’.⁸⁸ This list, says Simonin, was of authors with worldwide renown and was intended to reinforce the resistance of the French spirit.⁸⁹ Vercors was published in England during the Occupation, first in French then in translation as *The Silence of the Sea*.⁹⁰ There is an air of mystery that surrounds how the

⁸¹ Woods, “‘Reinvent America and the World’”, p. 3.

⁸² *Paroles* (1990)

⁸³ Les Éditions de Minuit, *Catalogue* (2024), *Historique* (2022) <<http://leseditionsdeminuit.fr>> [accessed 14/2/24].

⁸⁴ Anne Simonin, *Les Éditions de Minuit: 1942-1955, Le Devoir d’insoumission* (Paris: Imec, 1994)

⁸⁵ Simonin, *Les Éditions de Minuit*, p. 53. Simonin does mention a link between Gallimard and les Éditions de Minuit, but only to comment on an unfounded rumour which was banded around during the war that les Éditions de Minuit was secretly Gallimard. whilst at the same time Gallimard was being accused of collaboration by continuing to publish la *Nouvelle Revue Française*.

⁸⁶ Vercors, *Le Silence de la mer* (Minuit, 1942).

⁸⁷ German ban on publishing those who were against the Nazi State, in particular English works in translation.

⁸⁸ Woods, “‘Reinvent America and the World’”, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Simonin, *Les Éditions de Minuit*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 93.

translation, publication and distribution were possible, which adds to the caché of the clandestine publishing house upon which Ferlinghetti seems to have piggy-backed.

In reshaping the narrative, Ferlinghetti also modifies Prévert's position in the war. When he features translations from *Paroles* in the *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* (1995), Ferlinghetti inflates Prévert to 'French Resistance poet',⁹¹ which nicely draws together all the strands of the extended metaphor present in the Translator's Note, whilst at the same time compartmentalizing Prévert into a canon to which he may never have wished to belong. Evidence suggests that Prévert always downplayed his part in the Resistance, and he denied the label, despite evidence which suggests his words and actions contributed to their work. Prévert was a writer of dissent – as anti-state as much as he was anti-German – and he did not hesitate to show this in his writing. For those artists and poets who stayed put in France during the war, (and many, such as André Breton, did not), the choice was whether or not to stay silent. *The Silence of The Sea* 'propagated the Manichean myth that the good French man or woman refused to carry on any sort of relationship with the occupier, no matter what the circumstances might be,' write Thomas and Michael Christofferson.⁹² This silence was practised by René Char, another poet much admired by Ferlinghetti,⁹³ who joined the armed resistance and chose not to publish at all until after the Liberation. 'Their silence was a positive choice,' writes Julian Jackson, and the only way that an artist or poet could completely avoid compromising themselves.⁹⁴

Prévert, however, continued to work producing films throughout the war and so had to defend himself against allegations of collaboration. This was disproven as Prévert had many friends involved in the clandestine press and also had witness statements from both André Virel and André Verdet, both of whom were awarded medals for their active participation in the Resistance.⁹⁵ Virel and Verdet confirmed that not only did Prévert act as a 'letter box' between Paris and the South of France during the making of his films, but that his resistance was through his words. Prévert was also in contact with the group behind *Combat*, which was published by

⁹¹ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), p. ii.

⁹² Thomas R. Christofferson and Michael S. Christofferson, 'Resistance', in *France during World War II: From Defeat to Liberation* (Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 134 - 165 (pp.162–63).

⁹³ Ferlinghetti came across Char in 1948; he was one of the poets Ferlinghetti considered including in his dissertation whilst at the Sorbonne. (Barry Silesky, *Ferlinghetti, the Artist in His Time* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1990), p. 33.) (Cherkovski, *Ferlinghetti*, p. 56, 61).

⁹⁴ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, January 2001) p. 380.

⁹⁵ Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, p. 529.

the Movement for French Liberation which worked with London and used the RAF to disseminate texts over occupied France.⁹⁶ Verdet had already warned Prévert that he was treading a fine line, writing poetry which was anti-Vichy, anti-army and anti-religion. Whether through carelessness or arrogance, he submitted an anti-Nazi tract to *Combat* in his own style. Verdet encouraged him to put this to one side until he could publish it safely, as the risk was too great.⁹⁷ Despite his actions supporting the Resistance, Prévert did not want to join a Resistance network, as that was to go to war, which was against his antimilitary convictions. He obviously was engaged in resistance activity, just as he was engaged in pro-communist activity with the October Group, but he did not want to be part of an 'organisation' and believed he could sit outside the boundaries of any group, including the so-called 'Résistance Intellectuelle'.⁹⁸

Stepping back inside the Translator's Note, the textual comparison of Ferlinghetti's linguistic choices highlights changes which are important if we are to argue that the Translator's Note holds value beyond a simple signposting of "its" text.' The seemingly small and subtle distinction between the naming of the Translator's Note is a case in point. The title of the translator's preface is 'Translator's Note' in 1958 and 1990 but is renamed 'Introduction' in the Penguin edition (1964). A 'translator's note', as Batchelor has said, tells us that the text is a translation, and not only points forwards towards the text but also backwards towards the translator. An 'introduction' implies that something must follow and thus only points forwards. A translator's note highlights the relationship between the translator and the author whereas an introduction highlights the relationship between the author and the text.

These intertitles⁹⁹ are *self-referential* in terms of Batchelor's methodology, which is to say they draw attention to the paratextual element that is the preface. However, there is a distinction to be drawn between the two intertitles as regards their function. The intertitle 'Translator's Note' draws attention to the translator, implying an insight into his process and his motivation. In addition, it demonstrates that these are translations of a text by somebody else and thus categorises the work, 'establishing a "generic pact" concerning the appropriate attitude of

⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 488–94.

⁹⁷ Courrière, *Jacques Prévert*, p. 494. Unfortunately, the poem no longer exists as it was destroyed by another resistance member after Verdet's arrest.

⁹⁸ The same could be said for Ferlinghetti and the Beat Movement.

⁹⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 294. Intertitles are what Genette labels 'internal titles' which label sections of a book.

reception.’ It categorises the text, says Batchelor, as a translation, and so can be considered as *generic*.¹⁰⁰

The intertitle ‘Introduction’ (1964) implies a different function, however. Its job is to ‘introduce’ the text to the reader, and in Batchelor’s terms can be defined as *hermeneutical*. To use Batchelor’s description, the ‘Introduction’ offers ‘certain cognitive framings’, directs attention to expose ‘certain aspects or qualities’, it mediates ‘relevant contexts, instructing the understanding or interpretation’.¹⁰¹ In this context it is possible to argue that the title ‘Introduction’ reframes the text as critical discourse. As Kahn acknowledges, paratexts ‘often act as important commentaries on the text, and influence its reception in fundamental ways’, and so the distinction between paratexts and critical essays becomes blurred. Writing on Benjamin’s “The Translator’s Task”, Kahn refers to ‘nested textual layers’ which can produce ambiguities in the function of the paratext, such as is evident in the Translator’s Note. Kahn names this functional ambiguity as the ‘paratext/metatext continuum.’¹⁰²

The paratext reverts to its original title in the 1990 edition, which hints at Ferlinghetti’s direction of thought.¹⁰³ As Batchelor says, a paratext is ‘a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received.’¹⁰⁴ If this Note is ‘consciously crafted’, as in Batchelor’s definition, Ferlinghetti is making it clear that he prefers ‘Translator’s Note’ to ‘Introduction’. An ‘Introduction’ shifts Ferlinghetti back into the realm of allographical sender of the message rather than authorial. This is evidenced by the layout of the title page inside the Penguin edition. The title of the book and the poet’s name are followed by ‘translated and introduced by Lawrence Ferlinghetti’, which can only have been enunciated by a third party. Rather than the reader being addressed directly by Ferlinghetti, his message is mediated, which creates a distance between the author of the Note (the translator) and the reader. It is evident in the changes exercised in later versions of the Note, as demonstrated in Part One of this dissertation, that Ferlinghetti wishes to link arms with the reader rather than introduce space between them, as seen through his use of ‘us’ and ‘our’.

¹⁰⁰ See note 51.

¹⁰¹ See note 51.

¹⁰² Khan, ‘The Paratext/Metatext Continuum.’, 125–38 (p. 125).

¹⁰³ According to Morgan (p. 124), Ferlinghetti inserts the same text in the Penguin edition (1965) as in the 4th to 7th reprints of the City Lights editions. I can only guess (as I have not seen a copy of reprints 4-7) that Ferlinghetti renames the preface as ‘Translator’s Note’ in these editions, as this is what he chooses to name the paratext in previous and latter editions.

¹⁰⁴ Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, p. 142.

‘Our’ implies that the writer exists to serve the reader and not themselves, and by extension the author sits within the community of readers rather than outside it.

The placing of the Introduction/Translator’s Note within the book is also significant. In 1958 and 1990, the Translator’s Note is placed after the copyright information and before the contents. In 1965, it is placed after the contents page and acknowledgments. This hierarchical difference reflects back on Ferlinghetti and how much importance he places on the preface - which is more than the Penguin editor, I deduce. In 1958 and 1990, the preface is the first thing the reader sees after the copyright information, which affords it a status all of its own. They are unable to see the contents of the collection without leafing past the Note. The Note itself does not form part of the listed contents, and we are not made aware of its presence on the title page immediately before it, only that the selected poems were ‘translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti.’ Therefore, I argue, it forms part of the ‘text’ rather than being a separate entity or an ‘introduction’ to what comes after.

Either way, Ferlinghetti’s preface contains elements which could be attributed to a critical essay. One in particular is the reference to the thoughts of critics, with which the writer may agree or disagree to argue their point. These serve to *introduce* the text. One such critic that Ferlinghetti refers to is Gaëton Picon, taking his comments from ‘Panorama of New French Literature.’ (1958, p. 4).¹⁰⁵ Picon’s book was first published in 1949, as far as I am aware only in French, and gives *Paroles* a glowing report.¹⁰⁶ It is a fair assumption that Ferlinghetti read Picon’s text during his time at the Sorbonne from January 1948 to December 1950, where he studied for a PhD on the relationship between poetry and the city.¹⁰⁷ Picon is quoted in all three versions of the Translator’s Note, but not all of his words and ideas are attributed to him. Ferlinghetti’s relaxed use of Picon, particularly in the later versions of the Note, highlight his confidence in using Picon’s words as his own. It is fair to say that this is only uncovered if you pay attention to the differences between the three texts and refer back to Picon’s original French document, which is outside the boundaries of the paratext in Genette’s terms. Below, I highlight a couple of examples of how Picon assists in the decoding of the Translator’s Note.

¹⁰⁵ Gaëtan Picon, *Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française : introduction, illustrations, documents* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 228–33.

¹⁰⁶ Cynically, this may be due to the fact that Picon was also edited and published by Bertelé (Prévert’s editor and publisher). Bertelé, Prévert and Lacroix, *Éditer Prévert*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ Silesky, *Ferlinghetti*, pp. 26–43. Ferlinghetti was a fluent French speaker as he had spent some of his childhood in France with his French aunt. He chose to study in Paris as he found American university system too restrictive. His master’s at Columbia and PhD at the Sorbonne were funded by benefits through the GI Bill.

Picon is first mentioned by name on the second page of the Note, where Ferlinghetti cites his book:

In the view of French critics (such as Gaëton Picon in PANORAMA OF NEW FRENCH LITERATURE) Prévert is the voice of the wise street-urchin — precocious, mocking, bitter, dupe of nothing and no-one. (1958, p. 4)

This, in Picon's original text, falls at the end of a long paragraph which lays out why Prévert's work proved to be so popular. Not only does Prévert speak and sing like the people, as Picon puts it, his poetry is rooted in the everyday modern world and in things that everyone can see around them. It shuns the metaphysical and remains firmly on the ground, observing the world as he walks the streets with his eyes wide-open to what is going on around him. In 1964, Ferlinghetti adds more of Picon's comments:

In the late forties, the French critic Gaëton Picon wrote that Prévert was 'the only authentic poet who, up to the present time, has known how to break through the limits of a more-or-less specialized public.' Prévert (as Picon put it) is the voice of the wise street-urchin – precocious, mocking, bitter, dupe of nothing and no-one. (1964, p. 10; 1990, p. ii)

Here, Ferlinghetti transfers the views of Picon into the past tense - 'Picon wrote' and 'as Picon put it' - whereas he uses the present tense in 1958 - 'Prévert is the voice of the wise street-urchin'. Ferlinghetti clearly believes that Picon's views are still current, as he still includes them, but by using the past tense he creates distance between what Picon said then and what he, Ferlinghetti, is saying now. The inclusion of the phrase 'up to the present time' gives us the answer as to why Ferlinghetti consigned Picon's views to the past tense. Despite maintaining that Prévert's poems are 'still as alive and relevant as the day they were written' (1990, p. iv), Ferlinghetti believes that more contemporary poets have done a better job, hence the historical placement of Picon's comments. Ferlinghetti writes, 'I for one would have liked Prévert to go much, much further in his denunciations, as many younger poets now have.' Prévert, he says, 'allowed his cinematic eye too easy a passage over the still-astounding surface of the world.' Others, he writes, dug below the surface into a world 'the most omnivorous eye could never reach' (1990, p. iii). The 'others' he writes of above point the reader towards his Pocket Poet publications, of which there were 48 by the time the final Translator's Note was published in 1990.¹⁰⁸ In the introduction to the *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* (1995), Ferlinghetti describes his publishing role as 'essentially dissident':

¹⁰⁸According to the list in Ferlinghetti, *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* (1995).

From the beginning the aim was to publish across the board, avoiding the provincial and the academic, and not just publishing (that pitfall of the little press) just ‘our gang’. I had in mind rather an international, dissident, insurgent ferment.¹⁰⁹

Ferlinghetti uses Picon to present the idea that poetry of dissent is very much alive.

As to why Ferlinghetti included Picon’s words without crediting him, I can only assume that either he believed no one would notice, as Picon’s text was only published in French as far as I am aware, or Ferlinghetti wanted to limit the inclusion of critics in order to be more approachable to his readership in the spirit of avoiding the academic, as he says in the introduction to the *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology*. Just as he actively encourages the reader to become part of a community of readers supporting and disseminating the writing of dissent through the use of direct address, the presenting of poetry on a cheap, paper tablecloth becomes a metaphor for the removal of another barrier between the poetry and its readership - that of the critic.

In removing references to their original source, however, some lines in the Translator’s Note lack clarity. From the very first version (1958), Ferlinghetti cites Picon without crediting him:

Prévert is one of those who holds onto your sleeve and says: “Don’t go for it...keep out of it.” (1958, p. 3)

Without knowing where this line comes from, what Ferlinghetti is getting at is unclear. The original line in Picon’s text reads:

*Prévert retient par la manche celui qui allait être dupe, et lui dit : « N’y va pas. » (Le Combat avec l’Ange.) Poésie de vigilance, de défense de l’homme.*¹¹⁰

Prévert holds onto the sleeve of those who would be fooled and says: “Don’t go there.” (The Combat with the Angel.) His is a poetry of vigilance, of the protection of man. (My translation.)

Unlike in Ferlinghetti’s Note, Picon directly links this line to the poem ‘Le Combat avec l’Ange’, translated by Ferlinghetti as ‘The Combat with the Angel.’ In this poem, Prévert warns, ‘Keep out of it’; ‘everything is fixed in advance’ and ‘the match is faked’ (Ferlinghetti’s

¹⁰⁹ Ferlinghetti, *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology*, p. i. This comment could explain why Ferlinghetti removes the reference to the Beat Movement after 1958: ‘Prévert spoke particularly to the French youth immediately after the War, and if ever there was a generation that was Beat, this was it.’ (p. 3). Later, he says that it would be wrong to use beat language to translate Prévert. He is already considering moving beyond Beat towards a fundamental writing of dissent, which is what he wanted to do with his publishing house – writers from all around the world who spoke out against the status quo, irrespective of any movement they may be linked to.

¹¹⁰ Picon, *Panorama*, p. 232.

translation).¹¹¹ I felt when reading this line with no knowledge of the Picon text, which clearly signposts the reader toward ‘The Combat with the Angel’, that it seemed out of place and unclear in its message, even within the context of the surrounding sentences. The observant reader may well circle back to Ferlinghetti’s Note after reading this poem in the collection, and, in this regard, I can only agree with Genette that the Note leads us to “‘its’ text’ (the poems of Prévert). However, it seems a little vague and perhaps expects too much of the ‘non-specialized’ reader Ferlinghetti is so keen to attract. To be fair to Ferlinghetti, in the paragraph leading up to the inclusion of the line under discussion, he does highlight the kinds of ritualised behaviours that the writers of dissent are resisting and which Prévert demonstrates in ‘The Combat with the Angel’:

America has been occupied by different forces, with its own kind of resistance movement in its writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper middleclass ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities of church and state. Prévert is one of those who holds onto your sleeve and says: “Don’t go for it...keep out of it.” (1958, p. 3)

Here, the reader has to work too hard to join the dots, particularly as Ferlinghetti continues the paragraph for another half a page and uses a different poem, one not in the collection, as an example, and moves too swiftly into criticism of Prévert’s triteness:

At his best he simply shows you something and lets you draw your own conclusions. At worst, he draws them for you with too maudlin a touch, as in ‘Human Effort’ which begins wonderfully with what the eye sees: (1958, p. 4)

It is only by accessing Picon that the relationship between the two ideas becomes clear. This is unfortunate, as the lines concerning ‘church and state’ are important, as they demonstrate the responsibilities of the writer of dissent. Ferlinghetti further develops the remit of such poetry through changes to the text, which have become evident through the textual comparison of the three versions of the Note. When Ferlinghetti came to edit the Note in 1964, writes Larry R. Smith, he had ‘thoroughly digested and enlarged his own poetics with the existential philosophy of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre.’ Smith continues:

Thus grounded in this desperate yet vital view of life, the position of poet of dissent was dictated by the times, as Ferlinghetti explains, “no other life-alternative, nothing else possible, poetry the only self-solution, the last and only resort.”¹¹²

¹¹¹ *Paroles* (1990), p. 135.

¹¹² Larry R. Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Poet-at-Large* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), p. 55.

His changing viewpoint, evident in textual changes between versions, show how Ferlinghetti's ideology has developed over time. In all three versions, Ferlinghetti says that 'Prévert spoke particularly to the French youth immediately after the War'. What follows, however, differs. In 1958, Ferlinghetti finishes the line by stating 'if ever there was a generation that was Beat, this was it.' This ending is removed in 1964. This once again reflects his philosophy of not just publishing his group of friends but seeking out writers of dissent from all over the world. At the same time, he disconnects 'church and state' from 'tribal insanities':

America has been occupied by different forces, with its own kind of resistance movement in its writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper middleclass ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities of church and state. (1958, p. 3)

Since then we have had our own kind of resistance movement in our writers of dissent – dissent from the official world of upper middleclass ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities. (1990, p. i)

This separation implies that there are additional ritualised behaviours at play that we should be speaking out against.

'Tribal insanities' signposts Ferlinghetti's own poetry. As Smith points out, Ferlinghetti condemns Capitalism and the 'alienation it has fostered through consumerism,' as demonstrated in the poem 'Autobiography':¹¹³

I have read the Reader's Digest
From cover to cover
And noted the close identification
Of the United States and the Promised Land
Where every coin is marked
In God We Trust
But the dollar bills do not have it
Being Gods unto themselves.¹¹⁴

Another example of this is the portrayal of the hyper-consumerised ritual of Christmas in 'Christ Climbed Down':

Christ climbed down
From His bare Tree
This year
And ran away to where

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 67.

¹¹⁴ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind: Poems* (New York: New Directions Publ. Corp, 1998), p. 63.

No fat handshaking stranger
 In a red flannel suit
 And a fake white beard
 Went around passing himself off
 As some sort of North Pole saint
 Crossing the desert to Bethlehem
 Pennsylvania
 In a Volkswagon sled
 Drawn by rollicking Adirondack reindeer
 With German names
 And bearing sacks of Humble Gifts
 From Saks Fifth Avenue
 For everybody's imagined Christ child ¹¹⁵

The Translator's Note leads us similarly to question the direct influence of Prévert on Ferlinghetti's early poetry. As Smith confirms, the Translator's Note is 'perhaps the best prose key to Ferlinghetti's own poetics'.¹¹⁶ One obvious example is brought to light through reading Picon. He writes that Prévert's poems shun the metaphysical and the elevated language of poetry – 'l'achimie symbolique autant que l'achimie verbale'¹¹⁷ – and remains on the earth amongst the everyday. Picon gives two examples of this, one being Prévert's poem 'Pater Noster' (1990, p. 8-11).¹¹⁸ The poem starts by highlighting the beauty of life on earth, but quickly turns sour in evoking war and injustice. Ferlinghetti translates 'Et nous nous resterons sur la terre / Qui est quelquefois si jolie' by 'And we'll stay on here on earth/ which is sometimes so pretty'. The influence of 'Pater Noster' is evident in Ferlinghetti's 'The world is a beautiful place', which featured in his first collection in 1955.¹¹⁹ Firstly, I suggest the repeated line 'the world is a beautiful place' is directly influenced by the line 'la terre/ Qui est quelquefois si jolie'. A second example of direct influence is found in the ending of 'Pater Noster':

'The masters with their priests their traitors and their troops'
 (Pater Noster, trans. Ferlinghetti. 1990, p. 11.)

This can be compared to lines in 'The world is a beautiful place':

¹¹⁵ Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind*, p. 69.

¹¹⁶ Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 52.

¹¹⁷ Picon, *Panorama*, p. 230.

¹¹⁸ Picon, *Panorama*, p. 230. Picon quotes: 'Notre Père qui êtes aux cieux / Restez-y/ Et nous nous resterons sur la terre / Qui est quelquefois si jolie'. 'Pater Noster', *Paroles* (1990, p. 11.)

¹¹⁹ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Pictures of the Gone World* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 25. This edition does not have page numbers.

‘with its men of distinction/and its men of extinction/and its priests/and other patrolmen’¹²⁰

This is just a cursory glance at how Prévert’s poetry has fed into Ferlinghetti’s own writings, just as there is also more to be said about the Translator’s Note. There are doors still to open, in particular, regarding Ferlinghetti’s use of Picon, variances in capitalisation and references to other artists, which allow the reader to place Prévert within a cultural context. Left unanswered is why Ferlinghetti’s cultural context is not fixed but fluid, shifting with each of the three versions.

The Note acts as a vestibule but also serves as a waiting room, giving the reader a moment to prepare for the poems that follow. But as well as fulfilling the role of *introduction*, the Translator’s Note has value above and beyond this function, and this is found by listening to the voice of the translator. Ferlinghetti constructs a mythology around the discovery of Prévert’s poetry on the fabled tablecloth which represents his conviction that poetry, as Karl Malkoff puts it, ‘is grounded in the necessities of human existence.’¹²¹ What could be more necessary than the basic bodily need for food and drink, a need represented by a tablecloth and a café in Ferlinghetti’s narrative. The graffiti on the tablecloth equally represents the public nature of the poetry. Ferlinghetti also aligns himself with Prévert beyond the level of poetics through the manipulation of Prévert’s own story. He exploits certain aspects of this, such as Prévert’s role in the Resistance, and adds embellishments, such as the false claim that *Paroles* was published by a famous underground press, in order to add weight to his argument.

By stepping beyond the paratextual boundaries suggested by Genette, Ferlinghetti’s Translator’s Note does not lead us back to “‘its” text’ in isolation but leads us via the poetry back to Ferlinghetti himself and his views on the importance and relevance of poetry. Understanding the broader context reinforces Ferlinghetti’s metaphor of occupation and resistance. The reader is required to step outside the ‘text’ in order to fully appreciate the metaphor, which encourages the reader to question the status quo and the role that poetry can play in speaking out against the ‘official world of upper middleclass ideal and the White Collar delusion and various other systemized tribal insanities’ (1990, p. i).

It is possible to ‘ignore’, in the English sense of the word, the voice of the translator: a reader may choose not to read the Note and let the poetry speak for itself. But Ferlinghetti makes it

¹²⁰ ‘The world is a beautiful place’ in Ferlinghetti, *Pictures*, paragraph 2, line 12.

¹²¹ Quoted in Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 55.

difficult to *ignore* in the French sense of the word, that is *to be unaware of*, the translator's voice. In this we experience the *coquetterie* of Lawrence Ferlinghetti: he allows the reader to *ignore* his voice by not littering the translated poems with footnotes and asides, whilst at the same time he does not wish to be 'ignored' by insisting on the placement of the Note, in the two City Lights editions in any case (1958, 1990). This suggests that Ferlinghetti places an importance on the Note over and beyond a signpost to "its" text'.

Although I have argued that the Translator's Note goes beyond the role assigned to it by Genette, it conversely also confirms Genette's statement. At every turn, Ferlinghetti directs us back to the 'text', that is to say to poetry, if not *the* poetry, that is to say Prévert's and Ferlinghetti's own writing and that of the international writer of dissent. Insisting that Prévert's *Paroles* clearly mean 'both Words and Passwords' (1990, p. i), Ferlinghetti plays the same game. In this regard, the Note is 'subordinate' to the 'text', as it serves above all to underline Ferlinghetti's belief in the power of poetry as 'a radical tool for urgent communication'¹²² rather than serving as a monument to he who wrote it. As Smith concludes, 'the poet is not free to construct a tower of art, but must work first to save the world by changing it.'¹²³

When asked to write a foreword to Morgan's bibliography of his works, Ferlinghetti is typically self-deprecating:

I am wholly satisfied that Bill Morgan has uncovered every last syllable of mine that has ever been printed. If any escaped him, let them be obliterated, so that this book may stand as the compleat [sic] monument in stone, a Babel in its own right.¹²⁴

This text also contains 'passwords', its parodial tone linking back once again to Prévert and his poem 'One Shouldn't'¹²⁵, whilst also pointing towards City Lights' mission to speak in a 'truly supra-national poetic voice',¹²⁶ bringing international voices together to speak against 'systemized tribal insanities'. (1990, p. i). Clearly, Ferlinghetti's relationship with Prévert extends beyond *Paroles*. Not only do they share the characteristics of self-belief coupled with a relaxed attitude to their work, but they also share an ideology bound up in a paper tablecloth, which Ferlinghetti held onto up until his death in 2021. Thus, the translator and poet, and by

¹²² Kenneth Rexroth, quoted in Woods, "Reinvent America and the World", p. 3.

¹²³ Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*, p. 55.

¹²⁴ 'Foreword' in Morgan, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti*. This is signed Lawrence Ferlinghetti and dated January, 1981.

¹²⁵ *Paroles* (1990), pp. 122-123.

¹²⁶ Ferlinghetti, quoted in Woods, "Reinvent America and the World", p.4.

extension the Note and “its” text’, are united in a marriage of sorts, both inextricably paired, but individual.

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