**Translated into British:**

**European children’s literature, (in)difference and *écart* in the age of Brexit**

This paper tackles the theorisation of translated children’s literature in the particular context of post-Brexit Britain. There is a tendency, I argue, to think about translation as a healthy and necessary exposure to ‘difference’; however, in the case of translated children’s literature in Britain – a notoriously paltry market – narratives of difference are excessively at work: unlike the mostly ‘indifferent’ market of children’s translation elsewhere in Europe, in Britain such literature is always already set apart by its difference from a perceived norm. Furthermore, translated children’s books in Britain come to existence unsystematically and unpredictably. I propose that we should adopt flexible theoretical attitude when dealing with such literature, taking into account the political commitment of all actors involves – from publishers to translators – and use for that purpose the concept of *écart* developed by sinologist François Jullien, which allows us to think about how such literature plays with the in-betweenness of languages and cultures.

Keywords: translated children’s literature, difference, Europe, Britain, theory, écart, Brexit

Three weeks before what has come to be known as the “Brexit” vote, Julia Eccleshare, possibly the most influential children’s book reviewer in the UK, wrote for the Guardian an article on “the best children’s books to help children feel connected to Europe” (2016). The UK aside, none of them was actually from a European country; and none was in translation. As if seized by an afterthought, Eccleshare added: “Of course, another option is to read European books in translation. From Tintin to Asterix…”

That such an article, so close to the Brexit referendum, should have been published, let alone written, testifies to the British obliviousness to the fact that it is simply *not normal* for a country in Europe – indeed, for any country in the world – to have so few imports of children’s literature from elsewhere. While exact figures are unknown, it is estimated that less than 4% of the children’s literature market in the UK is made up of translations. In many other European countries, that share is well over half. So dire is the state of translated children’s books on the island that it does not occur to the most benignly liberal, Europhile, cosmopolitan newspaper editors and journalist that such books may be, just possibly, a better way of “helping children feel connected to Europe” than even the best-intentioned home-grown fiction.

Eccleshare’s list, furthermore, is holiday-focused and decidedly urban. The city trip is especially foregrounded: “The quickest and simplest way of getting a picture of life in Europe,” she argues, “is to look at some of the books about holidays in European capitals”, which give “delicious insights into European cities”. Four out of nine books take place in Paris – a fact which, while flattering to this Parisian exile, calls into question the existence of Europe beyond the Eurostar. This is a list, clearly, of curated dips into not-too-faraway cultures; the implied British child reader of such fiction is placed in the position, always-already, of a contented outsider. Europe is its oyster; yet the continent, it is understood, cannot welcome him or her as a full person; always only as a pair of eyes, camera-wielding hands, and a salivating tongue. The continent, Eccleshare’s list implies, must forever for British children remain, however “connected” they feel to it, fundamentally exterior, alien, other – *different*.

In this article I want to probe that *difference* – in all its modalities – of the UK children book market in relation to European children’s literature. Because the situation of children’s literature in translation in the UK is so *different* to the rest of Europe, and because the UK is currently living through a time of unprecedented political tension with “the continent”, I argue that we cannot adopt, to study children’s literature in translation on the island, the same analytical and theoretical tools as we would for children’s books in translation elsewhere. In the UK, translating children’s books, publishing, promoting and teaching such books, and in equal measure studying them, are activities de facto so vividly anomalous, so stamped by commitment, as to require their own conceptual, aesthetic and ideological frameworks for analysis.

I propose here that a first step towards this framework might be to be critical of the notion that children’s literature in translation exposes, or should expose, children to *difference*. The term is often mentioned, but rarely defined, in relation to children’s books in translation. In the case of the UK it is particularly problematic, as I unpack in a first subpart, because translated literature is always marked already by intractable *difference* on several levels. That phenomenon itself, as I detail in a second part, must be resituated within a long British history of narratives of difference towards Europe – notably as regards language learning.

Yet the “solution” is not empty celebrations of sameness, or advocating “indifference” to translation; not only would this be probably unfeasible, it is also arguably undesirable. I contend in the third part of this article that the situation calls for theorisations of children’s literature in translation more receptive to the tensions and volatility of British people’s relationships to Europe and to other languages. I propose Francois Jullien’s vision of *écart* – the gap or sidestep – as a conceptual opening towards a more flexible analytical framework, more successfully tuned into the committed aesthetics of children’s literature in translation in the UK.

***Vive la différence?* The intrinsic *difference* of children’s books in translation in the UK**

The question of the imbalance, in the UK, of children’s literature in translation in comparison to Anglophone literature is well-known to scholars and education professionals. Nicholas Tucker, in 2005, called it out as a “British problem”, noting:

Abroad is not just about politics; it is also about *different* ways of seeing, feeling and behaving. Continental illustrators … carry with them an exciting whiff of subversion for readers used only to how things are at home. Authors … who are translated, do the same thing in print. *Vive la différence!* indeed, but how typical it is that this resounding phrase still as yet has no British equivalent! (Tucker, 2005, emphasis added)

Tucker’s cry of “vive la différence” has an ironic twist, as it is in fact a British idiom mimicking a French phrase; so indeed, it has no British equivalent – but no French equivalent either. Even in English, the phrase is most often used sarcastically. And while *Vive la différence* may be somewhat of a linguistic mirage, far more puzzling still is its conceptual content when we try to take the expression seriously.

We quickly get into complex theoretical questions when thinking about the question of *difference* in children’s literature, and particularly with children’s literature in translation. It does seem to go without saying that exposure to cultural or national “differences” is broadly speaking a good thing for children; and that foreign children’ literature is particularly able to do that, because it is, well, foreign. But there is a faint impression, always, that this exposure to difference is only a first step; that ultimately, we should hope for that difference to lead to common understanding. To take another oft-heard metaphor, we intuitively guess that bridges will be built through heightened awareness of the cultural chasm. The rather idyllic vision of translated children’s literature as the key to world peace, or at least to some kind of universal understanding, is reminiscent of Paul Hazard’s view, in his famous 1932 manifesto, that societies find some common ground through translated children’s literature. In Hazard’s understanding, child readers are an active community, energised by world literature and shaping it as much as it shapes them, and that movement indirectly benefits humanity, made one by their shared corpus: “Each country gives and each country receives;… and that is how, at the age of first impressions, the universal republic of childhood is born” (231).

But of course it is clear that not each country gives its literature, and not each country receives that of others, in even remotely balanced amounts. It is debatable, too, whether children are always the active, discerning corpus-gatherers that Hazard envisages. And even if that were the case, would Hazard’s “universal republic of childhood” actually be tolerant, let alone aware, of *difference*? Not really, in Hazard’s view at least; it is, if anything, because children’s literature is closer to ancestral forms of storytelling that it has universal value. It is worth remembering here the rigidity of the French understanding of “republic” Hazard is calling upon – precisely one that has been seeking, since its inception, to *erase* differences through the process of education. Hazard’s view, foundational for the field, was not straightforwardly that translated children’s literature was building bridges between peoples out of their *differences*. He rather envisaged it doing so by taking everyone closer to a kind of originary similarity. His work set a trend for a more general emphasis on translated children’s literature’s ability to reconcile, emphasise cross-cultural similarities, and showcase the fluidity of international exchanges. Certainly, the discourse of “translated children’s literature as beneficial exposure to difference” has always been a subtext of such academic work in the field; yet it was not always clear by what kind of alchemical operation exposure to difference should transform into a sense of universal belonging.

Furthermore, and even more problematically, even if that kind of magic were true, is translated children’s literature truly a guarantee to get the “different ways of seeing” Tucker promises? Can we say, for instance, that children in France are exposed to vast amounts of “difference” because more than half of the production is in translation? How much translation “should” there be in a country, anyway? Let us look at the list of the past ten years” awards of the Prix Sorcières, arguably the most prestigious children’s literature award in France. For the mid-grade category, eight out of ten winners are translations; this sounds good, we might venture to say. Those eight books, however, are translated from “only” 3 languages. We may begin to worry: is this enough difference? But authors and illustrators, we note, are of five different nationalities. That does sounds like enough difference: it *is* about half. Is half enough difference? Publishers, meanwhile, are not very different: they are all French, but for one Belgian. Where is the francophonie in the Prix Sorcières? But hold on – is this difference only about nationality?DoesKatherine Rundell”s *Rooftoppers*, while a translation, count as different, since it is set in Paris? And what else should be calculated in our *Vive la différence* calculation? How about genders, ethnicities, social classes represented? Suchthought experiments, while worthy in a context marked by increasing concern for voice and representation in children’s literature, remain rather futile when the central concepts – difference, diversity – are left untheorised.

The Prix Sorcières, furthermore, might reflect the general market statistically, but proportional in number of course does not mean representative in content. In France, translations in the best-selling lists are sensibly the same than in best-selling lists in the UK and US: they are big UK or US sagas; classics; and books by celebrities. Will this exposure to translation also expose young readers to *difference*, whatever that means? Let us do a quick phenomenology of the child reader in France, exposed from babyhood to best-selling books. Very many in that category will be in translation, which in France is mostly short-cut for “translation from English”. By the end of her adolescence, our young reader’s attitude to books in translation is very likely to be, if anything, *indifferent*. There will be little in her script as a reader, in her way of apprehending literature, that sets aside the idea or experience of the translated book from the idea or experience of the “normal” book.

Not so, of course, in Britain, where an interesting characteristic of the market for books in translation is precisely its *difference* from the market for “normal”, namely Anglophone, literature. What is remarkable about the market of children’s translation in the UK is, well, its remarkability. Within the UK book market, books in translation stand out as abnormal or atypical, and their production is eminently unpredictable and unsystematic. As Gillian Lathey notes,

Fluctuations in the numbers and sources of translations for children in the UK since 1945 defy any conclusive analysis: economic pressures, chance encounters and the determination of pioneering individuals all play a part in a diverse set of attitudes and practices towards translations in British publishing houses. (2017, 232)

Lathey points out the (rather oxymoronic) characteristic serendipity of children’s translation in the UK. “Erratic and sometimes surprising” (232), characterised by “shifting fortunes” (233) and “circuitous [routes]” (235), relying on the “enterprising commitment” (234) of individuals, translation for children in the UK, says Lathey, has providence, coincidence and chance as its pattern. Namely, it has no pattern.

In an editorial system that is one of the most streamlined and well-oiled in the world, children’s translations in the UK are always-already set apart. For them, difference is not an added characteristic: it is their *identity*. If anything, while, for the French publishers mentioned above, translation is more or less business as usual, most UK publishers who publish translated books can quite rightly stake a claim to “*Vive la différence*” already.

**“Difference thinking” in the UK’s relationship to Europe**

In the fraught relationship between the UK and Europe, the difference-loaded status of children’s literature in translation is part of a wider phenomenon, which has arguably become more *vive* – alive and lively – since the Brexit vote. At the time of writing, only a year and a half has passed since Brexit; but current research in neighbouring fields to ours, especially language-learning, is already looking at the possible reasons for, and effects of, the event.

In a discourse analysis of attitudes to language-learning in the UK since Brexit, Lanvers and Doughy argue that the UK has long been marked intractably by – that word again - “*difference* thinking” in relation to language learning (2016). This difference thinking is activated on both personal and collective levels by entangled narratives: “I’m bad at languages anyway” (narrative of individual difference); “as a country, we’re bad at languages anyway” (narrative of cultural difference). This is compounded by the perennial problem of English as a dominant language: “the rest of the world speaks English, so we don’t need to learn languages anyway” (what might be called a narrative of linguistic difference).

Importantly, Lanvers elsewhere points out that this difference thinking goes both ways: the self-identification of British learners of foreign languages as “bad learners” is compounded by a general perception from Europe and the world that indeed the British *are* so (2017). Thus narratives of difference dominate in Britain’s thinking about Europe and vice-versa. Brexit, Lanvers and Doughy argue, may accelerate this difference thinking by further strengthening the idea that other languages (specifically European) are no longer needed in the UK; but interestingly, they suggest that Brexit also has the potential to reverse the cycle from vicious to virtuous, if the sense of a loss of European identity heightens the urgency of language-learning.

Such research also pinpoints the volatility that characterises the current UK language learning landscape, and has characterised it for many decades. The fruit of a precarious mixture of policy decisions, cultural Zeitgeist, individual self-perceptions and geopolitics, the evolutions of language-learning in the UK are fundamentally unpredictable. Here, too, the initiatives of individuals and associations to uphold and celebrate linguistic diversity contrast with successive governments” decisions – which have been at best sluggish, at worst quite simply toxic to its purposes (for instance, with Labour’s decision in 2004 to make language-learning optional after the age of 14.)

In language-learning as in children’s book translation in the UK, there are thus very similar, and seemingly insuperable, narratives of difference. Predictions are difficult; individual initiative is essential; the key to activating the circle virtuously has not yet been found. What Brexit will do to children’s literature in translation, as to language-learning, remains to be seen. Conversely, though, and for what interests me here, the state of language-learning and children’s literature in translation give us some clues to understanding the advent of Brexit. We can, and arguably must, take seriously the hunch that there may be a connection between the cultural, individual and linguistic *difference thinking* in the UK, and the decision taken last year by my compatriots.

In this context of conflating narratives of difference and of fundamental unpredictability, children’s literature in translation has become, more than ever, a political phenomenon, and the act of translating and distributing children’s literature in translation a committed act. Commitment, of course, can be seen as apolitical – editors might *commit* to bringing in different genres, aesthetic tastes, styles, etc. But considering both the long history of the UK and its very recent history, what Lathey calls the “enterprising commitment” of individuals to bring children’s books in translation to the UK has suddenly become more urgent than before, and more in need of theorisation.

I argue now that the situation calls for a change in focus from celebrations of “difference” – there is more than enough difference thinking already at work there – to theorisations of children’s literature in translation more receptive to the existing tensions, instability and unpredictability of the UK’s relationship to Europe and to its languages.

***Vive l’écart?* Looking into the gaps**

Because of the very peculiar status of children’s literature in translation in the UK, any theorisation or claims about its aesthetics must stay tuned to the economic, material, cultural, political, social, etc., aspects of its creation and distribution. And because those, as we have seen, are fundamentally unstable, I advocate a flexible conceptual framework: one that does not seek to be totalising; that does not aspire to systematicity. I want to adjust onto European children’s literature in translation in the UK a theoretical lens receptive to the aesthetics of its multiple commitments.

This means being sensitive to the ways in which text, paratext, epitext, and the conditions of production of children’s literature in translation in the UK exploit, explore, and most importantly perhaps, question and elasticise, the difference of those texts from others. Those ways, to reiterate, are not systematic, but mostly erratic; not fixed, but in movement; not the fruit solely of individual intentionalities nor of institutions, but distributed and diffuse. That commitment has aesthetic effect insofar as, on a basic level, it modulates the reception of those texts by readers and conditions their impressions towards those texts in particular. The relationship is dynamic here: I am interested in the ways that this commitment becomes textualized, and in how the texts, in return, commit their producers and mediators.

That commitment, prominently, reaches wider than single texts, translators or publishers. We are missing an essential dimension of the specificity of the children’s literature “translated into British” if we forget that, precisely because of the irreducible *difference* of translated books in Britain, each example stands not just for itself but for children’s literature in translation in general; not just for itself but for the country it comes from; not just for its own language but for the very concept of “another language”. The children’s book translated into British is characterised by a surfeit of representativeness. That is why we have much to gain by exploring the texts as aesthetically stamped by commitment: they always already signify outwards of themselves to a wider category of text and cultural and linguistic exchanges which are currently under strong political and social debate. To that analytical end, we need tools adjusted both to the enormous variety and fluidity of the corpus, and to the instability of all the pivot concepts – namely, the big words of “culture”, “representativeness”, “difference”, “commitment”, or indeed “diversity”, another often encountered term. I am currently interested in Francois Julien’s concept of *écart*.

Francois Jullien is a French sinologist whose extensive work on Western and Chinese philosophy has given rise to an ample and in some ways controversial work. Central to Julien’s thought is the refusal of traditional comparative work between cultures. Julien’s approach acknowledges the existence of different cultures, with their histories and geographies, but negates the existence of cultural *identity*. He is particularly critical of any endeavour to pin down “cultural differences”, which, he argues, fences thought into one or another system. Jullien does not, however, suggest that we seek only for similarities – at least not for the benign purpose of cultural conciliation or reconciliation – nor does he advocate searching for universalist set of human properties that would surpass cultures, hovering over them like divine command.

Rather, Jullien proposes a work of thought happening in the *écart*, the gap, the yawn, the opening, between cultures; not across, but in-between, cultural productions, languages, and perspectives (see for instance 1997, 2008, 2012). He advocates the detour, the “sidestep”, by another culture in order to better see what, in one’s culture, remains unthought or unthinkable. Shirking from considerations of identity, Julien’s focus invites us to consider the malleable, elastic open spaces between two poles considered as irreducibly different, and produce meaning from that gap. As he puts it: “While difference is a classificatory concept – difference is the master key of nomenclatures and typologies – *écart* is an exploratory concept, with a heuristic function” (2012, 8).

Heuristic is a keyword here: to figure out such questions we are hindered by clunky concepts, standing like heavy columns to support temples of theory. To navigate that space, we must work from the inside out, through approximations and guesses, hunches and partial attempts leading sometimes to failure and sometimes to illumination. Elsewhere he posits: difference is a tidying-up concept; *écart* a messing-up concept. Or also: difference implies fixity, while *écart* tolerates movement. It is the space where thought is deployed, across a distance which allows for reflexivity. The concept must resist ethnocentrism and, ideally, dominance. By paying attention to the écart, we begin to value those spaces where things happen that tug at our consciousness, making the other culture both graspable and resistant, not blocked behind a glass door, but as a place to wander and wonder.

Why would this perspective be applicable to children’s translation and the particular case of the UK? Jullien’s thought is born of his encounter with Chinese thought, namely one that, as he pinpoints, has been historically seen as the opposite, the “other”, of Western thought – certainly nothing like the relation of Britain to Europe. Yet I want to reclaim it in its more general capacity to get us to think the tensions in the aesthetic work of translated children’s literature. Namely, I want to consider the more modest *écarts* offered by children’s books in translation as literature and as cultural phenomenon. Those may be characterised as moments where children’s literature in translation yields neither to complete extraneity nor to complete transparency, and instead lets its readers and participants hover in an aesthetic in-between; when children’s literature in translation, in other words, becomes a tentative proposition to think in-between cultures and languages.

If we start thinking of how translation for children in Britain may allow young readers to feel the *écart* between cultures rather than the difference, we can begin to celebrate that “tugging” relationship to the world that true cultural understanding affords, rather than the experiences of pure exoticism or irreducible weirdness (which it also does, indeed, allow for).

Translation for children in the UK is particularly precious for such an analysis because, to put it bluntly, it is its burden to play with and within the *écart* – it is its fate, both literarily and in market terms, to overthink cultural difference; to dramatize it and place it centrestage. If we are to take seriously the notion that Britain’s current problems with Europe may be connected to a high tolerance of narrative of absolute difference, on both sides, and little tolerance or appreciation of considerations of *écart*, of in-betweenness, then we can look at translations and translators as some of the most prominent transmitters of a sense of écart, through language and through the work of translation.

We can do this in various ways. Firstly, we can look at how the texts themselves work elastically with dynamics of alienation and identification, namely how they perform those little detours through another language or culture that Jullien talks about. Practices here are those of close reading, translation analysis and literary analysis, focusing on the moments when translations pull the English language towards another, making it espouse the contours of another ; and conversely, on the moments where translations forego any “translationese” (however controversial the concept might be; see Tirkkonen-Condit 2002). One of my hypotheses is that there may be low tolerance for translated texts and/ or “translationese” in Britain in part because there is low tolerance for a linguistic zone which cannot quite decide on which side of the difference it stands – a language that hovers in the *écart*. Translators, in this case, are key negotiators in that intratextual space.

As way of example for what such an analysis can look like, one could pay particular attention to the ways in which translated children’s books in Britain deal with beginnings, that crucial moment for the reader’s attachment to the book – readers young, or indeed older, cracking open the novel at a bookstore, evaluating whether to buy for a child of their acquaintance. The opening of *Toby Alone* (2008), the celebrated translation by Sarah Ardizzone of Timothée de Fombelle’s *Tobie Lolness* (2007), is a prime example of a translation’s elasticity in that sensitive zone. Ardizzone’s very first page works from the source text so freely as to be called more legitimately a version rather than a translation; it offers the reader a far more active Toby than Fombelle’s Tobie, swapping most reflexive or passive verbs for active ones, taking out references to Toby’s immobility, explicitly assigning thoughts to the hero when they are free-floating in the French text, and indicating straightaway that Toby is being chased:

Tobie mesurait un millimètre et demi, ce qui n’était pas grand pour son âge. Seul le bout de ses pieds dépassait du trou d’écorce. Il ne bougeait pas. La nuit l’avait recouvert comme un seau d’eau. (Fombelle, 2007)

(Literal translation: Tobie was one and a half millimetres tall, which wasn’t big for his age. Only the tips of his feet were sticking out of the hole in the bark. He wasn’t moving. The night had capped him like a bucket of water (/water bucket).)

Toby was just one and a half millimetres tall, not exactly big for a boy of his age. Only his toes were sticking out of the hole in the bark where he was hiding. (Fombelle, translated by Ardizzone, 2008)

Later, Toby tells himself, in Ardizzone’s version, that the sky in Heaven “couldn’t possibly be as deep or as magical as this”, activating a readerly script quite different from Fombelle’s version, in which Tobie thinks that the sky, in paradise, would be “moins profond, moins émouvant, oui, moins émouvant…” (less moving). Whether editorial, translatorial, or more likely a mixture of both, these choices for the opening of Toby’s story anchor it quite clearly within a familiar strand of British children’s literature, the high or portal fantasy (of the Lewis, Pullman, or Rowling kind). But that anchoring is not nostalgic; in many ways Ardizzone’s beginning is also more resolutely modern than Fombelle’s, aligning with a contemporary appetite for in-media-res incipits in children’s literature. While Fombelle’s Tobie’s immobile, quasi-philosophical musing about stars and sky has an Exupéry tinge to it, Ardizzone’s Toby, while no less observant of the beauties of the universe, is clearly a little boy on the run, whose body is as present to the text as his contemplation of the sky.

One reading of such a strategy, through the lens of, for instance, Lawrence Venuti’s controversial theorisation (1995, 1998), could be to note – to deplore it or otherwise – the domestication of the source text. Yet this would be unfairly reductive. The translation’s contours are not fixed, but shifting, dynamic. Further along, Ardizzone’s translation snaps back swiftly to espousing closer the silhouette of Fombelle’s text, with the occasional deft, little sidesteps. This translated opening has something to say about the very category of the children’s book opening. *Toby Alone* does not simplify, but plays with, stretches, questions, the genre expectations that the French text sets, highlighting with particular vigour by contrast the existing strangeness of that text. Arguably, Ardizzone’s text, by overemphasising in small touches the more conventional nature of Toby’s adventure – its genericity, its action-packedness – draws special attention also, by contrast, to the delicately alien nature of its aesthetic, to its spiritual considerations, and to its contemplativeness. By doing small detours through action, activeness, adventure, Ardizzone activates scripts that are joyfully at odds with the rest of the opening; she allows the reader the distance necessary to appreciate, all the more acutely, the dips into thoughtfulness that this opening affords. The translation, therefore, yields neither to foreignization nor to domestication proper: rather, it works dynamically within that space, shifting strategy from one sentence to the next, from one moment of the story (the incipit) to the other. Those translatorial and editorial choices, whether intuitive or strategic, are not reifiable as either packed with difference or comfortably homely. Rather, they work in-between, participating in the complex elaboration, for an audience fundamentally unused to books in translation, of a kind of surprised delight which hints at an *écart* without falling into considerations of *difference*.

This is one kind of analysis only. We can also look at the corpus through distant reading, exploring the publishing system in whatever amount of resistance and giving-in it displays towards the European market. Interesting work by Sinéad Cussen suggests that there is no systematicity in how much publishers play on, and how much they refuse, the label of translation for purposes of promotion (2017). The marshalling of translation within its own category (as is the case for the Marsh award), or its inclusion within prestigious awards (such as the Carnegie) is an important dimension to consider.

We can look, also, at the friendliness of the British educational and para-educational system to the notion that a book given to children could and should allow for experiences of *écart*. The promotion in the UK of a “reading for pleasure” agenda (for an overview, see Clark and Rumbold 2006) while doubtlessly precious in many ways, might have implications for translations. What is meant conceptually by pleasure, and the extent to which that definition of pleasure stretches to the potentially destabilising experiences of reading in translation, must be critically explored. Another prominent and fascinating development of the promotion of translation in the UK, in the form of translation workshops such as the ones provided by Translators in Schools, is worthy of investigation.

Such approaches amount to reflecting on the acceptance, or lack thereof, of aesthetics of *écart* in the translation of children’s literature in the UK, always bearing in mind the commitment inherent to that type of literature in this country. They require being a committed critic oneself, as well as, if possible, a committed translator, leader of translation workshops, promoter of translated literature. There is clear crossover between the work of the scholar and that of the translator in that endeavour. Both have the ability to stand in-between two languages and two cultures; placed among the best people to feel that *grand écart* – splits – they are perhaps among the best people to spot it, reflect about it, and help others wander within it and wonder about it.

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