



An Exiled Poet adapts Plato: Théophile de Viau's *Traité de l'immortalité de l'âme* and the *Phaedo*

Hugh Roberts¹

Accepted: 11 March 2020
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In June 1619, the notorious poet Théophile de Viau (1590–1626) was banished for supposedly atheistic and obscene writings, according to a report in the *Mercure françois*.¹ Whatever the true reasons for this exile – it doubtless had more to do with rival factions at court than with unorthodoxy or lewdness (the poet was in the service of the Duc de Candale and had thereby fallen foul of Louis XIII's favourite, the Duc de Luynes²) – Théophile used part of his time away from Paris at his place of birth, the village of Boussères in south-west France, to continue writing.³ This included, strikingly, an idiosyncratic version of Plato's *Phaedo*, the *Traité de l'immortalité de l'âme, ou la mort de Socrate* (*Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul, or The Death of Socrates*). Following Théophile's recall from exile in March–April 1620 by his erstwhile adversary and new-found protector, Luynes, his writings were collected for the first edition of his *Œuvres* (1621); the *Traité* could scarcely be more prominent: it takes up almost half of the volume, is the first piece, and the subject of three of the works' four prefatory verses.⁴ The

¹ Research for this article was enabled by a Prize Fellowship awarded by the Society for French Studies, 2018–19. I also gratefully acknowledge comments from my colleagues at the University of Exeter, Dr Helena Taylor and especially Dr Adam Horsley, in addition to the very generous guidance by the two anonymous reviewers. The *Mercure françois*, V, 1619, p. 65, refers, among other things, to 'escrits athees et sales' ('atheistic and filthy writings'); digitized version by the Groupe de recherches interdisciplinaires sur l'histoire du littéraire (GRIHL), <<http://mercurefrançois.ehess.fr/picture.php?8302/category/61>> [accessed 4 February 2020].

² Théophile de Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. G. Saba, 3 vols, Paris, 1999, I, p. xv; unless otherwise stated, all references to Théophile's works will be to this edition. For the context of court politics especially, see also L. Godard de Donville, 'Théophile et son milieu dans les années précédant son procès', *Théophile de Viau: actes du Colloque du CMR 17 offerts en hommage à Guido Saba*, ed. R. Duchêne, Paris etc., 1991, pp. 31–44.

³ See Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, pp. 276–7.

⁴ *Les Œuvres du sieur Theophile*, Paris, 1621. The publication history of this first edition is complex: an anonymous preface to the *Œuvres* notes that, in the author's absence (Théophile was in England at the beginning of 1621), unnamed editors have gathered his works together, but they expect him to order and correct them in a second edition, sig. e3^v. The precise circumstances of its publication lie beyond the scope of this article; note, however, that Théophile never denied that he had composed the *Traité*, which

✉ Hugh Roberts
H.G.A.Roberts@exeter.ac.uk

¹ University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

topic of the immortality of the soul was fraught with danger at this time: immediately before its report on Théophile's exile, the *Mercure françois* gives an account of the execution of the Italian philosopher Lucilio Vanini in Toulouse, on the grounds that he had upheld, among other blasphemous views, that 'nos corps estoient sans ame, et que mourans tout estoit mort pour nous, ainsi que des bestes brutalles' ('our bodies had no soul and that in dying everything dies for us, like for brute beasts').⁵ Théophile was presumably drawn to a topic that was at once relevant and risk-filled, all the more to prove his mettle in his *Œuvres*.

Given the circumstances of its composition, the perils of the subject-matter, and its strategic placement in the *Œuvres*, it would be natural to think that Théophile, in adapting Plato, might seek to counteract the accusations of atheism that had been publicized by his recent exile. Yet this is not the case: Théophile makes no obvious effort to present the *Traité* in Christian terms, meaning that he is out of step with most other writers who had dealt with this material or topic.⁶ The *Phaedo* had been the subject of an explicitly and conspicuously Christian rendering in Loys Le Roy (Regius)'s mid sixteenth-century French translation, *Le Phédon de Platon traitant de l'immortalité de l'ame*.⁷ Similarly, Jean de Serres (Serranus), who produced a famous Greek edition and Latin translation of Plato to which we shall return, also penned a lengthy treatise, *De l'immortalité de l'ame* (1596), containing clear attempts to turn Plato into a proto-Christian, including, for example:

[Platon] afferme que Dieu est la vraye lumiere de l'homme, la cause souveraine de verité, d'honnesteté, de tout bien. Il enseigne clairement que l'homme est CRÉÉ A L'IMAGE DE DIEU: et qu'en ceste similitude gist toute sa dignité et excellence.⁸

[[Plato] affirms that God is the true light of man, the sovereign cause of truth, virtue, of all good. He clearly teaches that man is CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD and that in this resemblance lies all his dignity and excellence.]

Footnote 4 (continued)

remains as the first piece in the third edition (Paris, 1623, which is also the base text for Saba's edition). For the *Œuvres* of 1621, see A. Adam, *Théophile de Viau et la libre pensée française en 1620*, Paris, 1935, pp. 199–204; on the history of publications associated with Théophile more generally, see H.-J. Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris, au xvii^e siècle: 1598–1701*, 2 vols, Geneva, 1969, I, pp. 431–4.

⁵ *Mercure françois*, V, 1619, p. 64, <<http://mercurefrancois.ehess.fr/picture.php?/8301/category/61>>. This translation and subsequent ones from French are by me.

⁶ For the Renaissance reception of the *Phaedo*, see C. S. Celenza, 'The Revival of Platonic philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. J. Hankins, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 72–96 (including how Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444) characterized the *Phaedo* as 'a confirmation of the true faith', p. 77); Renaissance philosophy tends, unsurprisingly, to align Plato and the topic with Christian theology, see P. R. Blum, 'The Immortality of the Soul', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, pp. 211–33. In contrast, according to D. Robichaud, *Plato's Persona: Marsilio Ficino, Renaissance Humanism, and Platonic Tradition*, Philadelphia, 2018, p. 129, Ficino's famous *De amore* (1484), a commentary on the *Symposium*, also lacks 'overt Christian references', although this 'does not make the work anti-Christian'.

⁷ *Le Phédon de Platon traitant de l'immortalité de l'ame*, Paris, 1553; there were at least two other editions, in 1581 and 1600.

⁸ *De l'immortalité de l'ame*, Lyon, 1596; there was another edition published in Rouen the following year; see also J.-P. Chauveau, 'Le Traicté de l'Immortalité de l'Ame, ou la Mort de Socrate', *Théophile de Viau: actes du Colloque du CMR 17*, pp. 45–61 (54 and n. 1). For later seventeenth-century French treatises on the topic, see I. Moreau, "Guérir du sot": *Les stratégies d'écriture des libertins à l'âge classique*, Paris, 2007, p. 561, n. 3.

Yet there are no such comments nor Christianizing glosses in the *Traité*. Théophile is setting himself apart, in a potentially dangerous way. Equally, however, the work does not contain any obvious declarations of unorthodox views. It is a provocative enigma, onto which readers are liable to project what they want to find within it.

The *Traité* was in fact almost immediately the subject of very different readings in the polemics that engulfed the poet, not least during his imprisonment and trial, 1623–5, for allegedly unorthodox views and dissolute personal morality. Indeed, the two main protagonists in the campaign against Théophile, the Jesuit firebrand, François Garasse, and the chief prosecutor, Mathieu Molé, who were so often in agreement, differ in their views on this work. According to Garasse, writing in his lengthy tirade against alleged free-thinkers or *libertins*, *La Doctrine curieuse* (1623), Théophile decided to devote much of his exile to penning the *Traité* in order hypocritically to claim an orthodox belief in the immortality of the soul.⁹ In contrast, for the prosecutor Molé, the *Traité* is full of dangerous ideas, given what he views as the obvious inadequacy of Plato's arguments.¹⁰ Nor is there any consensus in the modern scholarship on the *Traité*, which varies between seeing it as a devious means of expressing subversive views to considering it to be a faithful translation.¹¹

In this article, I shall address how such divergent views are not an aberration but a result of a deliberate set of strategies on Théophile's part. Instead of maintaining that he hides atheistic or even Christian views behind a mask, I shall argue instead that his version of the *Phaedo* is one of many ways in which he experiments with a variety of voices to create a persona - Théophile - who cannot be pinned down to a consistent set of beliefs. He forms instead a kind of literary creation of differing and sometimes contradictory stances deriving from these voices. While many critics have identified such disguises in Théophile's later writings, when he intervenes in the scandal that

⁹ *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou prétendus tels*, Paris, 1623, pp. 885–6.

¹⁰ F. Lachèvre, *Le Procès du poète Théophile de Viau (11 juillet 1623–1^{er} septembre 1625): publication intégrale des pièces inédites des Archives nationales*, 2 vols, Paris, 1909, I, pp. 373–5.

¹¹ For Adam, *Théophile de Viau* (n. 4 above), pp. 174–8, the *Traité* allows Théophile discreetly to express unorthodox ideas like those of Bruno and Vanini, both of whom were of course executed for their views, while using Plato's original as a kind of shield. Other critics disagree and claim that the *Traité* is a faithful, albeit somewhat free, translation, which can even probably be reconciled with Catholic orthodoxy; this latter group includes Chauveau, 'Le *Traicté*' (n. 8 above) and G. Saba, *Théophile de Viau: un poète rebelle*, Geneva, 2008, pp. 131–9. Having taken the decision that the *Traité* is a translation, G. Saba's critical edition unfortunately only offers variants, and no notes that might have elucidated where Théophile follows or departs from Plato. The most extended study to date is M. Folliard, 'Le *Traicté de l'Immortalité de l'Âme* de Théophile de Viau, ou les voix du traducteur', *Libertinage et philosophie au XVII^e siècle*, 11, 2009, pp. 71–116, which adopts a middle ground, treating the text as a translation but also drawing attention to unorthodox features. As such, the article contains many useful insights but it is often hard to follow as a consistent argument. R. A. Mazzara, 'The *Phaedo* and Théophile de Viau's *Traicté de l'immortalité de l'âme*', *The French Review*, 40, 1966, pp. 329–40, is mostly devoted to anachronistic comparisons between Théophile, Descartes and Pascal. Moreau, *Guérir du sot* (n. 8 above), pp. 101–2, summarizes the controversy surrounding the *Traité*. The few pages devoted to the *Traité* in J.-P. Cavallé, *Les Déniaisés: Irréligion et libertinage au début de l'époque moderne*, Paris, 2013, pp. 225–9, are probably the most helpful in establishing that the meaning of the work is unclear and that its status as a translation far from obvious.

has engulfed him, the *Traité* has scarcely been studied from this angle.¹² His use of classical works testifies to experimentation with different personae, including that of Socrates in the *Phaedo*.¹³ The poet's approach may seem unusually modern, even postmodern, but it also draws, albeit in highly idiosyncratic ways, on well-established writing practices of the time, especially imitating an ancient model to demonstrate deep engagement with it as well as authorial innovation.¹⁴ Moreover, personification and prosopopoeia are themselves characteristic of Plato and the *Phaedo*, in which, after all, the philosopher gives voice to several dead or absent figures.¹⁵

Using the *Traité* as a case study while briefly comparing it to a selection of other, related works, I aim to show that it was always impossible to crack the de Viau code, so to speak. There is no way of identifying an authentic self behind the different voices Théophile adopts, however much the prosecution at his trial or indeed

¹² My view draws on J. DeJean, 'Une autobiographie en procès: l'affaire Théophile de Viau', *Poétique*, 48, 1981, pp. 431–48, in which she argues that the judges in Théophile's trial prosecute a fictional persona they have created from his own fiction (p. 431) and that in his use of his first name, 'Théophile', he has created 'un être situé en un sens au-delà de l'identité' (p. 438) ('a figure situated in some sense beyond identity'). Other critics have also drawn on DeJean's insights, including L. Giavarini, who discusses Théophile's 'persistance dans le simulacre' ('persistence of pretence') in 'Le libertin et la fiction-sorcière à l'âge classique. Remarques sur Dom Juan et Théophile', *Usages et théories de la fiction: Le débat contemporain à l'épreuve des textes anciens (xvi^e-xvii^e siècles)*, ed. F. Lavocat, Rennes, 2004, paragraph 39 <<http://books.openedition.org/pur/32703>>; <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.32703> [accessed 24 February 2020]. L. C. Seifert, *Manning the Margins: Masculinity and Writing in Seventeenth-Century France*, Ann Arbor, 2009, pp. 181–206 (186), argues that, especially in his writings from prison, 'Théophile presents a complex, multifaceted self ... he does not construct a single, authentic, prediscursive self, but rather invites readers to imagine multiple interpretations of his writings and of his very being'. I also agree with Folliard's similar argument, 'Le *Traicté*' (n. 11 above), p. 72, that Théophile creates an ambiguous authorial figure in the first edition of his *Œuvres*, but even his metaphor of a 'figure d'auteur proprement masquée' ('an authorial figure who is himself masked') is unhelpful, since it seems to assume precisely what is in question, namely an authentic authorial persona behind the mask. Similarly, in arguing that 'libertinage' was innately indirect and involved 'real dissimulation' in combination with dissimulation of thoughts, S. Van Damme begs the question, since he appears to presume a philosophical position somehow known behind the dissimulation, *L'épreuve libertine: morale, soupçon et pouvoirs dans la France baroque*, Paris, 2008, pp. 35, 37; in contrast, elsewhere the same author insists that 'libertinage' was a collective construction, formed by both its supposed adherents and its opponents: see 'Grandeur, affaire et épreuve libertine au xvii^e siècle: le cas Théophile de Viau', *Affaires, scandales et grandes causes: de Socrate à Pinochet*, ed. N. Offenstadt and S. Van Damme, Paris, 2007, pp. 151–76 (151–3). The latter view seems more plausible, based on the evidence of the *Traité* at least. For an overview of the historiographical difficulty of identifying any sincere view within early modern texts, including especially Théophile and other *libertins*, see P. Vesperini, *Lucrece: Archéologie d'un classique européen*, Paris, 2017, p. 243.

¹³ This is also true of the way he compares his exile to that of Ovid: see H. Taylor, *The Lives of Ovid in Seventeenth-Century French Culture*, Oxford 2017, pp. 107–24.

¹⁴ For a classic study of Renaissance *imitatio*, see T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*, Oxford, 1979, Part 1, chapter 2.

¹⁵ See Robichaud, *Plato's Persona* (n. 6 above), esp. chapters 1 and 3.

some scholarship may desire to do so.¹⁶ Theoretically, this may be true of all literary works, but Théophile is unusual in at once appearing to fashion an authorial persona and simultaneously make that persona as undefined as possible. The challenges faced by the prosecution in some ways confirm this dynamic, which I maintain was already part of the works themselves, including, not least, the enigmatic *Traité*.¹⁷ The text and the surrounding controversy provide significant insights into both the status of Plato's work during the Counter-Reformation and the associated risks of translation or adaptation of ancient texts more generally. When approaching Théophile's work, there is a risk of considering it predominantly in the terms of the trial, which only give us a certain number of highly charged views. To mitigate this, I shall address the trial in the first part of the article, but consider the original work more widely in the second part. By comparing the *Traité* with the *Phaedo*, I seek to address questions of the means and ends of Théophile's engagement with Plato. Close reading of the *Traité* alongside intertextual clues in other works are the best guide to what the poet may be attempting to do. Given constant adjustments, at different levels, it follows that the traces left by Théophile, so to speak, will include omissions, additions, and passages in which he chooses apparently more faithful paraphrase. A wantonly strange work, somewhere between translation, paraphrase and poetic adaptation, the *Traité* constitutes a remarkable instance of the reception of Plato that practically became a matter of life and death, given how it was used alongside other works among numerous attempts to incriminate the poet.

The title in all editions published in Théophile's lifetime, 'Traité de l'immortalité de l'âme ou la mort de Socrate par Théophile', gives the poet great prominence, treating him as the author who would therefore be responsible for it. The likelihood that we are not dealing with a straightforward translation is made even clearer by the fact that Théophile opens with 114 lines of verse, and he subsequently alternates between prose and poetry throughout.¹⁸ Théophile thereby usurps Plato, implicitly at least, upsetting the normal power relation between purported translator and author and even between poetry and philosophy. Yet since any educated reader would have recognized Théophile's principal source, this can scarcely be considered an inept case of plagiarism, but the title remains provocative. Indeed, it played a significant part in the first interrogation of Théophile on 22 March 1624 as if, writing in exile, he had foreseen both the impending controversy and a line of defence:

Dem. – Luy avons remonstré qu'il a fait intituller ledit livre non en forme de traduction ny de paraphrase, mais comme un traicté de sa composition.

¹⁶ I use the term 'prosecution' as a shorthand to refer to a complex combination of judges and the chief prosecutor, Molé; for a detailed account of the legal system in operation at Théophile's trial, see A. Horsley, *Libertines and the Law: Subversive Authors and Criminal Justice in Early Seventeenth-Century France*, Oxford, forthcoming.

¹⁷ See DeJean's similar point, 'Une autobiographie en procès' (n. 12 above), p. 445, that 'dans son œuvre, Théophile semble aller au-devant de sa propre condamnation' ('in his work, Théophile seems to seek out his own condemnation').

¹⁸ Chauveau's claim, 'Le *Traicté*' (n. 8 above), p. 54, that 'nous avons affaire à une véritable, attentive, scrupuleuse traduction' ('we are dealing with a genuine, attentive and scrupulous translation'), is not credible; see Cavallé's comment, *Les Déniaisés* (n. 11 above), p. 228: '[il faut] insister sur le fait que ce texte n'est pas une simple "traduction"' ('the fact that this text is not a simple "translation" must be stressed').

Rép. – A dit qu'il n'est pas simplement intitulé *L'Immortalité de l'Ame*, mais *la Mort de Socrate et Phédon* et ne se peut entendre que du *Diallogue* de Platon.¹⁹

[*Qu.* – We set before him that he had entitled said book not in the form of a translation nor of a paraphrase, but as a treatise of his own composition.

Ans. – He said that it is not simply entitled *The Immortality of the Soul*, but *the Death of Socrates* and *Phaedo* and can only be understood as Plato's *Diallogue*.]

Obviously, the prosecution seeks to force an admission of authorial responsibility that would be dangerous given not only that they had argued that the work contains 'mauvaises maximes' ('bad precepts') but also that Théophile had admitted to writing it, whereas he simply denies authorship of most of the poetry signed by him in contemporary collections and/or attributed to him at trial.²⁰ Although his defence in this instance is in many ways unconvincing, since the *Traité*'s subtitle does not state that the work is by Plato, not Théophile, the fact that the *Phaedo* was so well known presumably saves the poet at this point.

There is an understandable degree of confusion in the prosecution's case as to what type of work they are dealing with, whether it is a translation or a paraphrase, these terms being used more or less interchangeably, or a more original treatise. The prosecutor was particularly sensitive to the ambiguous status of the work, which cannot be said to be any one thing precisely because Théophile, as I shall show, is constantly shifting between more or less faithful paraphrases and varying degrees of liberty. Writing in his notes for the interrogation, Molé argues that its hybrid nature allows Théophile to hide behind Plato as far as its unorthodox views are concerned, while simultaneously basking in the glory of writing about the immortality of the soul:

[Théophile] s'est contenté d'imiter un païen, sous le nom du Phaedon de Platon, pour, sous tel nom, autoriser le mal qui est dedans, afin que, d'un côté, on pût dire que Théophile a écrit de l'immortalité de l'âme, comme le titre du livre le porte, et que, d'autre part, sous ces deux noms païens, il pût faire passer la croyance qu'il veut établir.²¹

[[Théophile] made do with imitating a pagan, under the name of Plato's *Phaedo*, to lend authority, under such a name, to the evil that lies within,

¹⁹ Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, p. 374; an anonymous ode prefacing the *Œuvres* (1621), is addressed 'A Théophile, sur sa paraphrase de la mort de Socrate, ou de l'immortalité de l'ame' ('To Théophile, on his paraphrase of the death of Socrates, or the immortality of the soul'). The poet also mentions Plato in the first stanza. Théophile however does not draw on this poem in his defence.

²⁰ Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, p. 372–3; Théophile's tactic of denying authorship in the majority of cases was broadly successful, as in the end he was exiled, not executed; see A. Horsley, 'Strategies of Accusation and Self-Defence at the Trial of Théophile de Viau (1623–25)', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 44, 2016, pp. 157–77.

²¹ Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, p. 374, n. 1; Lachèvre publishes these notes alongside his transcription of the trial.

such that, on the one hand, it might be said that Théophile has written on the immortality of the soul, as the book's title has it, and that, on the other hand, under these two pagan names, he might insinuate the belief he wishes to establish.]

The alleged evils contained in the *Traité* include the theory of knowledge as recollection and the doctrine of metempsychosis, in other words undeniable features of the *Phaedo* (see 73a-76e and 81e-82b respectively). For the prosecution, these and similar arguments are so obviously weak they are part of an underhand strategy to sap belief in the immortality of the soul more generally. They argue that he was wrong to draw on Plato on this topic in the first place and that he should instead have considered it according to the Church fathers and theologians.²² It is hard not to sympathise with Théophile's response that all those who have translated Plato and similar ancient works could be considered as guilty as him in this respect.²³ Admittedly, in this Counter-Reformation context, too much focus on pagan authors apparently at the expense of Scripture could provoke suspicion, hence, for example, Garasse attacks Étienne Pasquier (1529-1615) as a *libertin*, partly on the grounds that he had the *Phaedo* read to him on his death bed.²⁴ Yet the Jesuit's view does not imply a wholesale rejection of pagan texts, since even he does not condemn Théophile for translating one. By incriminating almost anyone who deals with such ancient works, the prosecution inadvertently let the poet off the hook and demonstrate a certain degree of ineptitude.

When they try again to tackle Théophile on the *Traité* after reconvening for his second interrogation on 26 March 1624, they adopt a different tactic, citing a specific passage, which, alongside allegedly similar elements in his *Œuvres*, seem to incriminate the poet. They argue that the verses 'l'âme dans un corps vivant ... En la mort n'est qu'un peu de vent | Qui se perd comme une fumée' ('the soul in a living body ... in death is only a bit of wind which is lost like smoke') show that 'ce n'est de nous après la mort que de l'ombre et du vent, qui est à dire qu'il n'y a rien en nous d'immortel' ('the only thing that is left of us after death is a shadow and wind, which amounts to saying that there is nothing in us that is immortal').²⁵ Unfortunately for the prosecution, this part of the dialogue corresponds to *Phaedo*, 70a, in which the speaker Cebes mentions this view as something that some people believe. In this instance, Théophile is clearly justified in his defence that he has reproduced Plato's presentation of the dialogue, albeit putting it into verse.²⁶ The prosecution needed to do more homework. They return to their more general attack, perhaps with some desperation, at Théophile's final interrogation on 27 August 1625, when they accuse him of making a mockery of theology in the *Traité*. Théophile responds by arguing that the work 'n'est qu'une traduction qu'il a faite pour monstrier que,

²² Ibid., I, p. 373.

²³ Ibid., I, p. 375.

²⁴ *Recherches des recherches et autres œuvres de M^e Estienne Pasquier*, Paris, 1622, cited in Cavaillé, *Les Déniaisés* (n. 11 above), p. 223.

²⁵ Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, pp. 390-1; Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 29.

²⁶ Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, p. 391.

puisque Platon avoit quelque sentiment de Dieu, qu'à plus forte rayson les chrestiens en doibvent avoyr' ('is only a translation that he did to show that, since Plato had some sense of God, then there is all the more reason that Christians must have one'). In his defence, Théophile presents an argument designed to appeal to a Christian audience, of a kind that is conspicuously absent from the *Traité*. The prosecution finally accuse him of not being faithful to Plato: 'il sait bien que Platon en a traicté tout autrement et qu'il [i.e., Théophile] a voullu [faire] croyre que l'âme consiste au sang et qu'il n'y a point d'immortalité' ('he well knows that Plato dealt with the topic entirely differently and that he [i.e., Théophile] wanted to [make people] believe that the soul consists in blood and that there is no immortality'), but the poet's standard defence of saying that he had never thought in this way and that he did not even know those who accused him of it seems to hold sway, as this is the last mention of the *Traité* at his trial.²⁷

In addition to translation and paraphrase, Molé accuses the poet of having 'imit[é] un païen' – doubtless this would involve an increased level of authorial responsibility, hence the risk for Théophile.²⁸ In present-day translation theory, it may be considered unhelpful to attempt to differentiate between translations, versions and adaptations, as such distinctions tend to presume an objective standard of correctness and a passive reader, neither of which are given, as Théophile's case itself makes clear.²⁹ Yet naturally when translation becomes a legal concern these differences, however flimsy in theory, do matter. In 1546, Étienne Dolet was condemned to death in part because of his translation of a Latin version of a dialogue then attributed to Plato, *Axiochus*, and in particular his rendering of a phrase relating to human mortality, 'futura non enim eris' ('for in the future you will not be') becoming 'apres la mort tu ne seras plus rien du tout' ('after death you will no longer be anything at all') in Dolet's version; the French translator was held criminally responsible for the addition, which emphasizes, presumably for stylistic effect, the point made in the *Axiochus*.³⁰ I do not mean to suggest that there is a direct link between Dolet's condemnation and Théophile's presentation of the *Traité* over seventy years later, despite the tantalizing link given that both concern Platonic discussions of immortality. I do however argue that presenting the work along a kind of spectrum of translation, paraphrase and adaptation allows Théophile a degree of leeway in his defence that was unavailable to Dolet, not least because it was harder to pin the former down on the intricacies of his translation.

²⁷ Ibid., I, p. 500.

²⁸ I am indebted to Adam Horsley for this point; for an extended study of the role of *imitatio* in the case against Théophile; see 'A Last Stand: The Trial of Théophile de Viau (1623–25)', in Horsley, *Libertines and the Law* (n. 16 above).

²⁹ See, e.g., S. Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3rd ed., New York, 2002, pp. 81–2. According to L. Venuti, it seems that early modern translations, especially in courtly contexts on both sides of the Channel in the early seventeenth century, allowed for a higher degree of freedom than in the present day; *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd edn, Abingdon and New York, 2008, pp. 38–40. It nevertheless remains true that the licence Théophile takes exceeds the bounds of even such comparatively free contemporary standards.

³⁰ See V. Worth, *Practising Translation in Renaissance France: The Example of Étienne Dolet*, Oxford, 1988, p. 80.

Even following his trial, in his *Apologie au roi* (1625), Théophile insists 'que c'estoit un ouvrage de Platon, que je l'avois traduit sans m'esloigner du sens de l'Autheur' ('that it was a work by Plato and that I had translated it without departing from the author's meaning').³¹ Yet on the next page he happily admits that 'il y a plusieurs endroits que j'ay en quelque façon desguizez pour les tourner à l'avantage de nostre creance' ('there are several passages that I have in some way disguised to turn them to the advantage of our faith'), which is obviously hard to reconcile with his claim of faithful translation. The vagueness of 'en quelque façon', like the overarching generic ambiguity of a supposed translation that he also calls a 'version ou paraphrase sur l'immortalité de l'ame' ('version or paraphrase on the immortality of the soul'), all point to a strategy of seeking maximum credit for an adaptation of another's work with minimum authorial responsibility.³² The prosecution's failings are not therefore wholly the result of a lack of attention to detail. Théophile's presentation of the *Traité* deliberately makes it hard to identify where, so to speak, Plato ends and Théophile begins. From the title page onwards, the poet strongly suggests that he has adapted the dialogue to make it his own by omitting to mention Plato, but, beyond the implicit indication that the reader should be alive to his innovations, he gives no other guide as to what his originality consists in, all the better to protect himself.

Nevertheless, Théophile's repeated claims at trial and elsewhere that the *Traité* was 'un discours qu'il a fait en parafrasant le *Phédon* de Platon' ('a discourse he did by paraphrasing Plato's *Phaedo*') and that he did not depart from the author's meaning are tenuous.³³ Oddly, the prosecution scarcely challenges him to justify these points. They do not, for example, ask him to identify his source text(s), which would have allowed them to compare the original(s) with his supposed paraphrase. According to Melaine Folliard, Théophile mostly drew on Jean de Serres's Latin translation of the *Phaedo*.³⁴ It is certainly not implausible that Théophile drew on this version to some degree, as he was an excellent Latinist and author of several Neo-Latin pieces. However, despite some similarities between Serres's Latin and Théophile's French, to consider the former as the source text misses the point of how far the poet departs from the *Phaedo* for so much of the *Traité*. Admittedly, in some extended passages Théophile is close to Plato, even when he puts the philosopher into verse; hence the prosecution's failed attempt to tackle him on the point of detail during his second interrogation, discussed above. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the *Phaedo* enters into technical philosophical discussions of the nature of opposites and on number theory, the corresponding passages of the *Traité* remain

³¹ *Apologie au roi*, s.l., 1626, p. 19, cited in Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, pp. 368–9; see also Cavaillé, *Les Déniaisés* (n. 11 above), p. 228, and Horsley, *Libertines and the Law*.

³² *Apologie au roi* (n. 31 above), p. 20.

³³ Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, pp. 373–4.

³⁴ See the famous three-volume, 2000-page edition of Plato, *Opera*, Geneva, ed. and transl. Jean de Serres, 1578, which has parallel Greek and Latin text and copious glosses, and which is the source of the Stephanus numbering still used to refer to Plato's works; see Folliard, 'Le *Traicté*' (n. 11 above), p. 74, n. 13, in which he cites a number of lexical similarities between Théophile's and Serres's versions.

close to Plato's original.³⁵ Yet there are countless examples of the opposite phenomenon, at both a macro- and a micro-level.

For instance, from the very outset, he alters the entire presentation by dispensing with Plato's framing dialogue between Echecrates and Phaedo, which had naturally been adopted by Le Roy and Serres.³⁶ Instead, Théophile's version begins with Phaedo (Phédon) speaking in verse, but unlike in Plato he is not clearly presented as the narrator. He is a witness, who reappears later in the *Traité*, as in Plato, but the clear, fictional and somewhat theatrical framing of the dialogue is replaced by a more opaque structure, in which it is not clear who the narrator, fictional or otherwise, is. Akin to omitting Plato's name on the *Traité*'s title-page, Théophile also omits Phaedo's allusion to Plato himself, in which he states that the philosopher was ill and unable to be at his master's side at his death (59b). Such a suppression of both the author and the narrator points to a wider strategy of a generalized autonomy of expression, as if the *Traité* emerged from the kind of transcendent realm it describes (107c–115a). Similarly, in the course of the *Traité* itself, the division between different speakers is less clear than in the *Phaedo*.³⁷ This is nowhere more apparent than a disconcerting moment when an unnamed speaker intervenes to address Phédon,³⁸ a passage that corresponds to a return to the framing dialogue between Phaedo and Echecrates in the original (88c–89a), as if Théophile had forgotten that he had dispensed with it. He reinstates Echecrates later in the dialogue, including in the final sentence, but without explanation or, therefore, coherence.³⁹ The resultant difficulty of identifying who is speaking, narrating, authoring, or translating/paraphrasing, very much impinges on the case for the prosecution, who seek to attribute the *Traité*'s words to the poet, and also of course meshes with Théophile's defence, which is to deny authorship.

Théophile also makes significant adjustments on a micro-level. Take, for example, the moment at which the *Traité* first moves from verse to prose, which the reader might reasonably expect to signal a move from freer adaptation to closer paraphrase or even translation. The point in question corresponds to *Phaedo*, 60a, in which Socrates asks for his wife, Xanthippe, to be taken away: 'Socrates turned to Crito and said: "Crito, someone had better take her home." Some of Crito's people started to take her away, crying and beating herself in her grief.'⁴⁰ Comparing Serres's, Le Roy's, and Théophile's versions of this passage clearly shows the latter has strayed well beyond translation and even standard paraphrase too:

³⁵ Hence, e.g., Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, pp. 80–90, correspond to *Phaedo*, 103a–105d.

³⁶ See Folliard, 'Le *Traicté*' (n. 11 above), pp. 106–8, for whom this constitutes a replacement of the framing dialogue with another, between Phédon and the reader. This latter point seems unlikely, as there is no explicit address to the reader.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 112, where Folliard calls this 'la prolifération et brouillage des instances de l'énonciation' ('the multiplication and mixing of instances of utterance').

³⁸ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 80 and 117, corresponding to *Phaedo*, 102a–b and 118a.

⁴⁰ Plato, *Meno and Phaedo*, ed. D. Sedley, transl. A. Long, Cambridge, 2010; all English translations taken from this edition.

[Serres:] conversis ad Critonem oculis Socrates, Hanc ait, Crito, velim mulierem aliquis alio abducat. Illam igitur Critonis famuli aliqui abduxerunt clamantem et eiulantem.

[Le Roy:] Socrates se tournant vers Criton luy dit: je vous prie Criton, que quelqu'un remeine ceste femme à la maison, et incontinent quelques serviteurs de Criton la remenerent criant et demenant grand dueil.⁴¹

[Théophile:] Socrate, sans s'émouvoir pour la désolation de sa femme, comme du tout insensible à sa perte et à la douleur des siens: je vous prie, dit-il, ramenez-moi cette femme en la maison. Un des domestiques de Criton qui se trouva là, la conduisit chez elle.⁴²

[[Le Roy:] Socrates, turning towards Crito, said: 'Crito, please ensure that someone takes this woman home'. Immediately some of Crito's servants took her back, crying out and lamenting.

[Théophile:] Socrates, unmoved by his wife's desolation, as if he were entirely unfeeling about her loss and about the grief of her entourage: 'Please', he said, 'take this woman home.' One of Crito's servants who was there led her home.]

Théophile's considerable addition shifts the focus away from Xanthippe's grief to Socrates's indifference. The latter is probably part of an overarching and paradoxically positive characterization of the philosopher's control over his emotions, in contrast to his wife, especially in the face of his impending death. The 'comme' mitigates the impression that Socrates is merely unfeeling, to suggest that he is putting on an act of unconcern; it also prefigures his actual death by showing both his bravery and his unwillingness to be side-tracked by other people's emotional responses. All this is implicit in Plato, but whereas the latter presumably downplays Socrates's role in the episode in order to mirror the way Socrates himself attempts to downplay things, Théophile chooses to emphasize its shocking nature, to drive home how unusual the philosopher is. Oddly, Théophile also changes from plural to singular the number of escorts Xanthippe requires to take her home, suggesting that she too is more controlled than Plato has it, as if Socrates's detachment had immediately transferred to her, so she no longer cries out in the *Traité*.

Such adjustments doubtless stretch Théophile's case that he has not departed from the author's meaning beyond breaking point. Yet they can scarcely be considered a hanging offence, suggesting again that many of Théophile's innovations lie beyond the terms of his trial. In contrast, a passing reference to the *Traité* in a co-authored chapter on Théophile's writings about friendship makes the claim that the work is a 'brilliant portrayal' of Socrates as an exponent of 'Lucretian naturalism', not Platonic theology, but that the judges had difficulty demonstrating the presence of Epicurus in the work, in which, moreover, the translator has some digressions

⁴¹ *Le Phédon de Platon* (n. 7 above), p. 33.

⁴² Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 12.

following the New Testament.⁴³ If this were true, it might constitute the kind of hanging offence the prosecution sought. Yet the authors cite no evidence to support their views. They thereby go to extremes that even Théophile's judges did not reach, while still failing to note that the *Traité* is not a straightforward translation.⁴⁴ To return to Théophile, following his exile, more than one reader would have been alive to possible associations between the poet and the protagonist of the *Traité*, Socrates, who awaits 'arrêts mortels de la cour' ('life-and-death judgements of the court') at the outset, not unlike the exiled poet.⁴⁵ Such a link was a potentially charged one: according to the *Mercure françois*, at his execution Vanini proclaimed 'allons, allons, mourons allaiement en philosophe' ('come on! come on! let's die a joyful philosophical death!'), in other words a death showing not only Socratic courage and equanimity but also defiance of oppressive forces.⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, Théophile is much less bold but he does nevertheless suggest potential associations with the ancient philosopher. Early in the dialogue, Socrates discusses the poems he has been told to compose in dreams (60e–61a). Théophile turns these dream voices instructing Socrates to write verse into verse, as if his poetic adaptation mirrored the philosopher's inspiration: 'Lors, les déesses des poètes, / Auparavant pour moi muettes, / Poussèrent leurs charmantes voix, / Firent un peu de poésie / D'un peu de fureur que j'avais' ('Then, the goddesses of the poets, who had previously been mute, cried out in their charming voices, and made a little poetry, of a little inspiration that I had').⁴⁷ An appeal to the Muses is commonplace in verse of this, like other, periods, and the *furor poeticus* was also a well-established notion in French poetry, particularly associated with the famous Pléiade of the second half of the sixteenth century. Indeed, Théophile's renderings, 'un peu de poésie' and 'un peu de fureur', are made bathetic by their repetition of a prosaic structure in successive lines.

The above references to the Muses are Théophile's addition, for Socrates only makes a somewhat oblique allusion to dedicating his verse to Apollo (61b).

⁴³ M. Folliard and S. Requémora-Gros, "'Une juste amitié m'excite le courage': l'amitié comme espace littéraire chez Théophile de Viau", in *Gueux, frondeurs, libertins, utopiens: autres et ailleurs du xvii^e siècle. Mélanges en l'honneur du professeur Pierre Ronzeaud*, ed. P. Chométy et S. Requémora-Gros, Aix-en-Provence, 2013, pp. 223–37 (230).

⁴⁴ For a wide-ranging critique of this tendency to treat Epicureanism, and Lucretius in particular, as catch-all terms, see Vesperini, *Lucrece* (n. 12 above), pp. 13 and 262–5 (on early seventeenth-century *libertins* specifically).

⁴⁵ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 10. For a different perspective on this point, see Folliard, 'Le *Traité*' (n. 11 above), pp. 108–12, which contains many helpful examples, but also some ideas that do not appear to be supported by the evidence cited, notably his claim that the association between Socrates and poetry as well as prophecy is ironic and amounts to a mockery of Christianity (p. 110).

⁴⁶ *Mercure françois*, V, 1619, p. 64, <<http://mercurefrancois.ehess.fr/picture.php?8301/category/61>>; Garasse repeats the anecdote in *La Doctrine curieuse*, cited in Cavaillé, *Les Déniaisés* (n. 11 above), p. 224; and, for the role of Socrates in *libertin* writing, see *ibid.*, pp. 221–63. The *Mercure françois* is itself doubtless drawing on another contemporary source, the *Histoire véritable de tout ce qui s'est fait et passé depuis le premier Janvier 1619 jusques à present, tant en Guyenne, Languedoc, Angoulmois, Rochelle, qui Limousin & autres lieux circonvoisins*, Paris, 1619, p. 10; see A. Horsley, 'Remarks on a Subversive Performance at the Trial of Giulio Cesare Vanini (1618–1619)', *Modern Language Review*, 110, 2015, pp. 85–103 (91–2).

⁴⁷ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 13.

Théophile omits Socrates's point that the dream was encouraging him to do what he was doing anyway, since philosophy is the highest form of art (or 'music', from μουσική, that is to say any art form presided over by the Muses, 61a). By again displacing philosophy in favour of poetry, Théophile gives the latter maximum prominence, even returning to the source of the very idea of *furor poeticus*, which had been revived following Ficino's translations and commentaries on Plato. This serves a strategic purpose, for it suggests that poetry answers to a higher authority of which the poet is a mere mouthpiece: Théophile intervenes in verse to suggest that the responsibility for such verse lies elsewhere, hence the Muses 'firent un peu de poésie', not the poet/Socrates himself. Théophile thereby adopts an imitative and ironic Socratic persona. Moreover, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates is also penning verse adaptations of Aesop (61b): as Théophile puts it, they are 'fables que j'ai prises d'Ésope, car de moi je ne me trouve point l'esprit inventif pour cela' ('fables that I took from Aesop, for I do not find in myself the creative mind for such things').⁴⁸ This would indicate that the link between Théophile and Socrates is even stronger than that suggested by their shared poetic inspiration: Socrates is versifying Aesop as Théophile is versifying Socrates.⁴⁹ In other words, at this point in the *Traité*, Théophile is imitating an imitator, in a way that very probably contributed to the prosecutor's impression, cited above, that the poet 's'est contenté d'imiter un païen' ('made do with imitating a pagan'). Perversely, however, even when apparently at his closest to Socrates, there is a key difference: Socrates turns to fables because he is *not* a poet but requires poetic subject-matter. In the same section of the *Phaedo*, Socrates says poets should write stories, not arguments, or, as Théophile has it, 'un poète doit travailler en cette matière plutôt qu'en autre discours' ('a poet should write in that way [i.e., fables] rather than other arguments').⁵⁰ The 'autre discours' would obviously include philosophical propositions that might incriminate their author. As a poet imitating a philosopher imitating a poet, Théophile establishes multiple levels in which poetic licence trumps philosophical engagement. The moral to his own fable is far from clear. The *Traité* is scarcely a treatise, let alone a fable. One of the key provocations in Théophile's writing as far as Garasse, the prosecution and even some modern scholarship are concerned, lies precisely in this deliberate slipperiness, the suggestion that, through imitation, he is engaging in, but never fully adopting, unorthodox and dangerous views. Théophile's strategic refusal to nail his colours to the mast in the *Traité* is itself an outrage and an incitement to the censor.

Even when declaring itself to be transcendent, poetry is also inevitably political, especially so for Théophile, who was so implicated in court factions. The *Traité* was, among other things, one of the poet's ways of re-establishing himself in that world. This is nowhere more obvious than in the anonymous ode prefacing the *Œuvres* of 1621 in which the *Traité* first appeared, 'A Théophile, sur sa paraphrase de la mort de Socrate, ou de l'immortalité de l'ame' ('To Théophile, on his paraphrase of the death of Socrates, or the immortality of the soul'). While the nature of such pieces

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 14.

⁴⁹ I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for this point.

⁵⁰ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 14.

is to offer hyperbolic praise, to be taken with a pinch of salt by any reader familiar with the genre, in this particular case the standard rhetoric becomes especially charged, as the author specifically mentions Théophile's exile and serves to bolster the latter's reputation. Not only does Théophile's style make Plato's 'divins escrits' ('divine writings') even more god-like, but the French poet, in eulogizing Louis XIII, is going to surpass Virgil's glorification of Augustus.⁵¹ The immortality of the soul transfers to the work devoted to it: 'l'invention nouvelle | D'un livre qui ne peut mourir, | Nous fai[t] voir l'ame immortelle' ('the new invention of a book that cannot die shows us the immortal soul') and, in spite of the malice of those who slander the poet, 'Tu ayes par tout l'univers, | Immortalisé dans tes vers | Ton innocence, avec ta gloire' ('You have immortalized your innocence along with your glory across the entire universe in your verses'). It is a trope to say that poetry bestows immortality but here it becomes a way of again placing poetry above philosophy, since it is the *Traité*, and especially Théophile's verse, not the *Phaedo*, that shows the soul to be immortal; Plato is doubly displaced, in fact, as the *Traité* becomes an 'invention nouvelle', no longer a mere paraphrase, and it is Théophile's innocence and glory that are immortalized, above and beyond the soul.

The *Traité* itself alludes to Théophile's situation in more covert ways. The poet takes particular advantage of a passage in the *Phaedo* in which Socrates warns of the grave dangers of becoming a 'hater of arguments' as a result of putting too much faith in people who prove themselves to be untrustworthy, when it would of course be better to see them as they truly are (89d-e), an important passage that establishes the conditions for free and open philosophical discussion exemplified by Plato's own dialogue. Théophile expands on this section considerably in verse, to argue against the grain of the *Phaedo* that when 'plusieurs ont abusé notre âme ... Les plus sacrés serments lui [notre esprit] laissent des ombrages | Et le font incrédule à tout autre qu'à soi' ('several have abused our soul ... The most sacred oaths cast a shadow on [our mind] and make it unbelieving to any other than itself').⁵² By using the term 'âme' here and elsewhere, Théophile suggests a link to the *Traité* as a whole, albeit that, in these and other lines, the soul in the poet's hands seems very worldly. The poet uses potentially inflammatory religious language to put the blame for his scepticism onto others who are not true to their 'sacrés serments'. This part of the *Traité* is reminiscent of the letter to the reader that also prefaces the *Œuvres* (1621). In this epistle, Théophile refers to the slander and outrage he has been subjected to but which, he claims, have not affected his mind nor altered the course of his life, very like 'l'homme de qui l'âme est vigoureuse et saine | Jamais de tels rebuts ne se laisse choquer' ('the man whose soul is vigorous and healthy never lets himself be shocked by such setbacks').⁵³ The duplicitous world as described in this part of the *Traité* is akin to the court as depicted in Théophile's letter: 'Les esprits des hommes

⁵¹ Théophile de Viau, *Œuvres*, s.l., 1621; Théophile also draws on the poet's capacity to immortalize his ruler in 'Au roi, sur son exil', id., *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, pp. 121–5; see Taylor, *Lives of Ovid* (n. 13 above), pp. 120–1.

⁵² Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 59.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 5–6 (for the letter to the reader) and 59.

sont faibles et divers partout, principalement à la cour' ('Men's minds are weak and fickle everywhere [and] principally at court').⁵⁴ This trope of anti-courtier writing allows Théophile to argue that exile is, perversely, a badge of honour:

En mon bannissement, j'étais infâme et criminel; depuis mon rappel, innocent et homme de bien Dans ce rebours de toutes choses, j'ai de l'obligation à mes infamies, qui, au vrai sens, se doivent appeler des faveurs de la renommée.⁵⁵
[In my banishment, I was infamous and criminal; since my recall, [I have been] innocent and a good man In this turning upside-down of all things, I'm obliged to my infamies, which, in truth, should be called the favours of renown.]

Such recasting of vices as virtues inevitably calls the entire moral order into question. It also recalls a key argument of the *Phaedo* that opposites come into being because of their opposites, including the just and unjust (70e).⁵⁶ This point that all things entail their opposite becomes a key but unacknowledged feature of much of Théophile's engagement with the *Phaedo*.

By associating himself with Socrates, and having Socrates expand upon politics well beyond what Plato has, Théophile turns the morally topsy-turvy world of court to his advantage. Hence in the conclusion to this section of verse, he suggests that he and, by implication, the king, are above the throng, and can deploy deception to control others:

Il faut un peu d'adresse à bien cueillir des roses,
Il faut bien du mystère à gouverner les gens,
Il faut de l'artifice à discerner les choses
Que n'ont jamais connu tous ces esprits changeants.⁵⁷

[You need a little skill effectively to gather roses,
You need some secrecy to govern people,
You need guile to discern things
That fickle minds have never known.]

⁵⁴ Ibid., I, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, pp. 5–6. As Seifert, *Manning the Margins* (n. 12 above), argues: 'Ambiguously, [Théophile] maintains both a distance from and a proximity to the banished self', p. 188; see also Taylor, *Lives of Ovid*, (n. 13 above), p. 119.

⁵⁶ Théophile reproduces the argument from opposites with apparent fidelity, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba, I, pp. 30–2.

⁵⁷ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 59; for Folliard, 'Le *Traité*' (n. 11 above), p. 111, n. 192, to associate politics with mystery is to align it with religion. It is true that 'mystère' derives from religious language, but in this context it appears much closer to the following definition: 'MYSTÈRE, se dit aussi de ce qu'on tient caché, qu'on ne veut pas découvrir. On ne doit pas pénétrer dans les *mysteres* des Grands, dans leurs secrets conseils' ("MYSTÈRE", is also used for what someone holds hidden, for what someone does not want to reveal. One must not enter into the *mysteres* of great people, in their secret councils'): A. Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, 3 vols, The Hague and Rotterdam, 1690, s.v. Randle Cotgrave's translations of 'artifice' are also helpful in understanding the range of associations of that term: 'Skill, cunning, workmanship; also, craft, subtility, guile, deceit', *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, London, 1611, s.v.

Whereas of course the entire thrust of Socrates' discussion in the *Phaedo* is about purifying oneself of worldly concerns to attain reality and god-like immortality, Théophile in these lines is very much of the world. He characterizes the philosopher in a thoroughly un-Platonic manner as a Machiavellian manipulator, in philosophy as well as politics, since Socrates goes on to comment that 'il y a un certain artifice à se servir des hommes et à les connaître ... tout de même il y a du mystère à se bien servir de quelques raisons et à les connaître' ('there is a certain guile in using and knowing men ... in the same way there is secrecy in using and knowing some arguments').⁵⁸ The illusion is part of seeing how things really are, but this implies that it is impossible to see through the mystery, for any distinction between artifice and sincerity or even reality becomes arbitrary at best. These lines enact the type of 'artifice' of which they speak, not least by putting them into a supposed paraphrase that is not one. To alert the reader to a manipulative 'mystère' and simultaneously render its decoding highly problematic if not impossible is very provocative, as it calls all of Théophile's claims into question. Hence when, for instance, his letter to the reader maintains that he wishes to show himself 'sans masque devant les plus rigoureux censeurs des écoles les plus Chrétiennes' ('without a mask in front of the most rigorous censors of the most Christian schools'),⁵⁹ the claim not to wear a mask may well, on Théophile's own terms, be part of the illusion, so to appear maskless is itself to be masked! Any moral stance on his account simultaneously implies its opposite, akin to Socrates's argument from opposites, mentioned above. Hence, Théophile teases and even wishes for Christian censors while at the same time allowing himself a way to deny their accusations. By perversely putting such apologies for deceit into the mouth of a philosopher famously committed to the truth, Théophile is, as it were, doubly masked.

On this reading, when the Socrates of the *Traité* makes claims about detachment from worldly concerns, they may form part of an underhand attempt on Théophile's part to imply that he is above the 'esprits changeants' of court, all the better to reintegrate himself into that world. Take, for example, Socrates's declaration:

Il faut donc bien philosopher tout le temps de notre vie pour atteindre à cette pureté qui nous porte au Ciel, et l'esprit qui se voue de bonne sorte ... ne prend point de part aux soucis dont le reste des hommes sont ordinairement travaillés.⁶⁰

[We must therefore philosophize well throughout our lives to achieve this purity that leads to Heaven and a mind that is devoted in the right way ... does not participate in worries with which the rest of mankind is normally occupied.]

The above, which corresponds fairly closely to *Phaedo*, 82c, disingenuously suggests that Théophile may return to the heaven or 'Ciel' of court precisely because he

⁵⁸ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 61.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 48.

is beyond the factional politics that led to his exile.⁶¹ This interpretation may seem extravagant but it is borne out by the conclusion to a poem that also appears in the 1621 *Œuvres*, which is presented as an epistle to an unnamed friend, and in which the poet discusses his exile as well as, above all, the circumstances of writing the *Traité*:

Je finis un travail que ton esprit, qui goûte
Les doctes sentiments, trouvera bon sans doute:
Ce sont les saints discours d'un favori du Ciel
Qui trouva le poison aussi doux que le miel,
Et qui dans la prison de la cité d'Athènes
Vit lâcher sans regret et sa vie et ses chaînes.
Ainsi, quand il faudra nous en aller à Dieu,
Puissions-nous sans regret abandonner ce lieu
Et voir, en attendant, que la Fortune m'ouvre
L'âme de la faveur et le portail du Louvre.⁶²

[I am finishing a work that your mind, which savours
Learned sentiments, will doubtless find to be good:
It consists in the saintly thoughts of a favourite of Heaven
Who found poison as sweet as honey,
And who in the prison of the city of Athens
Let go of his life and chains with no regrets.
Thus, when we shall have to go to God,
May we abandon this place without regret
And see, while we wait, that Fortune opens up for me
The soul of favour and the gateway to the Louvre.]

In these lines, Théophile's heart is not so much in his immortal soul as it is in 'L'âme de la faveur', a turn of phrase apparently unique to this poem, again playing on the key word 'âme', but linking it to the language of favour at court, echoing the characterization of Socrates as a 'favori du Ciel'. These verses imply once more that the *Traité* is an elaborate ruse for re-entry at court (hence the reference to the gate of the Louvre), or even a knowing joke between friends, here extended to the attentive reader. The philosopher's bravery can therefore wait until death. Such an ironic attitude to the detachment proposed by Socrates in the *Phaedo* is also apparent earlier in the poem, when Théophile claims that even the most sanguine philosopher would have struggled with the conditions of his exile; the poet was only able to sustain it

⁶¹ Ibid., I, p. 59.

⁶² The poem in question, which has no title, begins, 'Je pensais au repos, et le céleste feu | Qui me fournit des vers s'alentissait un peu': Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, pp. 206–9, vv. 111–20; cited in Chauveau 'Le *Traicté*' (n. 8 above), pp. 48–9.

owing to two excellent meals a day.⁶³ Such claims comically undermine the apparent seriousness of the *Traité*. The work itself is never so overt but even, for instance, in the conclusion of Socrates' extraordinary vision of the afterlife, the material world of court reappears in Théophile's vocabulary. Hence while the philosopher discusses how those who have purified themselves with philosophy will arise without bodies to dwell for eternity in beautiful abodes (114c), Théophile refers to 'cette gloire [qui] de bien loin | Passe la pompe des tiaras' ('this glory that far surpasses the pomp of crowns') and to 'ce grand palais de lumière | Où notre parfaite raison | Doit habiter une maison | Plus heureuse que la première' ('this great palace of light where our perfect reason must live in a happier dwelling than the first').⁶⁴ The poet omits Socrates' point that the dwellings of this afterlife are hard to describe, doubtless because they are non-corporeal; instead, he gives a description of sorts, which alludes to the trappings of royalty and hence the court.

It would nevertheless be reductive to suggest that the entire *Traité* is no more than a ploy for Théophile to insinuate himself back into service at court. The ambiguity of his approach encourages divergent interpretations. Probably the poet's most extraordinary intervention in his supposed paraphrase is not primarily political. It occurs in the context of a discussion of knowledge as recollection, in which Socrates asks 'Now are you aware that whenever lovers see a lyre or cloak or something else that their boyfriends use regularly, they have the following experience: don't they both recognize the lyre, and come to have in their thinking the appearance of the boy whose lyre it is?' (73d). Théophile simplifies this: 'lors qu'un amoureux vient à voir le luth dont il a vu jouer sa maîtresse, il se souvient aussitôt de sa maîtresse' ('when a lover comes to see the lute which he has seen his mistress play, he simultaneously recalls his mistress').⁶⁵ In Plato, the subtext is clearly homosexual, indeed pederastic, but Théophile is not unusual in bowdlerizing this passage, as both Serres and Le Roy translate it in such a way as to make the discussion heteronormative.⁶⁶ What is highly unusual, however, is to put a love lyric at this point into Socrates's mouth:

Si je passe en un jardinage
Semé de roses et de lys,
Il me ressouvient de Philis,
Qui les a dessus son visage.
Diane, qui luit dans les cieux,
Toujours jeune, amoureuse et belle,
Me la remet devant les yeux,
Parce qu'elle est chaste comme elle.
Je la vois si je vois l'aurore,

⁶³ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 207, vv. 39–44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 113.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 34.

⁶⁶ Serres refers to 'amasii' and 'amicae', i.e., male and female lovers, of a 'puer', which means 'boy' but can also mean 'youth' more generally, so, despite a little ambiguity, the translation veils the pederasty (I am indebted to Helena Taylor's advice on this point); Le Roy has a male lover and the lyre belongs to his (feminine) 'amie', *Le Phédon de Platon* (n. 7 above), p. 88. On this issue more widely, see T. W. Reeser, *Setting Plato Straight; Translating Ancient Sexuality in the Renaissance*, Chicago, 2015.

Et quand le soleil luit ici,
Il me ressouvient d'elle aussi,
Parce que l'univers l'adore.
 Les Grâces dedans un tableau,
Le petit Amour et sa flamme,
Bref, tout ce que je vois de beau,
Me la fait revenir dans l'âme.⁶⁷
 [If I walk through a garden
Planted with roses and lilies,
I recall Philis
Who has them above her face.
 Diana, who shines in the heavens,
Ever young, lovely and beautiful,
Replaces her in front of my eyes,
For she is chaste like her.
 I see her when I see the dawn,
And when the sun shines here,
I recall her also
Because the universe adores her.
 The Graces in a painting,
Cupid and his flame,
In short, all the beautiful things I see
Bring her back to my soul.]

These verses could scarcely be more Théophilian, since the beloved is one of the foremost addressees of his poetry, including the infamous sonnet, 'Phylis tout est ...outu je meurs de la verolle' ('Phylis everything is f***ed I'm dying of the pox').⁶⁸ That poem ends with a vow to commit sodomy to avoid venereal disease: 'Je fais veu desormais de ne ...tre qu'en cu' ('I vow henceforth only to f*** in the arse'). Another sonnet, 'Je songeois que Phyllis des enfers revenue' ('I dreamed that Phyllis had come back from Hades'), is even closer to the subject-matter of the *Traité*, as it relates how a dream vision of the deceased beloved returns to the poet, to conclude 'Comme tu t'es vanté d'avoir ...tu mon corps, | Tu te pourras vanter d'avoir ...tu mon âme' ('As you boasted of having f***ed my body, you will be able to boast

⁶⁷ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, pp. 34–5; cited in Chauveau 'Le *Traité*' (n. 8 above), pp. 59–60.

⁶⁸ The piece in question is the first poem of the collection that in many ways triggered the poet's trial, *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques*, Paris, 1622, pp. 1–2; the ellipses are in the original. The sonnet is signed by 'le sieur Theophile', but of course the poet repeatedly denied authorship, including at his first interrogation, immediately before he is questioned on the *Traité*: see Lachèvre, *Procès* (n. 10 above), I, pp. 372–3; on this sonnet, see esp. J. DeJean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France*, Chicago, 2002, pp. 29–55.

of having f***ed my soul').⁶⁹ A select group of readers may have been aware of this pornographic perspective on the afterlife, making a mockery of the *Traité's* love lyric. Clearly, Théophile is interested in exploring various dimensions of immortality, from the supposedly sublime to the obscene, a part of how his poetry experiments with very different, and sometimes contradictory, themes and registers.

Even if the obscene poetry was unknown to the reader, this is still a startling irruption of love lyric into the *Traité*. Théophile has taken his cue from Socrates's point about mental associations, to create his own associations that doubtless encourage further ones in the reader's mind. Yet the lines themselves verge on the parodic, as the things the poet associates with his beloved are not only hackneyed but appear all the more clichéd by virtue of being in list form. As Joan DeJean points out, even the name 'Phyllis' was standard for the object of a poet's desire.⁷⁰ Her chastity seems especially forced in what amounts to an erotically charged moment in the dialogue. In short, both the heterosexuality and the morality flaunted in these lines are overdetermined. Consequently, the verse potentially encourages different associations. Indeed, homosexuality reappears as a subtext immediately afterwards in the *Phaedo* and in the *Traité*, as well as in Le Roy's and Serres's translations, when Socrates points out to, and concerning, his interlocutors that when thinking of Cebes, one automatically thinks of Simmias (73d). Overtly heterosexual verses do not halt homosexual connotations. The vow in the final line of 'Phylis tout est ... outu je meurs de la verolle' was taken by some contemporaries to refer to male same-sex sodomy, despite that sonnet's opening address to a woman.⁷¹ The lack of obscenity and the overly insistent propriety of the *Traité's* unexpected love poem perversely suggests homosexuality as one of the mental associations that the speaker, Socrates, encourages his interlocutors, and by extension the reader, to consider.

Such homoerotic elements return in a later episode when Phaedo relates how Socrates played with the former's hair (89b). Théophile's verse adaptation of this passage emphasizes its erotic elements by multiplying mentions of physical intimacy:

Passant dessus mes yeux son regard vénérable,
Et jouant de sa main avecque mes cheveux
... Encore sur mon poil il repassa la main,

⁶⁹ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), III, p. 130; the sonnet was first published in the *Delices satyriques* (1620) and then reissued in the second part of the *Parnasse des poètes satyriques*, the *Quint-essence satyrique*; a less overtly obscene version is signed by Théophile in *Le Second livre des delices de la poésie française* (1620): Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), III, p. 279.

⁷⁰ DeJean, *Reinvention of Obscenity* (n. 68 above), p. 48.

⁷¹ See, for example, the testimony of one of the witnesses against Théophile, Louis Sageot, who claims to have heard someone attribute to the poet a sonnet in which 'se plégnant de la vérolle qu'il avoit eue, il faisoit veu à Dieu de ne plus cognoistre que des garçons' ('complained of the pox that he had got, he vowed to God henceforth to only sleep with boys'), Lachèvre, *Procès*, I, p. 256; see DeJean, *Reinvention of Obscenity* (n. 68 above), pp. 47–8, and Seifert, *Manning the Margins* (n. 12 above), pp. 289–90, n. 112.

Et possible, dit-il en me pressant la tête,
Phédon, ces beaux cheveux seront coupés demain.⁷²

[Passing his venerable look above my eyes
And playing with my hair with his hand
... Still on my skin he passed his hand again,
'It's possible', he said, pressing my head,
'Phaedo, these beautiful locks will be cut tomorrow.']

Perhaps there is licence for the homosexual element at this point, given Socrates' venerability that makes the affection of an older man for his young pupil more acceptable. Taken together, Théophile brings this pair of pederastic elements of the *Phaedo* into relief in contradictory ways. This is therefore a small but not insignificant instance of how the stigma of homosexuality could lead to a 'self-censure [that] unleashes a creative potential that is in many ways theatrical', as Lewis C. Seifert puts it.⁷³ Moreover, the ways in which Théophile deals with pederasty in the *Traité* is a microcosm of the way he engages with the *Phaedo* throughout, that is to say improvising on themes in Plato.

A key feature of Socrates's discussion in the *Phaedo* is his view of philosophy as a preparation for death, a rite of purification through which, by freeing himself of bodily desires, the philosopher gets closer to understanding the true nature of reality, which he will access in a disembodied afterlife. Théophile however disturbs this vision by constantly returning to desire, often in verse which deliberately destabilizes Socrates' argument. One last example of this comes in another poetic intervention which at first glance is close to *Phaedo*, 68b ('For [a lover of wisdom] will be quite sure that he will have a pure encounter with wisdom nowhere else but [Hades]'): 'notre esprit, qui voit ici | La vérité dans une nue, | Après la mort, mieux éclairci, | La voit entière et toute nue' ('our mind, which sees truth in a cloud here, after death, better enlightened, see entirely and wholly naked').⁷⁴ The process of versifying again sets up associations that unsettle Socrates' reasoning, for what appears and sounds like the same word at the rhyme, 'nue', stands for the illusion ('nue' the noun meaning 'cloud') and for reality ('nue' the feminine adjective meaning 'naked', i.e., the unadorned truth).⁷⁵ On a linguistic and poetic dimension, the

⁷² Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 58. Cf. Le Roy's translation: 'Socrates estoit assis beaucoup plus hault: lequel en me touchant doucement la teste, et me serrant les cheveux que je portois pendans sur le col, comme celluy qui avoit accoustumé se jouer avec eux ... par adventure (dit il) ... couperez vous demain ceste belle perruque' ('Socrates was sitting much higher and he was gently touching my head and gripping my hair which I wore hanging down on my neck, as someone who had been accustomed to playing with it ... "Perhaps," he said ... "you will cut this beautiful head of hair tomorrow"'): *Le Phédon de Platon* (n. 7 above), p. 140.

⁷³ Seifert, *Manning the Margins* (n. 12 above), p. 186; he is drawing on D. Eribon, *Insult and the Making of Gay Sex*, transl. M. Lucey, Durham, NC, 2004, p. 100.

⁷⁴ Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), I, p. 27.

⁷⁵ Théophile is fond of this rhyme, which also occurs in 'Je songeois que que Phyllis des enfers revenue', discussed above, and in an elegy, 'Bien que jamais amour ne m'ait montré sa flamme': Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Saba (n. 2 above), III, p. 128, vv. 19–20.

illusion and the reality are rhymed together and look identical. Even at this level of detail, especially at a moment when Théophile seems very close to Plato, he can also be read as going in the opposite direction but in a way that nevertheless builds on features of the *Phaedo*, in which Socrates establishes that opposites entail one another.

The second part of Théophile's *Œuvres* (1623), begins with what appears to be a fragment of a comic novel, the *Première journée*, which itself opens with a kind of literary manifesto by the anonymous narrator, who rails against the practice of *imitatio*: 'Ces larcins, qu'on appelle imitation des auteurs anciens, se doivent dire des ornements qui ne sont point à notre mode. Il faut écrire à la moderne.'⁷⁶ ('Those thefts which are called imitation of ancient authors, must be called ornaments that are not in our way of doing things. One must write in the modern way.') Characteristically, the opening of the second part of Théophile's works seems to undermine how he opened the first part, unless we read the *Traité* not as an imitation but as a reworking that is all the more radical for being hidden and frequently contradictory. Writing 'à la moderne' in the *Traité* involves a highly original and deliberately disconcerting engagement with a major work of ancient philosophy, as rapidly confirmed by the reactions of hostile readers at the time. Théophile destabilizes contemporary readings of the *Phaedo* by reinvesting in its poetic qualities. If, as Denis Robichaud puts it, Ficino's works on Plato 'craft[ed] a rhetorical mask for philosophical purposes', Théophile has crafted a philosophical mask for poetic purposes, the latter of which are also political, since they are grist to the mill of his reintegration into court life.⁷⁷ Nothing is ever quite as it seems in the *Traité*, which would benefit from further study still. For one thing, it is clearly not a treatise, despite its title, for, like the *Phaedo* itself, it explores a number of different views in the dialogue, and has elements of myth and even biography to it. Théophile of course adds poetry to the mix contributing, as it were, another layer of interference. He is not remotely interested in presenting a consistent philosophical argument either in this work on its own or across his various works, in fact he revels in provocative inconsistency. Similarly, it is both true and false to say, as its title-page has it, that the *Traité* is by Théophile. Obviously, given how close much of it is to the *Phaedo*, this is a gross misrepresentation. Equally, given how often the poet departs, at different levels, from his model, then to call it a paraphrase or even a translation is equally untenable. Instead, we are left with a highly elaborate game, partly designed to provoke the censor but leave him with nothing to hold onto, thereby demonstrating the poet's cleverness, that he is somehow above the game.

One of the many sets of opposites on which Plato plays in the *Phaedo* is that of Socrates himself: although he is imprisoned and about to drink the hemlock, he is paradoxically free because he has purified himself from desire. Anyone who has not done this is imprisoned, because he is in illusion and does not therefore see 'the cleverness of the prison – that it works through desire, the best way to make the prisoner himself assist in his imprisonment' (82e). Théophile omits this in his version,

⁷⁶ Ibid., II, p. 11.

⁷⁷ Robichaud, *Plato's Persona* (n. 6 above), p. 26.

perhaps because his desire is for the illusion of desire, be it social or sexual or both. He was of course soon to find himself in a very literal prison but, metaphorically, the *Traité* succeeds in trapping its readers into desiring an unequivocal meaning that can never be satisfied.

Acknowledgement Research for this article was enabled by a Prize Fellowship awarded by the Society for French Studies, 2018-19. I also gratefully acknowledge comments from my colleagues at the University of Exeter, Dr Helena Taylor and especially Dr Adam Horsley, in addition to the very generous guidance by the two anonymous reviewers.

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