

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Oxford World's Classics: making European literature available to a wide public
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Oxford World's Classics (OWC), re-founded in 1980 as a paperback series and now also available electronically, includes many new translations from European languages with introduction and notes written for a non-expert reader by scholars drawing on their academic research. Three members of the Oxford Modern Languages Faculty (Cronk, Kahn, Robertson) have been particularly active in translating and/or editing volumes and in advising the Series Commissioning Editor on the basis of their respective research expertise. The impact is partly economic (sales, including export sales), partly cultural in making key works of European literature accessible to an Anglophone public reliant on translations and partly educational as the editions are adopted worldwide on secondary school, undergraduate and graduate reading lists. The OWC editions have made classic European literature available to an international market, reaching out to new audiences.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The three academics concerned are acknowledged authorities on major European authors (Voltaire, Pushkin, Kafka) and familiar with their literary and cultural contexts.</p> <p>Professor Nicholas Cronk is Director of the Voltaire Foundation and Editor of the Complete Works of Voltaire, a series in over 200 volumes, which is scheduled for completion in 2018; since 2008 he has co-edited two subseries (<i>Questions sur l'Encyclopédie</i>, 5 volumes published, 2 forthcoming; <i>Essai sur les mœurs</i>, 4 volumes published, 4 forthcoming), made substantial contributions to seven volumes and lesser contributions to nine further volumes. He has published 33 articles on Voltaire since 2008 and also co-edited numerous volumes of essays by various hands on Voltaire and the Enlightenment. He also co-directs (with Robertson) the Besterman Centre for the Enlightenment which promotes interdisciplinary research via colloquia and workshops on aspects of Enlightenment culture. Cronk's central and distinguished place in Voltaire studies has been acknowledged by his election in 2010 as president of the Société des études voltairiennes and by the titles 'Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres' and 'Officier des Palmes académiques', and by the award in 2010 of the Prix Hervé Deluen de l'Académie française.</p> <p>Professor Andrew Kahn is an expert on 18th- and early 19th-century Russian literature, which he sees against the background of the international Enlightenment. His major scholarly achievement is the study <i>Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence</i> (OUP, 2008; now in paperback); he has also published a monograph on Pushkin's <i>The Bronze Horseman</i> (1998), often cited as the standard work on its subject, and edited the <i>Cambridge Companion to Pushkin</i> (2007). His translation of Karamzin's <i>Letters of a Russian Traveller</i>, an important Enlightenment text, includes a 100,000-word commentary explaining Karamzin's significance. Besides introducing OWC editions of Pushkin and Lermontov, he has also shown his commitment to international Enlightenment study by introducing Montesquieu's <i>Persian Letters</i>.</p> <p>Professor Ritchie Robertson's research on Kafka long antedates 1993 but since then has led to many research articles and edited volumes. His commitment both to advancing the understanding of Kafka and communicating it to a wide public finds expression in his OWC introductions and in his <i>Kafka: A Very Short Introduction</i> (Oxford: OUP, 2004). As co-director of the Oxford Kafka Research Centre (co-founded with Manfred Engel in 2007) he has organized major international conferences: <i>Kafka and Modernist Short Prose</i> (2008), <i>Kafka, Prague, and the First World War</i> (2010), <i>Kafka, Religion and Modernity</i> (2012); the proceedings have been, or are being, published by Königshausen & Neumann (Würzburg). He has been particularly concerned with understanding Kafka's religious thought, his relation to political and cultural Zionism, and to the work of other Prague writers (Max Brod, Franz Werfel).</p>

3. References to the research

[1] Voltaire, *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, critical ed. by N. Cronk & C. Mervaud, 7 volumes of text published (2007-13); in *Complete Works of Voltaire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation) [Available on Request] Review: «C'est en effet la première fois depuis la mort de Voltaire que les *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* bénéficient d'une édition à part et qui plus est d'une édition critique de haut vol [...] L'annotation, riche et soignée, apporte tous les éléments nécessaires permettant de comprendre aussi les effets incessants de récupération de matériaux antérieurs. [...] Son érudition remarquable offre en outre les éclairages nécessaires pour des références qui nous échappent désormais et attestent l'amplitude de la culture de Voltaire' (Alain Sandrier, *Cahiers Voltaire* 8, 2009);

[2] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs*, critical ed. by N. Cronk, vol. ii (2009) ISBN 9780729408745; iii (2010), ISBN 9780729409469, in *Complete Works of Voltaire* (Oxford : Voltaire Foundation) [Available on request] Review: « Complète, claire, impressionnante. [...] ce premier volume révèle les principes qui guident l'entreprise ainsi que la grande qualité du travail effectué par les éditeurs. [...]cette nouvelle édition s'impose désormais comme édition de référence. Tout compte fait, ce premier tome de l'édition n'est pas seulement un début prometteur, c'est un triomphe que doivent saluer tous les "voltairistes".' (John R. Iverson, *Revue Voltaire* 11, 2011).

[3] Andrew Kahn, *Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman'*, Critical Studies in Russian Literature (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998). ISBN 9781853994449. [Available on request] Reviews: praised as 'meticulously researched, wide ranging, full of useful detail, and well written' (A.D.P. Briggs, *MLR*, 95 (2000), 589); it is an undergraduate set text at Cambridge and Manchester.

[4] Andrew Kahn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521843677>]. ISBN 9780521843676. Reviews: 'The fourteen essays [...] are assembled with a concision and elegance that its subject would surely applaud. [...] It is a crucial addition to the library of every Pushkin scholar' (Muireann Maguire, *MLR* 105 (2010), 301-3).

[5] Andrew Kahn, *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, ISBN 9780199234745; revised, paperback, 2012, ISBN 9780199654338) [In REF2]. In the lead review of the *TLS* (25 March 2009) Rachel Polonsky praised it as a fundamental re-evaluation of Pushkin's poetry based on a deep knowledge of the literature and history of ideas. The book was awarded Honourable Mention, Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Studies in Slavic Languages and Literatures 2009. In a 'featured review', the distinguished Pushkinist, Monika Greenleaf (Stanford), concluded: 'Kahn has reset one horizon for twenty-first century Pushkin studies. It is a rare book that makes us reconsider what we thought we knew so fundamentally' (*Slavic Review*, 69 (2010), 191-3 (193)).

[6] Ritchie Robertson, *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), [Available on request] ISBN 9780192804556, translated into Japanese (2008); Chinese (2009), German (2010); translation into Arabic forthcoming [Available on request]. From reviews on Amazon: 'Robertson has written the most incisive, clear and perceptive account of FK's writings that I've yet come across and that includes the likes of Kundera, Canetti and Calvino' (Dr John Markway, 24/08/07).

4. Details of the impact

Cronk, Kahn and Robertson have used their research insights to contribute to bringing classic European literature to a wider audience through being involved in the editing and translating of 15 OWC titles, with 10 of those titles published in the REF impact period (2008-13) ^[1]. Titles they have edited are:

1. Cronk (ed.), Voltaire, *Letters concerning the English Nation* (2009)
2. Cronk (ed.), Voltaire, *A Pocket Philosophical Dictionary*, tr. John Fletcher (2011)
3. Cronk (ed.), Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, tr. Christopher Fry (2008)
4. Cronk (ed.), Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, tr. Margaret Mauldon (2008)
5. Kahn (ed.), Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, tr. Margaret Mauldon (2008)
6. Kahn (ed.), Lermontov, *A Hero of our Time*, tr. Nicolas Pasternak Slater (2013)
7. Robertson (ed.), Kafka, *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, tr. Joyce Crick (2009)

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8. Robertson (ed.), Kafka, *The Trial*, tr. Mike Mitchell (2009)
9. Robertson (ed.), Kafka, *The Castle*, tr. Anthea Bell (2009)
10. Robertson (ed.), Kafka, *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, tr. Joyce Crick (2012)
11. Robertson (ed. and tr.), Kafka, *The Man who Disappeared* (2012)
12. Robertson (ed.), Freud, *A Case of Hysteria (Dora)*, tr. Anthea Bell (2013)

Involvement with OWC enables the academics concerned to bring the products of their research to a wide public; to convey their understanding of, and enthusiasm for, their chosen authors to a non-academic audience; to communicate in an accessible, informative style which respects its readers and avoids condescension. Academics professionally committed to studying and disseminating a foreign literature also want to counter the British reading public's notorious lack of interest in translations. Readers demonstrate the accessibility of the editions through reviews e.g. a review on Amazon of Robertson's *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* says: 'this book does a fantastic job of introducing Kafka in a way which is as useful to those familiar with his work as it is to new readers [...] One of the most enjoyable aspects of the book is that it does not try to teach you the 'meaning' of the novels, which is a flawed business where Kafka is concerned and which would be impossible in such a short space of time, but rather how to read them in a way that allows you to draw your own conclusions.' (Zerbina, 11 December 2011).^[i]

Within the OWC series the five Kafka volumes form a distinct subseries (now available as a set)^[iii]. The Kafka project provided an opportunity to commission new translations of Kafka's main works from outstanding translators including Anthea Bell, Joyce Crick, and Mike Mitchell for a five-volume series, each with introduction and notes by Robertson. This enabled Robertson to use his scholarly knowledge of Kafka, his long experience of teaching Kafka to undergraduates and speaking on Kafka to general audiences, and the practice in concentrating on essentials gained from his well-received *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* (2004), by mediating these often opaque texts to a wide readership without over-simplifying and without pressing any particular line of interpretation on readers. The first three volumes were launched by a public event hosted by the Bodleian Library, featuring a panel discussion among the three translators, chaired by Professor Karen Leeder, and talks by Mark Harman and Stanley Corngold (who have translated various Kafka texts for American publishers), now available as a podcast. The three volumes were also featured on the BBC Radio 4 Open Book programme (with Mariella Frostrup and Lawrence Norfolk), broadcast on 12 July 2009 and repeated on 16 July^[iii]. The remaining two volumes appeared in 2012; Robertson presented them with a talk at the Oxford Literary Festival on 29 March 2012 (audience c. 30)^[iv]; one attendee, a retired schoolteacher, wrote: 'Robertson's lecture on *The Man who Disappeared* at the Oxford Literary Festival not only inspired me to read Kafka's first novel, but also sent me back to Kafka's masterpieces, *The Trial* and *The Castle*.'

As OWC are published by OUP, their editor, who is based in Oxford, is able to cultivate close links with Oxford academics. In the resulting symbiosis, academics reach a wide readership; readers in turn benefit from the introductions and notes which distinguish OWC from rival paperback series. The editors, when not themselves working directly as translators, work closely with translators: thus Cronk ensured that the translator of Voltaire's *Pocket Philosophical Dictionary*, unlike all predecessors, conveyed Voltaire's deliberately jarring use of low register (which, after the *Guardian* printed an admiring review by Nicholas Lezard, led to an exchange in its letter columns about the appropriateness of using the word 'shit'^[v]).

Besides their own contributions, Cronk, Kahn and Robertson are often asked to advise the publishers: 'In my role as Senior Commissioning Editor for the Oxford World's Classics series I solicit opinion from expert scholarly advisers concerning the viability and quality of new proposals for titles under consideration for publication in the series. For titles in the field of modern European literature I consult with Ritchie Robertson, Nicholas Cronk, and Andrew Kahn. They advise on the quality of sample translation material, on the suitability and scope of editorial material, on the prospects for new editions in the college market, and they recommend possible translators and editors.'^[1] This collaboration leads also to expanding the classics base (e.g. by including Jonathan Mallinson's translation of Graffigny's *Letters from a Peruvian*) and to added value: e.g. Cronk's edition of Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* has as an appendix Goethe's essay on Diderot, never

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before translated, and Kahn's version of Lermontov's *Hero of our Time* (2013) also includes a new annotated translation of Pushkin's 'Journey to Erzerum'.

The academics' involvement helps to ensure and enhance the quality of translated literature available not only in Britain but (since the series sells widely overseas) to an international reading public. OWC has the largest market share of any classics series after Penguin Classics. Sales figures show that there is also a substantial demand worldwide among general readers for reliable translations with informative introductory material that enhances their reading experience and gives them background knowledge. The OWC series is distributed worldwide via OUP's branch network. Its sales form a significant part of the trade contribution to the Academic Division's turnover. For the reporting period (Jan 2008 – Jul 2013) global sales for the volumes edited by Cronk, Kahn and Robertson (15 titles) total 84,028 with a further 23,891 in UK sales.^[1]

OUP gains prestige from having a quality paperback series advertised in both its academic and trade lists. Since the target readership includes students, and the Commissioning Editor normally wants to be assured that a text is widely read by undergraduates and/or graduates, this is a further reason for wishing to maximize the quality of the translations and editorial matter; it is assumed, however, that the student readers are not (mainly) modern languages students using cribs, but students on courses on comparative and general literature, both here and (especially) in North America. Cronk's edition of Voltaire's *Letters concerning the English Nation* is used in French universities, including Rouen, Lyon II and Paris IV (as the only edition of the English version of the *Lettres philosophiques* authorized by Voltaire, it is crucial evidence of Voltaire's European reputation and influence).^[1]

During the impact period the above OWC titles were adopted for over 900 courses across more than 200 universities in the USA, taken by over 21,500 students; 394 of these courses were at private, 541 at public institutions. In geographical range, the largest number was in the Northwest (297), closely followed by the Midwest (285). The universities with the most enrolments on courses using these texts were Michigan and Berkeley with Ivy League universities such as Columbia, Harvard and Yale also adopting the texts. Some 50% of the adoptions were of *the Interpretation of Dreams*, *The Metamorphosis*, and *the Golden Pot*. Besides the expected literature, language, history, and general humanities / liberal arts programmes, some titles (*Letters Concerning the English Nation*, *Persian Letters*, *Rameau's Nephew*, and *The Castle*) also appear on political science and anthropology syllabi. *The Trial* appears also on law and criminal justice courses, while *The Interpretation of Dreams* is prescribed for courses (both undergraduate and graduate) on history of science, law, media studies, psychology, and music. The breadth and depth of adoption in US higher education institutions clearly demonstrates the contribution Cronk, Kahn and Robertson make to teaching via the supply of quality and accessible translation of texts with wide interdisciplinary application.^[1]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Testimonial evidence:

[1] Email testimonial, sales figures and adoption data from Senior Commissioning Editor, Oxford University Press

Other sources of corroboration:

[i] Amazon review

http://www.amazon.co.uk/review/R3FOSG20MRQT60/ref=cm_cr_dp_title?ie=UTF8&ASIN=B000SHO812&channel=detail-glance&nodeID=341677031&store=digital-text

[ii] Kafka box-set

<http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/products/franz+kafka/anthea+bell/mike+mitchell/joyce+crick/the+kafka+collection/8945811/>

[iii] BBC Radio 4, open Book programme <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ljhrm>

[iv] Oxford Literary festival <http://oxfordliteraryfestival.org/events/detail/franz-kafka-a-hunger-artist-and-other-stories>

[v] 'A Pocket Philosophical Dictionary', review by Nicholas Lezard, *Guardian*, 15 November 2011; by David Coward, *TLS*, 30 September 2011, 30

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/nov/15/pocket-philosophical-dictionary-voltaire-review>