At the Other’s Expense:
Iconoclastic Translation

Québécois adaptation is proof of our theatre’s uniqueness. Once stifled by foreign theatre, it has now shown itself strong enough to assimilate it.

Paul Lefebvre and Pierre Ostiguy, 'L’Adaptation théâtrale au Québec'

The emergence of a ‘Québécois’ theatre coincided, as we have seen, with the emergence of a new form of national awareness that asserted itself not only against Anglo-Canadian hegemony but also against the cultural and linguistic legacy of France. The time had come to eliminate the French legacy, a remnant of colonialism. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that a new way of translating emerged along with the new theatre. Indeed, the simultaneous growth of writing and translation for the theatre indicates that translation played an active role in the renewal of the theatre in Quebec.

The year 1968 saw the success of both Michel Tremblay’s Les Belles-Sœurs and Éloi de Grandmont’s translation into Québécois of Shaw’s Pygmalion.1 With Tremblay’s play, the first play to use the vernacular language exclusively in its dialogue, the literary institution heralded the birth of a Québécois theatre. Grandmont’s translation of Pygmalion, which also used the vernacular, broke with the traditional mode of expression used in translations imported from France, and also gained recognition from the institution. Two aspects of this translation are worthy of note: first, the linguistic transformation in Grandmont’s Pygmalion differs only in certain parts from earlier French translations; the vernacular is used to translate only the cockney dialogue and transpose the action more effectively to Montreal. Second, the vernacular is used to render the humorous effect of the foreign work.
A Sociocritique of Translation

These two features of this widely acclaimed translation prompted us to look at a unique ensemble of productions from the period under discussion, plays that were on the borderline between original works and translations from foreign theatre. These plays relied heavily on translation. Indeed, translation became the very subject-matter of dramatic writing, as if using it as a theme could ward off this dangerous activity that daily placed Québécois in a position of dependence. The year of the Official Languages Act, 1988, saw an explosion of translation activity, centred in Ottawa. Most translation was from English to French; administrative, technical, and commercial documents originated in anglophone Canada; however, foreign literature in translation came from France. Thus, translation, a constituent element of the cultural and political situation of Quebec, was perceived as a source of dispossession, the very incarnation of the dependence of a province that aspired to be recognized as a fully fledged nation.

Under these circumstances, writing and translation for the theatre gradually started to move into the realm of parody. The time had come to 'break with edifying, imported literature.' Dramatic writers made liberal use of translation and of imitation, an extreme form of translation. The new theatre thus operated on two levels. On one level, it was reacting against a textuality in which it no longer recognized itself; paradoxically, in this reaction, it opted to imitate the very model it was attempting to replace. On the other level, it was attempting to throw off the shackles of the institution, which was seen as a root cause of Québécois alienation. Indeed, the Québécois condition itself became a subject of parody. This social satire was profoundly linked to the resurgence of nationalism.

The Scourge of Alterity

Jean-Claude Germain's play, with its evocative title, A Canadian Play/Une Plaisante canadienne, is a good example of a work in which creation and translation are interwoven. Such use of translation in dramatic writing is indicative of a problematic relation with alterity. Jean-Claude Germain's play is paradigmatic by virtue of its very title, which parodies translation and ridicules the perverse effects of institutional bilingualism. The structure of A Canadian Play/Une Plaisante canadienne imitates the culture espai, or hybrid forms, found in translations done for the federal government, for example, forms in which toponymic expressions fuse English and French:

Maple Avenue des Érables. Germain's title is clearly designed to announce this copresence of the two languages and the fact that French is always overshadowed by English. This metonymical phrase also brings to mind official translations from Ottawa in which the two languages are placed side by side. The position of the two languages is far from innocent or innocuous - English, given the numerical majority of its speakers, occupies the position of source language; French, the language of translation, takes second place, as weak and distorted as an echo. In these bilingual texts, French has no autonomous existence. It is marginal to English, and the more it duplicates English, the more it becomes, insidiously, a literal translation of English:

We should in fact consider that whenever there is close contact between two languages, there is inevitably an exchange, and to the extent that one dominates the other, the dominated language receives more than it gives: the dominated language is subjected to interference from the dominant language. [... in Quebec] francophone translators are influenced by English in two ways. On the one hand, they have to provide in their language equivalents of concepts that were formed in English, and sometimes the easiest thing to do is to borrow or translate literally from English. On the other hand, because they live in contact with English, translators may sometimes unconsciously absorb anglicisms for which there are authentic equivalents that they do not know or have forgotten.

The bilinguality of translation is thus a Canadian wound (une plaie). The adjective Canadian is significant because, as opposed to Québécois, it designates the federal reality, the true cause of the wound. And as we all know, the wound has its origins in history, dating all the way back to the defeat of Montcalm and the French Canadians on the Plains of Abraham, and the beginning of colonial subjugation. The 'Canadian wound' is the unhealed wound of this humiliation. The title À Canadian Play/une Plaisante canadienne is parodic, yet, at the same time, dysphoric with regard to the situation it is attempting to describe. It is paradoxical in form, the better to reinforce the dual, the point of view, the discourse on the Québécois condition. But Germain's parody does not stop at the title, for his whole play is an attempt to exorcise, through laughter, the federalist scourge that forces the Québécois to become Canadians: 'In other words French people who speak English!' So we end up with two borrowed cultures:

In this dual definition of alterity, cultural attachment to France is seen to be as much a source of alienation as English domination. Becoming
English-speaking French people, in other words, opting for federalism over national autonomy, is tantamount to denying one’s specific Québécois identity and becoming assimilated – just as the Englishman who sealed Québec’s fate in the last century had desired. A Canadian Play puts that Englishman, Lord Durham, on trial. Lord Durham was sent out from England to survey the situation in the province following the Patriote rebellion. In his report to Queen Victoria, he described the Québécois as a people bereft of history and culture, whom the British had to assimilate in order to protect themselves against even the slightest hint of secessionism. The following is an extract from that part of the report which deals with the dependency of French-Canadian literature, in particular, the theatre:

They are a people with no history and no literature. The literature of England is written in a language which is not their; and the only literature which their language renders familiar to them, is that of a nation from which they have been separated by eighty years of foreign rule, and still more by those charges which the revolution and its consequences have wrought to the whole political, moral and social state of France. Yet it is on a people whom recent history, manners and modes of thought, entirely separate from them, that the French Canadians are wholly dependent for almost all the instruction and amusement derived from books: it is on this essentially foreign literature, which is conversant about events, opinions and habits of life, perfectly strange and uninteresting to them, that they are compelled to be dependent.

Though descended from the people in the world that most generally love and have mostly successfully cultivated the drama – though being on a continent, in which almost every town, great or small, has an English theatre, the French population of Lower Canada, cut off from every people that speaks its own language, can support no national stage.

To stifle any secessionist impulse, Lord Durham advocated the political and demographic integration of the colony, which was cut off from France and already anglicized. He recommended that an English administration be set up in the colony and that the local population be drowned in an anglophone majority. In German’s play, Lord Durham’s ghost is tried before a court of a Québécois brotherhood whose name, ‘Les Enfants de la Veuve Saint-Jean’ (The Children of Widow St John), refers to the patron saint of Québec, St John the Baptist. In this symbolic trial, German puts the following words in the mouth of Lord Durham:

Je ne savais que traduire la réalité! Je suis venu! J’ai écouté! J’ai regardé! Et dans mon esprit, on me racontait que je me retrouvais en un lieu de la réalité! Que vous voyez, monsieur le Juge, je ne vous dis pas de vous perdre dans les connotations, mais de vous entendre tout droit, exactement comme je vous dis.

Monsieur le Juge – D’une indication de traduction, excellence! Pour que votre expertise soit plus complète!

L’homme au bandana [Durham] – Alors, si c’est le cas, c’est une indication de traduction! Il faut se dire soi-même, si on ne veut pas être dépassé par les autres!

Il ne peut pas être vrai! Je l’entends! Je l’ai écouté! Je l’ai entendu autour de moi! Et dans mon esprit, alliés, les connotations, mais de vous entendre tout droit, exactement comme je vous dis.

Monsieur Caron – De la traduction, excellence! So that your evaluation will be more complete!

The Blindfolded Man [Durham] – So, if that’s the case, cease translating! You have to express your own self, if you don’t want to be embarrassed by others!

German’s play provides a paradigm as enlightening as the title suggests. The play is explicitly constructed around a metaphor of translation, a metaphor that presents translation in a negative light. Translation is a calque: *traduire* (the standard French verb) and its literal translation, *translate*, are interchangeable. German puts the verb *translate*, an etymologically justifiable yet incorrect form, in the mouth of the Englishman. We should therefore see the verb as an *error*, a bad translation and, figuratively, a pernicious, alienating, and destructive act. Translation is portrayed in the most pejorative way possible. Here again we see the old cliché – *traducteur trahisse*. One of Lord Durham’s Québécois judges bluntly declares: ‘It’s the rule, the more you are translated, the more you are betrayed!’ This cliché presents the Québécois with an image of themselves – they are the victims of an existence perpetually mediated by the Other and, as such, they are inexorably betrayed by the Other.

To understand the full impact of the translation metaphor, we must
remember that the play was produced in 1979, just before the referendum that offered Quebec yet again the option of independence. The Patriotes’ dream had come to the fore once more, but it was hampered by the same obstacles as before. Once again, the province was divided. The nationalists, for whom Germain now spoke, saw the attachment of part of Quebec’s population to federalism as a new form of French-Canadian ‘loyalism’ to the British Crown. This very loyalism, together with British orders to repress the rebellion, had aborted an American-style attempt at independence in the preceding century.

On the eve of the 1830 referendum, Germain’s play was a final plea, an attempt to awaken consciousness, a ‘shamanistic operation,’ wrote Germain, directed at a population that had to be liberated from its British (federalist) obsession and convinced it should acquire enough independence to live for itself.18 Germain harks back to a time when imperialist England had the upper hand in the Dominion of Canada. Lord Durham’s ghost is brandished as a symbol of that era which, following the repression of the first failed attempt at autonomy, saw the formation of the Canadian Union of Upper (anglophone) Canada with the former French colony, known as that time as Lower Canada. The ghost of the Englishman accused of advocating this union still haunts Quebec today, incarnated in his French-Canadian emulators: Wilfrid Laurier, Louis Saint-Laurent, and Pierre Trudea. The three Canadian prime ministers from Quebec are tried before this same court, in the presence of an allegorical character, the ‘Maurin’ (mislabeled maiden) who represents the Province of Quebec. The three men are directly identified with the Englishman who advocated assimilation. Lord Durham actually assumes their physical appearance and dress. La Maumâre, the gullible inneverdupe, is completely taken in by his resemblance to the prime ministers. Germain’s message is clear: since Durham, history has repeated itself. These three men came to power in Ottawa with a mandate from Quebec to go before the majority, the inheritors of the victory of the Plains of Abraham, and defend the interests of the francophone province: ‘I voted you in so you could translate what we want in their language.’19

These men, in whose Quebec placed its trust, these men, brought up in both languages and in both founding cultures of the Union, turned out to be poor ‘translators’ of Quebec’s interests. They are accused of neglecting the son, of playing the Anglo-Canadian game at Quebec’s expense. They put Quebec at a disadvantage, and deprived it of real power instead of fulfilling their mandate, to give it more power.
whom iconography depicts with a lamb on his shoulders, had been confused with the Saviour: 'Least among the faults of this translation was the fact that it not only altered the nature and role of the Essamean Demigurte but also turned him forthwith into a sort of Quebecois Panurge.'

The image of a Quebecois Panurge, according to Germain, is more than a fortuitous choice of words; it is the very image others have of the Quebecois identity. To express the 'ethnic humiliation' of a people who have only ever known their name 'from the outside,' Gaston Miron writes, for example, 'My name is sheep.' But in the social discourse, 'nation of sheep' 'nation of translators' are interchangeable expressions, used repeatedly, as if to excuse this self-representation of Quebecois society.

Thus, according to Germain, the initial attempt at self-affirmation by the Quebecois was derailed by an incorrect 'translation' which rebounded against them; this error foreshadowed the 'sheep-like' behaviour they would display throughout history. Was the failure of the 1980 referendum on Quebec sovereignty not final proof of this?

Above and beyond Germain's political plea, what is significant here is that this 'erreur de passe,' this attempt at auto-translation, results in a 'translation of identity. Instead of damaging the prestige of the model, thereby repelling the invading alienity, translation literally takes as its subject the society that it was attempting to support and promote. Mistranslation is not without consequence. It is demeaning and provokes laughter and disdain. On the other hand, the superiority of the Other is strengthened by translation, an act that makes Quebecois translators the willing victims of the plan to assimilate them, and the agents of their own destruction. Translation is exposed as an involuntary act of self-derision, involuntary but incapable of the remoteness of the model. It is thus imperative to distance oneself from the model, to act as if the Other did not exist, so as to finally gain access to one's own identity. And if such distance is not achieved, in the process of asserting one's identity, of 'translating' oneself, one is destined to be nothing but a ridiculous, distorted imitation of the Other: 'a fantasy in a theatre of shadows, whose only reality is to be l'Enfant imaginé d'un Envers imaginaire' [the imagined outside of an imaginary inside].' For German, translation is a metaphor of the deformation that occurs when there is contact with the Other, so clearly demonstrated in the juxtaposition of A Canadian Play and Une Place canadienne. The metaphor of translation assumes a profound ideological function in German's work. His portrayal of translation as an act of duplication, controlled from the outside, on occasion coercive but always despoiling, parallels the theme of the distorted mirror
image, a theme that permeates the discourse on québécois. As a result, when translation is put on trial, the Other is put on trial for being an inescapable modal, a model that reflects back a dislocated, alienating image to the Québécois. The Other, whom Germain also calls the ‘Foreigner’,

is not an abstraction: ‘Wherever we look, we inescapably find the Other – in this case the English, whose gaseous clouds our own vision.’ Omnipresent and absolute, Otherness nullifies and contaminates Alterity. Alterity is an absolute for Québécois, the sole incarnation of alterity is the anglophone world.

The Other is also a mirror in which one seeks to find one's own image. But the Other sends back a reflex image (a reflection that is both distorted and. in Gide’s sense of the word, “abysmal”), because this form of self-identification produces only a double of the Other’s shadow. He will think he is someone else and, since he exists solely through the Other, he will condemn himself; in the same breath, to existing only for the Other: in other words, he is going to become the double of the Other’s shadow. The Other is a subjugating, hegemonic figure, whose proximity leads to the degradation, and then the loss, of individual and collective identity.

In Québec, the theme of destructive alterity is more prevalent in poetry than in drama, particularly since Gaston Miron began speaking of ‘the suffering of being an other,’ ‘the hopeless conditions of daily otherness,’ ‘the polluted culture.' T’altérité pèse sur nous comme un glacier qui fond sur nous, qui nous détruit, nous englue, nous dilue [...].’ Accepter CECI c’est me rendre complice de l’aliénation de mon âme de peuple, de sa disparition en l’‘alterité’ (alterity weighs on us like a glacier that melts over us, that subdues us, traps us, dilutes us ...) Accepting this makes me an accomplice of the alienation of my people’s soul, of its disappearance into alterity).

After Miron, Paul Chamberland spoke even more harshly of the ‘scars of alterity [les scasses de l’alterité].’ Clearly, the Québécois search for identity is diametrically opposed to other notions of identity such as the German Bildung, the creation of Self through the experience of Alterity. In the German Bildung, translation is a preferred means of building self-identity. However, in the Québécois notion of identity, the exact opposite is true. The Other is not a source of knowledge, neither is it a pole in a dialectic relationship with the Self. The Other is too close and too similar for that. And since the Self and the Other tend to be one and the same, to create the Self, one must make every possible effort to avoid becoming ‘a Non-Other like before (Autre comme devient).’ Thus, the experience of alterity is an agonizing one, a daily struggle against assimilation. The pain of this experience is condensed in the memory of a traumatic event, the Conquest, the colonisation that produced ethnic inferiority. It explains the rejection of the Other and the tendency to turn in on oneself, phenomena that have become explicit themes. For example, in a 1983 study of Québécois theatre between 1960 and 1990, the author views the past from a contemporary perspective, projecting onto it the contemporary feeling of alterity, with its attendant narcissism, ‘specularity’ or mirroring, and its focus on the dominant Other, the English:

What this notion loved was itself as it knew itself or imagined itself to be, it believed sometimes that it loved another people (the French, the English, but it really loved itself through the image it had of other peoples. The Québécois were a different people from the others, from the English people, and they knew they were, since they were of a different origin, which did not include the ‘FOREIGNER’.

Refusal by the Self to replicate the Other logically leads to a claim of absolute difference, and the logical consequence of this claim of absolute difference is segregation, or negation of the Other, who must be confined to his own impecunious difference. This differentiation may be needed to create a dialogue in which the Other can recognize ‘me,’ but the whole process is nevertheless basically anti-dialogue, as there is no reciprocity. Rejection of the Other perpetuates the preconstituted Self. This rejection of any dialogue results in an entrenched fidelity to the values and ideas passed down by one’s own history.

The reader will recall the definition of translation attributed to Lord Durham by Jean-Claude Germain: to translate is not to express the Other or to want to do so, but, rather, to be expressed by the Other, and, consequently, to be dispossessed of one’s own words. This is indeed the effect of federal bilingualism, which drowns the francophone minority in texts translated from the dominant language, whereas these texts could have been written originally in French. Being expressed by the Other can also imply that one does not yet have one’s own language. Thus, along with the rejection of anglophone hegemonic alterity, there is a desire to banish the French language to the sphere of the Foreigner, making it possible for the Québécois language to come to the fore or be created. Taking refuge in the voice appears to be a consequence of the narcissistic rejection of the Other; one’s own identity has been dissolved in the Other’s gaze and, from now on, one’s own language is to be the new reality.

This relation to the Other raises the question of what remodelling pro-
cures are used to ‘translate’ foreign plays—or those perceived as for-
eign—to make them acceptable to the new Québécois theatre system and
to its new canon. A Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne is a paradigm in which translation is a differential and epistemic form of
repetition, what translation procedures might we expect to find in the
works included in our corpus? Or rather, since categorizing procedures
is of finite interest, on what basis are these differential procedures selected,
apart from the obvious desire to provoke laughter? The relevance of these
questions becomes apparent when we examine the title of Germain’s
play, which fuses the two operations—translation and parody. In
text, translation aims at perfect coincidence between the target
and the source text, and thus, as a process, excludes any palimpsestic
effect. Parody, on the other hand, requires the recognizable presence of a
hyphen in a hypertext, the presence of the parodied within the parody
itself.

The parody in the title A Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne is pro-
duced by a deformation of the transitive operation. This skewed trans-
lation was obtained by transliting phonically a single element in the
title, which is otherwise translated semantically. The resulting homophony produces a striking semantic opposition between the two compo-
nent parts of the title. The phrase ‘play,’ whose denotation is euphoric
and playful, is replaced by ‘plaid’ which has two dysfunctional meanings:
source and sound. The parody resulting from this phonetic manipulation
makes the title A Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne self-referential.
Like Magritte’s pipe, but in the converse sense, this parodic title, which
is not a priori a translation, nevertheless says: ‘This is a transla-
tion.’ And since, in its duality, it refers itself as a translation, the
double utterance takes on a metadiscursive meaning, as analysed at the
beginning of this chapter.

As a case-study, Germain’s work raises questions about the metadiscurs-
ive function of dramatic works whose comic effect results from partial
and formal deformations. What does the grand discours, to use an expression
from the pragmatic semantics of Oswald Ducrot, consist of?—the grand
discours being the more or less illocutionary discourse that the dramatist uses
to address his audience through the petit discours, that is to say, through the
dialogue in the play? In this grey area of Québécois theatre where creation and translation meet, we find imitation of the foreign model, pure and simple. Any trans-

lation must select along a clime between literal respect for the source text
and the pragmatics imposed by the target milieu. Imitation can be consid-
ered to be an extreme manifestation of the choices in the translation pro-
cess. In imitation, typical translation procedures such as expansion,
reduction, and transposition are applied not only to short utterances but
to the whole narrative and to the actantial structures of the original text.
None the less, the original remains recognizable in the new version. In
some cases, the site-alone indicates that the translation is a remake. For
example, Roland Lepage’s Le thé à La Folle de Château is easily detectable in
the title La Folle du quartier latin. Lepage used Giraudoux’s plot, but he
moved the action from the Paris of the 1940s to contemporary Québec City,
with the necessary transposition of setting, protagonists, references, and
language. As these transformations have been discussed by Paul Lefebvre
and Pierre Ougi, we will turn our attention to two more recent instiga-
tions to see what transformations have been made to the original texts.

Gogol in ‘La Grande Noireuse’:
Michel Tremblay’s Le Gars de Québec

Michel Tremblay’s title Le Gars de Québec would never lead one to sus-
pect that the play is based on Gogol’s The Government Inspector. Tremblay’s
translation transforms the original through reactualization of space and
time. The action takes place in the Quebec of the 1930s, which clearly
seems to function in the theatre as the Québécois equivalent of nine-
teenth-century Russia. Only the bare bones of the plot of Gogol’s play
are retained. The somewhat shady public figures of an imaginary village
on the north shore of the St Lawrence are in a state about the visit of an
inspector, who is actually an impostor, sent by Premier Duplessis:

MAMAN BOUCHARD—Ouais, mais chuis sûre qu’vou a pas dit qu’v’y avait dit, par
exemple, cher... Y’a connu à son ami de québec qu’y avait tombé sur une gang
d’Habibiens Ignorants qui avais l’air de le prendre pour quelqu’un d’autre pis
ev’expérait faire une cenne avec vous autres... Vous pouv pas vous imaginer:
’s’ya dit, cher... Deux, pis des autres!

MARIE-ANTOINE PETIT—C’tait pas l’inspecteur de quebec!

MAMAN BOUCHARD—Pantoute! Ci’t un tout nu qu’y avait même pas une cenne
pour retourner chez eux... qui venait de perdre sa job, à québec, parce qu’y avait
basé contre le cardinal Léger!
MADAME BOUCHARD — Yes, but I was sure he didn’t tell you what he said, dear ... He told his friend from Quebec that he came across a gang of ignorant locals who seemed to mistake him for someone else and who were hoping to make money off you ... You’d be amazed by what was said, dear ... About you and the others!

MARGUERITE PETIT — It wasn’t the inspector from Quebec City!

MADAME BOUCHARD — Not at all! He was penniless, didn’t even have a cent to go back to where he came from ... he had just lost his job, in Quebec City, because he had said things against Cardinal Léger!19

The satire of a Russia riddled with corruption finds its equivalent in the depiction of a local Québécois event which could have taken place during La Grande Noirceur (‘the Great Darkness’, a reference to the Duplessis period). Tremblay retains the main outline of the play, but he does not include the myriad of tiny details that enrich the humorous but caustically critical description of daily life in the highly corrupt Russia of Tsar Nicolas I. Tremblay’s depiction of Québécois society is infinitely more benign and self-indulgent, a nostalgic evocation of days gone by. A comparison of the above extract with the equivalent passage in Gogol’s play reveals the difference in the way the two societies are depicted.20 For further comparison, let us examine the same scene as translated into English by Milton Ehre and Pruma Gotschalk:

THE POSTMASTER (reada) — My dear Troyshichkin, some amazing things have been happening to me. On my way here, an infantry officer cleaned me out of my last kopeck. The insenker was set to have me thrown into jail, when suddenly, the whole town took me for Gogol. I must have been my Petersburg clothes and manners. I’m staying at the mayor’s, living it up, flirting like mad with his wife and daughter. I haven’t decided who to start with. Probably the mother — she looks ready to go all the way at a wink. ... Remember how hard up we were, the meals we sponged and the time the waiter threw me out on my ear for charging our dinner to the king of England? Now the tables are turned. They’re falling all over themselves to lend me money. What oddballs! You’d die laughing. Why not put them into some of those sketches you write for the papers? Take the mayor — as dumb as an ox.21

Tremblay changes Gogol’s denouement, in which everyone comes a cropper, replacing it with a series of brief interchanges, focusing on events in the plot rather than on social mores. This reduction is typical of the changes Tremblay made throughout the play. One gets the impression he followed the principle of absolute simplicity, used so successfully by popular tall-tails.

Machiaveli in Underpants: Jean-Pierre Ronfard’s La Mandragore

Jean-Pierre Ronfard’s La Mandragore (The Mandrake),22 a comedy inspired by Machiavelli, who in turn had based his play on the works of Terence and Boccaccio, can also be categorized as an imitation. Written in the style of a medieval fabliau, the plot of this Florentine comedy is built around a strangegy developed by Ligurio, a resourceful sponger: The beautiful but overly virtuous Lucrezia is led to fall in love with the young Callimaco. Gullible and obsessed with the desire to be a father, Lucrezia’s elderly husband agrees to allow Lucrezia to drink a potion containing mandrake and to take a lover as an antidote to the poison. Lucrezia submits to the authority of a licentious mother and a mercenary confessor, and finally experiences the pleasures of love. In an imitation predating Ronfard’s version, La Nouvelle Mandragore,23 Jean Vauthier retains Machiavelli’s characters, as well as their original traits, and barely gallicizes the names of the two main protagonists. But the role of Callimaco is expanded and made much more lyrical. The language becomes particularly poetic in the finale, when two young lovers appear. Their passionate dialogue, in a sort of ouistre-off, projects the stream of consciousness of Lucrezia and Callimaco, who are finally united but must save face. Vau- thiher develops the theatricalization of comic elements in the role of Sostrata, the shameless mother-in-law, and Timoteo, the ‘rogue monk.’ The dialogue is risqué at times, as it is in Machiavelli’s play, but the charac- teres still use the language of classical comedy, which has a distancing effect.

Ronfard’s (imitation, as Tremblay’s Le Gar de Quebec, is achieved through reduction. The narration is stripped down and rearranged so that it retains only elements of bedroom farce of the sort found in the light comedies of the théâtre de boulevard. The tragic caustic nature of the characters and situation is pushed to the extreme. What is elliptical and discrete in Machiavelli becomes explicit and crude in Ronfard’s work; witness the bedroom scene. The comic effect is also derived from a disjunction between language and content. The characters are identical to those of the Florentine comedy,24 time and space depicted in decor
and costumes are still set in the Italian Renaissance, but the language no longer the theatrical convention of contemporary Québécois realism: ‘Bon, ça va faire! On va pas niaiser plus longtemps. Ce soir à huit heures dans le jardin. O.K., la petite porte par en arrière Ça va?’ The language is made even more authentic by local allusions: ‘pêcherie à Sainte-Anne de Beaupré,’ ‘dentelles de Pointe-au-Pic,’ ‘judith Lavio, Antoine Bérubé et Compagnie.’ Throughout the play, English expressions are also used to accentuate the anachronism: ‘O.K! Let's go! je rentre chez nous attendre ma femme!’ ‘J'ai pour ami de cœur steady le cardinal Bibiena’; ‘Attention, minute, caution, pas de folies.’ In other words, Machiavelli is rendered in TV sitcom language, a language aimed at the ratings and guaranteed to pull in the audience: ‘Appelle-moi Callimaco tout court ou, si tu préfères, Calli, ou mieux Cal, comme ils diraient dans l'Ouest.’

In Québécois theatre, imitations of the sort we have just discussed in the work of Lepage, Ronfard, and Tremblay are common. Typically, Québécois imitations utilize re-actualization, adapting the plot, as well as the names and roles of the characters, to the Quebec context. Republic and comedies are thus replaced by ‘Québécois’ creations. To this end, the foreign work is interpreted according to a media aesthetic, the aesthetic of television, which uses humour based on the lowest common denominator to attract the biggest possible audience. Let us look at one of these imitations, a satire that denounces the anglophobia from which the Québécois cannot escape. In this play, the relation to the Other becomes an overt theme.

The English, or Evil Intruder: Antoine Maillet's Le Bourgeois Gentleman

Clearly based on Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Antoine Maillet’s Le Bourgeois Gentleman is a re-working of Molière’s play to the Montreal of 1949. A certain M. Bourgeois, from Sainte-Pétronille, has got rich selling overshoes and now has only one ambition, to live in Westminster. Central to this Québécois version of Molière’s comedy is the portrayal of the English, the Other, ultimate fantasy. M. Bourgeois wants to become a gentleman at all costs,’ says the maidervant, ‘that’s why he wants to become English.’ The satire of the rubber-boot merchant’s anglophobia parallels the theme of ‘Plays’ – the temptation to emulate the English irresistibly leads to assimilation. Naive and uneducated, but practical and sensible, Antoine Maillet’s bourgeoise gentleman refuses to accept his status as a Québécois, whose fate, as the popular expression says, is to be ‘né pour un petit pain’ (born for a little loaf), victim of the English, who have the power and real wealth:

The day is gone when they will explain my own business to me in a language that I don’t understand, when they will treat me in a manner that is unfamiliar to me; when they will take my money to invest in a life that I will not share. Do you understand that?’

This line of thinking is reminiscent of arguments used by separatist politicians to sensitize public opinion. The question posed here, which is not in the least a rhetorical one, appeals to the Québécois public who share this aspiration, the legitimate desire to take charge of their own lives. Unlike the French bourgeois gentilhomme, the Québécois ‘bourgeois gentleman’ is sensible, pragmatic, and aware of the socio-economic inferiority of French Canadians and of the political roadblocks to their freedom of action. In the Québécois version of the play, it is not so much the bourgeois himself who is derided and discredited, but the way he chooses to achieve his new status – anglicization. It is ridiculous for him to model himself after the English, because the English are intrinsically inferior.

The Englishman is represented by a character called Featherstonehough. The last syllable of his name is systematically repeated throughout the play, echoing the laughter he inevitably attracts each time he appears on the stage. An emblematic character, Sir Harold Featherstonehough is to the English what Mollière’s Dorante is to the nobility: the paradigm of a social category. He is an unspeakable character, his name is literally unpronounceable. ‘We could only say his name if he had a real Christian name like Bouchard or Bourgeois and not... ha-ha-ha!’ The Sir Harold is deposed, dishonest, and deceitful. Like his French model, Dorante, he takes advantage of the gullibility of the bourgeois to restore his own financial health. Dorante, the ruined noble, in a practical joker, but, ultimately, his deeds have positive results. He is a lover with noble intentions, to win over the woman he loves and to marry her. It is true that he gives the Marquise a ring that he was supposed to have given her on behalf of M. Jourdain, but, by doing so, he saves the licentious bourgeois from an illicit love affair that would have disturbed his household. He is also generous and goes along with the Turk’s stratagem to thwart M. Jourdain’s silly pretensions and make it easier for his daughter to marry the man she has chosen. In the Québécois version, Mollière’s tricks become nasty pranks. Sir Harold, the impecunious lover, does much more than just use the money and the house of the gullible bourgeois to seduce a beautiful
woman with a fancy meal and a ring; he is also a marriage wrecker and an objectionable procurer who pushes the bourgeois into adultery. He is anxious to get rid of this extravagant woman, to push her into the arms of the father, hoping that she will become the father's mistress. His goal is to win the girl's hand in exchange, but, unfortunately, she loves someone else. However, if the opportunity presented itself, he would not be above picking up the mother. Thank God, honour is preserved, because the Québécois protagonist, who is a good husband and a good father, does not go along with the scheme. He wants to know how to say 'pêcher' (to sin) in English. "In English," replied Sir Harold, "they don't talk about that." Straddling moral, the Québécois continues, "Not even in connection or to his own conscience?" The Québécois bourgeois may be naïve but he is also honest, virtuous, and hard-working. The Englishman, however, is downright evil.

The play contains many maxims that depict the English stereotypically: 'The English don't have English maidservants.' 'In English you start at the top, and in French you start at the bottom.' And, more figuratively, 'When the dust rolls down the mountain, it's always our glasses that get dirtied.' 'In English you never get bogged down, you stay on the surface.' 'English is the language of business.' 'In English, time is money.' In aphorisms such as these, the Englishman is depicted as the wealthy exploiters, the cold calculator accountable to no one, neither to God nor to his conscience. This Protestant heathen does not go to confession. He is an unscrupulous exploiter, an out-and-out souter. Sir Harold is the prototypical Englishman. Financially ruined, he manages to dupe the bourgeois by selling him his mortgaged house, while the creditor is none other than the bourgeois himself.

The Englishman is evil incarnate. It is dangerous to ally oneself with him; it is harmful, indeed unnatural, for a Québécois to do so. Such an alliance constitutes a betrayal of the 'French race,' to quote from nationalist language of the 1930s and 1940s. The Englishman belongs to another, totally different world, and he is thus of no interest to a Québécois. Let us listen to Mme Bourgeois, the voice of common sense, give vent to the objections she has to her daughter's plans to marry an anglophone:

Do you think I feel like going to eat roast beef and plum pudding at my son-in-law's, and listening to the mother-in-law's litany about her childhood in Yorkshire or Winnipeg; and dangling on my knees grandchildren who call me Granny and won't understand when I sing 'La Poulette garce a pondu dans l'église'?"

Here the superiority and legitimacy of Québécois values are implicitly validated, while denigration and negation of the English are used to ward off alienation. The British and the Anglo-Canadians are one and the same. In contrast to the richness of Québécois history and culture, they stand out as the very incarnation of vacuity and idiocy. The haughty, humourless anglophone, with his 'guette belle' (frozen expression), is of absolutely no interest. The Québécois, by contrast, is depicted as a simple, unpretentious being, who enjoys life and is respectable of traditional values. It is entirely inappropriate for M. Bourgeois to proclaim, 'I want to learn English, the English style, the English way of living.' He is mocked for wanting to get to know the Other; friendship with the Other is reprehensible.

In Maillet's play, one never sees the real Englishman, as he is obscured by an imaginary full of self-enhancing prejudices. And, lo and behold, behind the archetype of the Englishman, we find the archetype of all alterity: the Jew, who is equated with the Englishman, as can be clearly seen in the family names used in the play. The Québécois equivalent of the marquise courted by M. Jourdain is called 'Lady Cowendolph Twickenheim'—a name part English, part Jewish. The two cultures merge, as in the scene where M. Bourgeois's Québécois maidservant, in disguise, passes herself off as Lady Twickenheim:

Bourgeois: Do you like dancing?
Joséphine: I go dancing every Sunday evening ... at the Goldcooks.

Bourgeois: Oh! Would you be free on Tuesdays?
Joséphine: That's my Bingo night ... at the Gold 'n' Golds. And on Thursdays we took Mrs. at the Goldbergs', Bluebergs' and Steinsbergs'.

Bourgeois: I might have known. And on Saturdays?
Joséphine: That's our family day. The Twickenheims, Twickendens and Twickenbees come to our house to have some fun. Uncle Jérémite ... Sir Jeremy ... takes out his bagpipes, and my cousin, the head of the Cabinet, plays the harmonium, and my grandmother, Lady Twickenish, gets up and does a little step-dance for us. You should see that! Things really swing, and we eat blood pudding and home pie, and we sing sad songs around the organ ... What they call 'Five o'clock tea' in Westmount.
This caricature of life in Westmount, which reveals a whole imaginary, is based on a set of ideological maxims. The Englishman is Jewish, and the Jew is English. Is there any difference between the celebration of the Sabbath and tea o'clock tea? The Englishman may be different from the Jew, but we, the Québécois, do not see the difference, and rightly so, because there is simplicity between them in terms of power, money, and leisure. They form an exclusive club from which we are barred.

In the repertoriation of the Other in the Québecois remake of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, the English and the Jew have a number of things in common, the most important of which is the power of money. Nothing, however, surpasses the onomatopoeic wealth of the Jews:

BOURGEOIS = Oh yes, Let’s talk about houses.

HAROLD = Residences, Sir ... With a pool ...

BOURGEOIS = ... like the Goldbergs ...

HAROLD = ... tennis, golf ...

BOURGEOIS = like the Goldclowns ...

HAROLD = ... billiards ...

BOURGEOIS = ... like the Goldsmiths ...

HAROLD = ... and a bar like the Gold n’ Golds ... 84

Jews monopolize and concentrate wealth. This is the message in the choice of the invariable root gold, the English word for capital, which is the root of all the Jewish names in the play. The Jew is thus denounced as the symbol of the double usurpation of which Quebec is a victim. Like the Englishman, whose language he shares, the Jew becomes a legitimate object of derision. The choice of the name ‘Goldclown [Goldclown]’ speaks volumes. The symbolism contained in this fictitious name contaminates the other names chosen by the author, some of which are well-known family names in Quebec, such as that of the Steinbergs, the owners of the supermarket chain. 85

Wealth accompanies power, real power, political power: ‘Lady Gwendolyn is the wife of a minister and former adviser to the Cabinet of ...’ 86

We should also note the portrayal of Lady Twickenham, a demi-monde who goes from her lover’s (Sir Harold’s) bed to M. Bourgeois’s salon. M. Bourgeois is protected, thank God, by the forensis of his irreproachable Christian virtue. His wife can rest assured, he only wanted to get a little power from the Jews: ‘It was not for real, my darling, only to be a gentleman, and be like the Goldbergs and Gold n’ Golds, to be in charge, like the others.’ 87

Lust is the Jew’s trademark, together with the money power he inherits at birth; but a Québécois has to earn his money, by the sweat of his brow and through his own talents. Are there other little guys from Sainte-Pétronille in the Conseil du Patronat! Did the Goldclowns and the Goldbergs and the Gold n’ Golds start from scratch, like you, and manage to end up running a dozen factories and two dozen stores? 88

Characterized in this way, the Jew constitutes the prototypical Foreigner who has chosen to ally himself with the enemy in order to exploit francophones. He is doubly detestable. This characterization of the Jew maintains anti-Semitism in the consciousness of the public. The Jew is covertly accused, and humour is used as an unsuitable excuse for such a portrayal; after all, it is only caricature.

We could say, then, that Molière’s comedy is used as a metaphor to sublimely legitimate rejection of the Other. The Québecois version of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme replaces the original target of the satire with an ethnic or religious group, rather than a social group, and, as such, it is not so much an imitation as an ideological appropriation. It also can just as easily be viewed as a literary appropriation. Molière’s classical comedy indirectly validates the ideological re-creation of the text. But there is evidence of false reverence for the model here. Maître’s imitation (or mockery) attempts to compensate for the inadequacy of the original play to describe the Québecois situation. This is why the original had to be replaced. Thus, in this case, adaptation destroys the original in favour of the new work, whose aim is to take over the play completely.

Rodriguemachine:
Régine Ducharme’s Le Cid maghârè

Parody, at least in its traditional form, is another intrinsically humorous but ‘deforming’ mode of translation. In some plays, as, for example, in A Canadian Play: Une Plate canadienne, only the title is affected. In Quebec theatre, there are many examples of such parodic titles, which trivialize
classical canonical works and reproduce them in a minor key: *Don Quichotte*, *l'Homme à la manique*, *Monsieur Lanthal*, *Emile et vœux restés*;* Romeo et Juliet*, *Rusell et Juliet*;* Le Cid maghane*;* En attendant Gounod*; and *L'Alphôme faite à Morte*. These parodies reactualize classical plays in a Québécois context, setting the action in the milieu of marginality, with characters such as the drug addict, the bar hostess, the tramp, or the homosexual, or re-actualizing the classic in a social milieu in which the language spoken (joual) is disconnected from the French of France and distinctly Québécois. We note, however, that, with the exception of *Le Cid maghane*, the titles of Québécois plays cited above bear no intertextual relation, in form or in content, to the foreign literary classics whose titles they parody and whose reputation they appropriate. The foreign masterpiece becomes a mere vehicle for the Québécois play. Its status as a classic helps validate the Québécois imitation. But it validates the imitation as much, if not more, by antithesis, because imitations clearly represent the classical work as being outdated, an object of derision inappropriate for expressing the Québécois condition. The best example of this type of parody is Régien Ducharme’s *Le Cid maghane* (*The Disfigured Cid*). As its title indicates, Ducharme’s parody disfigures one of the great classics of French literature, and one of the most frequently parodied plays in the French repertoire. The *parodic* effect in *Le Cid maghane* is mainly derived from the translation of Corneille’s *Oedipe*; *Oedipus*; into a prosaic mixture of English and French:

**Cornelle**

**CHIMÈNE** - Honneur impoysable à mes plus chers désirs

Que tu me coûter de pleurs et de soupirs.36

**Ducharme**

**CHIMÈNE** - Que je suis donc hasardeuse.

The famous lines from Corneille’s play do not have the same cultural significance in Quebec as they do in France. Parody works only if the parodied text is a familiar one. In Ducharme’s version of *Le Cid*, the parody is based less on well-known lines from the text than on the diegetic elements, or famous scenes from the play. For example, the slap scene is transformed into a bar-room brawl:

**LE COMTE** - You desire a good slap in the face. She’s coming. There she is! Gatch

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At the Other’s Expense 81

Pew! (Slap in the face. Don Diego falls, get up again.) — (He throws Don Diego’s wig in the corner.) You can sell the prince that you were scalped by an Iroquois. That can be an introduction to your first history lesson on America.37

Herr, Ducharme’s parody resembles *Le Chaplain désaffecté*, the first parody of *Le Cid*, by Boileau, Racine, and others.38 But Ducharme takes particular aim at the classic Cornelian dilemma, filling *Le Cid’s* famous stances (stanzas) with graffiti and scathing comments. Honour is trivialized and reduced to romantic-novel sentimentality:

**L’INFANTE** - Laisse ma charmante, existe qu’il est jamais armé de se faire dévoiler par les contradictions!

**LÉONOR** - Les contradictions garderont leurs distances avec toi.

**L’INFANTE** - Une chance! Il y a rien de pire. Ça me fait du mal que Chimène cesse la chance de perdre Rodrigue, mais en même temps, ça me fait du bien. Ça me fait du bien, parce que si Rodrigue se retrouve tout seul, c’est dans mes bras qu’il va venir se consoler. Ça me fait du mal parce que si Rodrigue vient me demander de le consoler dans mes bras, je pourrai pas dire non et je vais perdre mon honneur.

**LÉONOR** - Tu es sentimentale comme une fille qui travaille dans une manufacture.

**L’INFANTE** - Léonor, my darling, have you ever been touched by contradictions?

**LÉONOR** - Contradictions keep their distance from me.

**L’INFANTE** - Good thing! There’s nothing worse. I’m upset that Chimène might lose Rodrigue, but at the same time, it’s good for me because, if Rodrigue finds himself all alone, he’s going to consoler himself in my arms. It’s bad for me because, if Rodrigue asks me to console him in my arms, I won’t be able to refuse and I will lose my honour.

**LÉONOR** - You’re sentimental, as sentimental as a shop girl.39

Linguistically, the transformation of the text is not so much a translation as a free transcoding. The translation of Corneille’s verse into joual and the trivialization of the language reactualize the characters, their words, and their deeds, and put them in the realm of ‘commonly prosaic
"A Sociocritique of Translation
daily life," to quote Rodrigue, a daily life that is clearly Québécois. Rod-
rigue is portrayed as a bum, and Chénémé could be a heroine from the
tables of Le journal de Montréal, as could all the other charac-
ters—the Infante, who is as sentimental as a shop girl; Gorman, the killer,
and his gang; or Don Fernand, the homosexual who is always begging for a
"little kiss." Critics have interpreted Ducharme's play as an attempt to
parody alienation in Québécois society, the author uses Le Cid to read—
and criticize—Québécois society, more than using jandle to recontext Cor-
nelle.50 There are, indeed, many allusions, besides the use of jandel, to
the Québécois context in the play. However, Le Cid maghane is not just a
satirical tableau of Québecois society. The play presents us, rather, with a
grand-guignol image of a heterogeneous social environment, dwelt in by
character collages in period costume. The québécois (Québecness) of these
characters is to be found in their identifiable geographical mode of
expression, rather than in typically Québécois behaviour. The cultural
references in the play are far from being exclusively Québécois. Taking
your girl friend to a movie in a Cadillac, as Rodrigue does, is the dream of
any North American 'gars de taverne' (caveman). The play contains far
fewer references to Québécois 'heroes' than to international movie, 
press, and television superstars such as Cassius Clay, Rocky Marciano,
Pidel Castro, Mao Tse-Tung, and Paul Newman, or to even better-known
movie, popular literature, and comic-book heroes such as Tarzan, the
Three Musketeers, Al Capone, and Elvis Presley.

The blind point in parody, particularly in its modern form, is the inten-
tion that motivates it. Ducharme said of Cornelle's tragedy: 'My goal was
to make it more understandable, more of this place, less serious and
uglier.' On one level, the disfigurement of Cornelle's text seems to be to
nothing more than a satire, like a comic strip drawn on the Mona Lisa.
These iconoclastic transformations derive classical tragedy, but we cannot
say that they are directed against Cornelle, or derived from a polémical
idea, to use Linda Hutchins's term, as well as on linguistic delivery.51
This metatextuality is to be found, for example, in the extratext and in the intro-
ductive lines of the play, which the actresses are to deliver with a French

accent: here, there is a boomerang effect in which Cornelle begins to
parody Ducharme.

Normally, the objective of translation is to bring that which is foreign
nearer. In Le Cid maghane, however, the translation disguises the original
and has the opposite effect, distancing, or even banishing, the French
classic from the Québécois field of literature. In exchange, Québécois lit-
erature is enriched with an authentically Québécois work. As the Québécois
play replaces the French classic, there is a change of genre; the French
tragicomedy is transformed into a farce, based on the model of the Amer-
can sitcom. Thus, Cornelle's text is rewritten in media style, using the
exaggeration and absurdity of the crass-pop comedy of a Jerry Lewis or
a Pee Wee Herman, or of sensational newspapers such as The National
Enquirer. Ducharme makes no attempt to hide his debt to the popular
press. When asked what his influences were, he responded sarcastically:

I would say Mickey Spillane ... I would say L.F. Celine ... I would say also Docusse ...
But all those glorious wounds would seem to have given me such a thick skin that I can
only be moved by reading the sports pages in Le Journal de Montréal and the weekly
installments in Asil Police (I take part in their Maxi-Grisle crossword competition—
I've never won anything), I wonder myself what my influences really are ... 52

The Québécois contribution of Cornelle's text uses aesthetic proce-
dures similar to those used by Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol in their
art—the grainy press photo, a band of prime colour framed by a black
line, the naive caricatureization of comic-books, or the blow-up.
In the work of Warhol or Lichtenstein, the matrix of a painting is a visual repre-
sentation of an article of mass consumption, a comic or a press photo
reproduced in millions of copies. In this paintings, the meaning of repe-
tition is inverted. Through the artist's intervention, the cliché, which by
definition is banal and meaningless, assumes meaning and uniqueness,
making it a work of art. Ducharme uses the same procedure with the ste-
tereotype. First he uses one of the best known, even hackneyed plays in the
repertoire: a parody of Le Cid is in itself a cliché as far as literature is
concerned. Then he goes one step further by using stereotypes from popular
literature, or from television and cinema that either complement or
replace them. The play is an obvious parody, but it is interesting to read
Le Cid maghane in light of procedures used by artists such as Lichtenstein,
for example, who makes no claim at all to parodying Walt Disney ima-
tors. Parody is a useful literary category, but in the case of Ducharme's
play, one must go beyond the parody and put aside ethnocentric interpre-
in Montreal, Sabatier is going to come running from a far-flung corner of his country to say hello to him! Come and tell me again that it’s dishonorable to love a man like that."

The play also contains after-images from popular literature and comics. Let us look again, for example, at the slap scene, where the Comte de Gomaras, jealous because he was not chosen to be the prince’s tutor, tells Don Diego he is too old for the job. Don Diego defends himself as follows: ‘The Comte de Neipperg had only one eye and he wore Marie-Louise from Napoleon. Is there anything tougher than a pirate? Most pirates have only one leg.’

We find these infantile caricatures, which come straight out of comic books, throughout Le Cad maugreni. Like children, the protagonists model their behaviour on what they see in books or movies. Here is what Rodrigo says about the reward he should get when Don Diego praises him for bravely bumping off Chimbé’s father: ‘I read in the Ellois book that Al Capone had fixed the rate at ten thousand bucks a murder.’ Don Sanche refuses to make favourable amends on the pretext that ‘of all the Paul Newman films, for example, there is only one where you see him apologize ... He asks an eighty-nine-year-old woman to forgive him for running his Buick over her feet.’ The sensational press is full of formulas designed to hook gullible readers, to whom they offer an easy, escapist form of entertainment. Le Cad maugreni simply imitates media-style fiction.

Another example is the reinterpretation of the extraordinary military prowess of Cornelle’s Cid, in which Ducharme uses images as exaggerated as those in any Hollywood battle scene. There was not a single Moslem left on a horse and there were no Moslem horses left standing. The whole horizon was awash with enemy blood, like an abattoir full of animal blood. On our side, a few soldiers had a nose bleed and a few horses had a sunburn.

We easily recognize the slapstick style of popular American television and film comedies in this reinterpretation of the Cornellian classic; but Ducharme goes beyond this and works within a modernism comparable to that of Heiner Müller. Le Cad maugreni and Homelmachine both proclaim the death of a certain dramatic iconography, but they use different registers and obviously different procedures. This iconography cannot withstand the confrontation that Ducharme’s use of new cultural schema subjects it to. Le Cad maugreni could have easily been called Rodriguemachine. Rodrigo cannot remain the same in this new environment of ‘everyday’ culture, no more than the Prince of Denmark could.

All the realms, Niger and Nigeria itself, are going to break into a thousand pieces at his feet, Arabs are going to depart from the desert darkest Far East to come shine his shoes as a sign of submission. The Aragonese are going to abandon Aragon and give him a better reception in Madrid than the Quebecois gave De Gaulle.
neille's hero has dropped his mask, and, like the new Hamlet, he could say:

My drama doesn't happen anymore. Behind me the set is put up. By people who aren't interested in my drama, for people to whom it means nothing. I am not interested in it anymore either. Unnoticed by the actor playing Hamlet, stagehands place a refrigerator and three TVs on the stage. Illumining of the refrigerator. Two TV screens without sound. The set is a monument. It presents a man who made history, enlarged a hundred times ... The actors put their faces on the rack in the dressing room. In his box, the prospective is resting. The stuffed corpses in the house don't stir a hand. I go home and kill the time, at one with my undivided self.

Television. The daily nausea Nausea
Of prefabricated bubble of decreed cheerfulness
How do you spell GENUS RESIST?
Give us this day our daily murder ...

Hall COCA-COLA.86

In the context of a post-industrial society, where human tragedy, interpreted by the media, is consumed with the same pleasure and the same insouciance as a soft drink, the archetypal 'problematic hero' is out of style. A multidimensional man has succeeded him, a man whose consciousness is eroded daily by the media machine. There is no longer any dividing line between reality and the fiction that depicts it. The world is merely a captionless picture book. The heroes of Shakespeare and Corneille no longer form part of the imaginary. Like Hammerschmidt, the Quebecois parody of Le Gil demonstrates that the masterpiece must be recontextualized. Using a procedure similar to that of Heiner Müller, Ducharme dismantles the conventions of classical theatre and reveals the limits of the Cornelian protagonist, whose problematic becomes passé when re-actualized in a new environment. Today, the Cornelian hero has no more weight than a comic-book hero; he is not even funny or ironic. Corneille's Le Gil has become an 'auratic' work, or we might say, a 'chronos' of literature, with the required happy ending. Ducharme's disfigurement of the play removes the chrono effect, an effect Adorno refers to as the soothing aura that comes from hackneyed reproductions, in which the play becomes a relic with no hold on reality, a creator of false consciousness. A crucial intervention like Ducharme's thus has the effect of producing a cognitive impact on the consciousness of the spectator, to whom Le Gil maghild presents a new state of affairs, a new vision of the world and of man in the world.
and managed to survive; the repentance and punishment of the traitor; and, last but not least, for good measure, a series of murders at the end of the play.

Of the many characters in the original play, the parody remains only Lear and his three daughters, renamed 'Josette' (Gonzil), 'Violette' (Regan), and 'Carmez' (Cornelle). The youngest disinterested daughter disguises herself as the King's jester. The faithful Kent is replaced by a woman called Cornelle, a saucy chambermaid and Lear's mistress. Cornelle, the ambitious mother of the bastard named Hector (Edmond) will have her eyes put out. Apart from a few similarities, Lear so distorts the original Shakespearean plot that it is only nominally a parody. Since only minimal pieces of the narrative schema are retained, and in altered form, the audience is denied the double perspective essential to parody, in which awareness of the two texts is a source of irony.

Ronfard engages in a type of theatre that he calls 'hypertrope' and 'volcanic.' 89 His Lear utters Shakespeare's tragedy into an openly scatological and pornographic farce. The King is an old leech whom fate has made impotent. But, true to form, his two elder daughters have inherited his lustfulness, especially the younger of the two, an erotomaniac character who had added to her family coat of arms 'un perin de sitrple sur fond de gueules' 90 (a red penis on a background of gules). As for the bastard, he lives in excrement, the symbol of his abjection. The bathroom is the kingdom of this ignoble simphon. Throughout the whole play, defecation, masturbation, and other bodily acts are mimed on the stage. As might be expected, Shakespeare's poetry is replaced by bawdy language full of vulgar expressions not normally used on stage ... to put it mildly. Lear can be seen as a kind of end-game, revised and corrected in the auteur's satirical style of *Arsène-Koki*, the self-proclaimed 'stupid, vicious' magazine. But this parody version of Shakespeare's tragedy cannot be written off as marginal. The author and director of the play was at one time artistic director of the National Theatre School. The play was performed by well-known actors with international reputations. 84 Thus, the play cannot be dismissed out of hand. It is a product of the institution and is deserving of our attention.

Ostensibly, Lear is iconoclastic. This is not, however, all that is at work here. Distancing and irony are fully integrated into the performance. The set is framed by twin characters in Elizabethan costume, who each represent Shakespeare. They appear to be in charge of lighting, but they pay little attention to the play, drinking beer instead. For the audience, their presence is a rare tangible allusion to the source text, even though they remain on the sidelines. They do, however, participate at certain points in the play: by way of introduction, they engage in a brief 'Shakespearean dialogue' on the death of the King and the dangers of the new régime; in the middle of the play, we hear them in the background unintelligibly singing out 'Clarmen's dream from Richard II; at the end of the play, they run each other through and join the other dead bodies on the stage. Their anachronistic clothing and language accentuate the outrageous, distancing dimension of this bedroom farce. We note also that throughout the dialogue and stage directions there are references to popular usings, specifically to the Russian Revolution:

... under the red flag ... a horde of demonstrators are shouting and chanting 'Power to the bastards,' then they move off to attack all the possible and ignominious Winter Palaces ... On their way, they meet the two Shakespeares, who emerge from their cage out of curiosity. Two worlds confront each other. Silence. Immobility. What are we all doing here? Everyone falls into this theatrical void full of metaphorical anguish. 85

Clearly, we see here, as in the case of Réjean Ducharme or Heiner Müller, an attempt to recompose a literary classic, but so little remains of the source text in the target text that it becomes almost impossible to detect it. This makes it difficult: even to find the parody, notwithstanding the elaborate efforts put into the production. Thus, the impact of the intervention on the original text is considerably reduced. The dialectic one would normally expect between the parodied text and the parody text disappears beneath a veneer of obscurity and absurdity that seem to have no other function than to provoke laughter and 'épater les bourgeois.' Here, we see elements of the much-touted 'carnival' ideology. Witness, for example, the evocation of constructivism, an avant-garde proletarian movement, and the description of a world turned upside down, in the following excerpt:

THE JESTER (in an obviously constructivist style, he performs his big number on a ladder leading to his hiding place): The people are rising up. There is a revolt ... nurses and babies are jumping out of their carriages and playing hopscotch with their porcelain plates. The mobs of the Saint-Marie convent have opened a nudist camp in their congregation's cemetery. The world has gone crazy, totally crazy! . . .

As a dramatic work, Ronfard's parody is an apparent attempt to bring
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about a cultural revolution, to tear down the idols of institutional litera-
ture, whose decadence is incarnated by King Lear, with its unbelievable esthivus: ‘... Culture! Culture links us to the breath and blood of our ancestors like the different coloured tubes in the hospital that maintain the existence of the dying, mumified in their bandages.’

Ronfard breathes uninhibited ‘proletarian’ renewal into this élitist, moribund culture. On the one hand, unbridled eroticism is held up as an aesthetic principle, reminiscent of the refrain that closes Peter Weiss’s Marat/Sade ‘Revolution, copulation.’ On the other hand, the play has aspects of the carnival about it, elements that Bakhtin found in Goethe’s description of the Roman carnival, and later developed in his work on Rabelais:

... the pejorative character without any piousness, complete liberation from seriousness, the atmosphere of equality, freedom and equality, the symbolic meaning of the indiscernible, the chaos, the amassing and disarrangements, the crazy, the motions, the instincts.’

Lear clearly contains carnival elements; scenes such as the abdication of the King, whose ‘throne is a tavern chair placed on top of a pile of Coke cases.’ Nevertheless, this carnivalesque can hardly have Bakhtin’s effect on the members of the audience, since there is no audience participation. Obviously playing to a certain ideology, Bakhtin makes the people into the natural source of all positive values:

... the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community.

... Carnival, with all its indiscernibilities and curses, affirms the people’s immortal and indestructible character. In the world of the greatest of the people, their immortality is combined with the realization that established truth and authority are relative.

Popular-festive forms take into the future. They present the victory of the future, of the ‘golden age’, over the past. This is the victory of all the people’s material abundance, freedom, equality, brotherhood. The victory of the future is ensured by the people’s immortality; the birth of the new, of the better, of the better is indispensable and inevitable as the death of the old.

The Bakhtinian concept of the carnival is based on an intellectual reconstruction of the working classes, tendentiously represented as a homogeneous whole, and as the sole exponents of authenticity. Ronfard’s parody appears to be based on a similar concept, but this is, in fact, misleading since neither the results nor the purposes of the carnivalesque coincide with those of the theatre. The theatre acts upon a captive audience and can, thus, exert an illusionary force, or at least a form of manipulation similar to that of the media. But, in Ronfard’s play, the process is ironic, or at least its purpose is to be ironic. In fact, the sensationalism used by Ronfard is nothing more than a phatic process whose underlying message is: ‘Lear, like Le Cid, has had its day.

Redefining the Boundary of the Foreign: Jean-Claude Germain’s Les Faux Brilliants de Félix-Gabriel Marchand

Sensationalist theatre, of which Lear is an extreme, adheres to the strict definition of ‘neoculture’ pursued by the new Québécois society, as it seeks to free itself from the domination of the ‘old country’: ‘the polaculture, élitist, conservative and fetishistic, is a culture of private appropriation, museums, contemplation, individual pleasure; the neoculture – neither a “subculture” nor a “mass culture” – is a culture of sharing, of instant consumption, of widespread communication, a culture that creates community.’

The emerging Québécois theatre system followed the imperatives of this neoculture, itself institutionalized in infrastructures and in discursive norms. The existence of these norms makes it possible to categorize apparently unclassifiable isolated phenomena. A case in point is the adaptation of Les Faux Brilliants of a late-nineteenth-century vaudville play by a Québécois playwright who was better known as the premier of Quebec.

Based on French drama conventions, Félix-Gabriel Marchand’s work combines the classical theatre and the théâtre de boulevard. Needless to say, the rhymes and alexandrines of his play seem out of place in the new theatrical aesthetic introduced by Les Belles-Sœurs. However, Jean-Claude Germain set things right by ‘paraphrasing’ the play and, in doing so, made it, once again, truly Québécois. But this time round, the play has a new title that incorporates the original author’s name: Les Faux Brilliants de Félix-Gabriel Marchand. In this new guise, the play enriched the theatrical production of its ‘translator,’ who published the adaptation under his own name and was recognized by the literary institution as a truly Québécois author. Félix-Gabriel Marchand, however, cannot be classified as Québécois. This is why it was deemed necessary to translate and transform his play to make it conform to the new dramatic canons. As we shall see, the fact that this particular play was revived by the institution was not for-
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The plot of *Les Faux Brillants*, with some slight variation, is yet another adaptation of the story of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, set in the late nineteenth century. Rich but uncultured and consumed by a desire to rise above his station as an 'homme ordinaire,' Dumont allows himself to be tricked by an Italian swindler, and his partner Trémousset. Dumont is a widower, but he has two marriageable daughters – Élise, a snob, who throws herself into the arms of Faquin, believing he is a baron, and Cécile, who is in love with a young lawyer and rejects the marriage her father suggests, alias Conte I us.

Molière's main characters play double roles in Marchand's play, two swindlers, two marriageable daughters, and two lawyers. Nicolas, a jack-of-all-trades, and Marianne, his chambermaid, both have the imperious common sense of Nicole and Mme Jourdain, and the voice of reason is still that of Octave, Dumont's brother and his wise and cultured alter ego. This Québécois version of Molière's play is somewhat chaste. Captivated by his swindler, Dumont dreams ingenuously of the lineage of his future grandchildren. There is no upper-class woman in the offing to disturb his widowhood. The end of the story owes more to Présent du Terrail than to Molière. The swindlers are unmasked *en extenso* by a cousin who appears out of nowhere, having himself miraculously escaped in attempts on his life. As luck would have it, the providential cousin is a millionaire. So he marries Élise, who forswears exchanging her rocky fortune with the Baron for a golden future with this new Rocambolé.

German expands the opening lines and develops several of the scenes to take full advantage of the theatricality of the original play, but he retains all the characters and the narrative schema. We will not examine the structural changes at this time, but we will analyse two major aspects of the transformation: the ideological reinterpretation of Molière's narrative and the reworking of the language. It is significant, in fact, that from all the plays in the French-Canadian repertoire, German chose an imitation of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The choice can be explained by the intertextuality linking the basic structure of Molière's comedy and its three Québécois imitators, *Les Faux Brillants* (E.-G. Marchand), *Les Faux Brillants* ... (J.-G. Germain), and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Antoine Maillet). These three versions borrow from Molière in ways that are not in the story and whose ally he wishes to become. Once the roles have been filled by appropriate characters, the narrative activates some of the main ideologemes underlying the discourse on the Québécois condition, on relations between Quebec and Canada and the English, and Quebec and France and the French. The eulogy of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* subtly introduces, in territorial terms, the social conflict between the bourgeoisie and the nobility. The French bourgeois is subjugated by Le Grand Tzar, who represents, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, the 'homme de qualité' par excellence.

All three Québécois authors give Molière's narrative structure the same ideological interpretation. On the one hand, the geographical origin of the characters becomes just as important for their membership in a social class. The following divisions are used: the bourgeois is Québécois, while the person he admires is a 'Foreigner' who occupies, or appears to occupy, a higher position than the Québécois in the social hierarchy. In Antoine Maillet's version of the play, the Foreigner is an Englishman from Westmount; in Marchand's and in Germain's versions, he is a Frenchman disguised as an Italian aristocrat, or a pseudo-Italian aristocrat, with the caricatured traits of a French Bonapartist. On the other hand, in the three Québécois versions of the play, the relationship between territoriality and extra-territoriality is founded on antagonism – the Foreigner is the perpetrator of evil deeds. The Québécois is his victim. The Foreigner is not only a brazen scrounger, like Molière's Dorante; he is also a notorious swindler, like Antoine Maillet's Feathershorne. Marchand gives the Foreigner the name 'Faquin,' a name that tells us exactly the type of person he is. The underlying ideological, which commonly associates Italians with dishonesty, can be seen in the following narrative structure: before fleeing with the dowry of a Québécois fiancée, whom he has no intention of marrying, Faquin manages to get his expenses, which are considerable, covered by the poor girl's native father. The Italian, Faquin, is a professional con man; his very name tells us that. In this version of the play, it is clear that Faquin's Italianness is as fictitious as his aristocratic title or the name 'Monfellibico,' which he invents for his accomplice, Trémousset.

Marchand's Faquin is a scoundrel who normally conceals his true identity, but to no avail, the Italian suffix of his name resonates with dishonesty. German's version of the play adds or accentuates certain details that clearly give the character of Faquin, whom we believe to be 'Italian by birth,' the traits of a 'maudit Français' (cursed Frenchman). Witness the scene in which Oscar, his Québécois rival, appears. Oscar has just told Faquin exactly what he thinks of him, in piebald language, then he announces that he is going to repeat the whole thing in 'bon françai
(proper French). Faquin, taking a lofty tone, gives the following haughty, stinging retort: ‘Parody, my dear boy, is nothing more than impersonation / You can't invent a culture for yourself far from Paris.’

The Foreigner is portrayed as evil, but the Québécois are always portrayed in a positive light. They can be led astray, as Dumont and his daughter Élise are, but only temporarily. The naïve bourgeois comes out of the ordure on top, and all the wiser for it. He was foolish to be taken in by foreigners, especially since, beneath their external superiority, their veneer of culture and elegant language, the English, the French, and the Italians turn out to be basically evil and harmful. As we have seen, these evil acts are prototypes of the politico-economic colonizer, the cultural colonizer, and the immigrant. They represent the three groups perceived as a threat to the identity and the survival of the ‘people québécois.’ In this regard, Les Faux Brilliants corresponds interdiscursively to A Canadian Play: Une Plais Canadienne. The two plays, which share the same ideologemes, also have the same author. We also find this same interdiscourse in Antoine Mailet’s Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. All these works invariably cast the Québécois in the role of victim, but willing victim: he allows himself to be easily subjugated by the Other, so much so that he wants to be like him and to ally himself with him, and this, by definition, goes against nature. This man who managed to amass a fortune is none the less a sensitive man. If he allows himself to be fooled like a child, it is because of his inability to understand and misplaced pragmatism. It is also because of his inexhaustible generosity. The Other, the exploiter, takes advantage of his weaknesses. Even though he is led astray, Dumont, the prototypical Québécois, is a more or less positive hero who is, unfortunately, corrupted by the Foreigner.

In the plays of F.-G. Marchand, J.-C. Germain, and Antoine Mailet, the portrait of the Québécois is this image of the Québécois as that found in the political discourse or in news commentaries that explicitly or implicitly focus on the question of Québécois autonomy. Underlying the referendum or constitutional debates, the Meech Lake Accord or the new Immigration Act, we find the same ideologemes defining the Québécois condition: the Québécois thinks, incorrectly, that he is inferior (‘porteur d’eau’, ‘né pour un petit pain’, ‘Nègre blanc d’Amérique’...). The Québécois is too quick to trust others, the Québécois always gets taken in by the Other (the English, the anglophone provinces, the federal government, the neo-Québécois who take sides with the anglophones, etc.), the Québécois is a land that welcomes foreigners and gives them refuge). The Québécois identity is threatened by the Other (the English, the immigrant), the Québécois must be suspicious of a pragmatic alliance with the Other (in the Canadian federation). The political or para-political discourse centred on the Québécois condition has an implicit or avowed didactic goal. Its purpose is to educate the Québécois, to make them aware of the necessity of autonomy. Witness the media’s insistence that, with the loss of René Lévesque, the very incarnation of the quest for independence, Quebec lost a ‘great teacher.’ The theatre is also called upon to play its part in the independence movement; it has a pedagogical program, to help Quebec understand the motives and consequences of its alienation, and thus opt for independence. In the next chapter, we further examine how this ideology, which underlies a whole part of the social discourse, is woven into the foreign dramatic text by the translator and how the translator becomes a didactic instrument, an instrument of persuasion, to build the ‘nation québécoise.’

In Germain’s postscript to Les Faux Brilliants ... dedicated to ‘L’Hon. nête Monsieur Marchand,’

we find clear evidence of the dramatic discourse paralleling the political discourse. Marchand had a long political career in opposition before becoming premier of Quebec. Germain portrays him as an enlightened man, the last representative of political liberalism before the conservatism which plunged Quebec into ‘La Grande Noeufce’. From then on, the future belonged to the pragmatism of the Dumonts of this world, to those who sold off the interests of Quebec, from S.-N. Parent, the flamboyant parvenu who came into office immediately after Marchand, to ‘that reigning buffoon’ Duplessis. Patriotism and integrity are the two axiological poles of this homage to Félix-Gabriel Marchand. Germain reminds us that Marchand was, at one time, leader of a patriotic movement and that he played a part in driving back the ‘19th agitators’ during the Fenian raids of 1866. Ger main portrays Marchand as an ‘unrivalled’ politician who ‘emerges in the demagogic agitation of a turbulent sea churning with a horde of swashbucklers, corrupt officials, and fortune hunters.’

He adds that, ‘as an author, Marchand had a clearer and broader vision than he did as a politician.’

Germain sees Marchand as a precursor of the Quiet Revolution, and his play as a paradigm, in that it illustrates the obstacles to the emergence of a truly Québécois society. We could say, then, that if Germain took the trouble to revive a very minor literary work, it was implicitly to realize the full ideological potential of the work; the play’s narrative program already contained the basic axiological tenets of the contemporary discourse on québécois. Indeed, in his “paraphrase,” Germain projects a set of ideologemes from the target discourse onto the source text:

As the Other’s Expense
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Neither strict adaptation nor nostalgic reconstitution, but a true translation of the here and now into the recent past, the paraphrase – through consistent distancing – attempts to be a type of double vision: in this context, the traditional visual process, which consists in reactualizing chronological time by creating the illusion of a slice of life from that period, goes against the desired effect, which is not to bring the past back into the present but to put the present in the past, where it was already virtually present at its future.104

This translative operation, which German calls a ‘paraphrase,’ is indicative of his ambiguity towards the original text. German’s translation is a kind of reverential translation that shapes consciousness of history and places it in the ideological framework of ‘roots.’ But we could also say that his linguistic transformation restored a work that was clearly out of place in the new Québécois drama. It was, in fact, his paraphrase of the work that made its ideological appropriation possible.

German’s translation changes not only the structure but also the language of the play, which was originally written in rhyming verse. Here is how Dumont expresses himself in the original French-Canadian version, followed by its Québécois version:

Marfoand

DUMONT (en agitant) – Ouf! Je suis hors de moi... Ces débats me surmontent.
S’il fallait s’arrêter aux histoires qu’il s’est conté
Nul étranger n’aurait accès à nos salons.
Non, positivement...105

German

DUMONT – Espas possibl... Ça pas possible! Mais, c’est mort des discussions démembre... Ça pas possible... y’d’lla tout-chochouteurs qui récon- tenant sous à Grande Aube... à chaque fois qu’y a un étranger qui débarque du bureau, vu faut qu’il s’embrasser dans nos maisons puis enfermer tout’les gens en âge de smartr dans les champs... P’s après, ça, le plus drôle, c’est quand il s’entendre quant’teu prennent pour des habitants!106

For German, to translate is literally to create a Québécois work. His translation of Marchand’s play changed not only the ‘language’ of the work but also the title and the author. To be reappropriated, recontextualized into the field of Québécois theatre, the original work, although created in Quebec, had to undergo a change in linguistic code. German’s translation goes beyond a mere change of register, from literal verse to everyday prose, because the idiom he uses in his new text becomes a medium for defining québécois as opposed to francité. This opposition is emphasized by alternation of lines in French and in ‘Québécois.’ The linguistic paraphrase is applied selectively to certain characters. Else, Dumont’s eldest daughter, and Faquino both express themselves in French in verse. German retains the characters’ lines from the original text, but he makes some changes, shortening them, lengthening them, or replacing them with his own lines. This alternation of French and Québécois produces the same parodic effect as in Le Col mignon:

DUMONT – J’taî invitée à souper à souère à souper!107
ELSE – Adoncoup! Sans plus tarder! Je cours à ma toilette!108

The contrast between the two languages is, however, much more pronounced than in Ducharme’s play. In German’s play, the French is marked by a ridiculous affectation (précoité). Ducharme does not alter Corneille’s language as dramatically, although the interpersession of lines in jonal produces parodic effects. The Québécois specificity of German’s rewritten dialogues, which is much more pronounced than in Le Col mignon, lies in the actual written form, which reproduces a ‘hyper-Québécois’ mode of expression and pronounciation, in contrast to le bon parler français. Witness this dialogue between the two Dumont sisters:

ELSE – Je ne vous entends, ma foi, mais dis-jey m’y arrête? Votre facon de parler me donne la nausée.
COQUE – Tu vas p’tre viver d’oüti più vite que tu penses, Else, paraguay’s parali... Êt’alle... y est en train dosn plumer ben raide, pis sez un temps rare!109

The exaggeration and alternation of the dialogue of francité, on the one hand, and québécois on the other, sets up an opposition between artificial language and natural language or between (borrowed) culture and (one’s own) nature.110 In the denouement, when the scoundrels are unmasked, Else, the ‘colonized’ (colonialized) returns to her ‘true’ Québécois nature. In a symbolic gesture, ‘she frees herself from her sheath-dress,’ in other words, from the yoke of her borrowed ‘culture.’ As she does so, she
also makes another symbolic rejection; she switches languages. But this rejection is ambiguous because, although she clearly abandons the artifice of French, she expresses herself with a familiar English exclamation. Elle's true nature is, then, to be a "colonisée":

Que puis-je ajouter, sinon un mot du cœur.

(The Naturel, Reprend Le Ross)
Le Père – Des positions?

Le Mait d'Amie Diflle – Ouais! Le syrop Lambert! Dodd's pour l'estomac... Made- lon pour la tête... Sen-Sen pour l'haleine mais pour le rhume c'é LAMBERT! Madame Simonet... y a un sirupe que j'ai sous la tête... pis qu'y aurait-il d'autre une passe d'erreur?

Le Père – Ouais. Fait que... somme jouer... y avit Bouc nefonds l'excuse à tour de bras... ça servait pas grand chose... Sen cover était mo vu à cause dous horribles dos coulés comme un lapin en chaleur pis dans temps de l'été y était rendu au pied de la porte douce comme y disais à Québec... un ben belle ville ça... ci malheureux qu'y sien eu l'idée d'arrêter sur une blaine pis d'être des nuits si étranges... entoucas... Y était tenus dans son terroirs y grognais comme un cochohs dans l'auge... jasimen dans l'âme que poulds sous donner... y plaignais comme cochon à l'abandon... un cochon? un éléphant plutôt... pis y avait pas passe la touche de l'éléphant... y en avait l'air aussi... les jambes sur... e10

As compared with the French version of the play published by Les Édi- tions de l'Arche, Germain's translation actually reworks the language, and goes beyond a simple change in register. In its attempt to reproduce the sciollet of the Quebec: petit bourgeois, who do not speak like French petit bourgeois, Germain's Québécois adaptation introduces irrelevant transformations. Why write mome (mort), jamou (penite) or term (tar), since the difference, merely phonetic, is mainly in the diphthongization of the vowels? How can the graphic disappearance of the silent e, which is also not pronounced in standard French, be justified? These irrelevant changes can be viewed as ideological symptoms: they create a false uniqueness for the Québécois language, and make it appear to be more different from the French of France than it really is. Here, the trans- lative operation proceeds from the target text but also the target lan- guage. It produces a sort of 'in' code with which members of the community can identify. But, at the same time, the language functions as a secret code of exclusion, part of the nationalist program: 'A country, a people, a language.'

Expansions in the form of puns, metaphors, and digressions function as signs of recognition in this code:

Le Mait d'Amie Diflle – Ouais! Le syrop Lambert! Dodd's pour l'estomac... Made- lon pour la tête... Sen-Sen pour l'haleine mais pour le rhume c'é LAMBERT! 111

References to old Québécois advertisements are signs that only mem- bers of the community can decipher. Germain's translation clearly intro- duces references designed to reinforce, through humour, the cohesion of a group that shares the same values. The original Brechtian text is treated as a consumer good for a specifically targeted audience. Alienated from itself, the original merely provides a thematic model for a Québécois play destined for home consumption. In fact, when, at the end of Le Baffet imprimés, the character representing Brecht criticizes the other protagon- ist for not respecting his play, the bride's father retorts 'Quand on change de pays, faut s'adapter!' (When you change country, you have to adapt.) 112 Nevertheless, Brecht is successful in his demand that his play be staged in the original version, but just as he is announcing to the public: 'Medames, mesieurs, La mae à les petits bourgeois dans la version origi- nale... de Boertet Brecht,' the curtain is lowered. Germain's stage directions indicate that, at this point, the Québécois characters are to chase away the characters of the 'French version.' In other words, the foreign dramaticus is categorically denied his author's rights: his text cannot be produced on the Québécois stage. What is more, the stage directions, as well as the dia- logue, equate the French translation with the original (German) version. Hence the Frenchman, as spokesman for the Foreigner, has been chased off the stage and reduced to silence. In this case, Québécois adaptation censors the voice of the Other and retains only aspects of the original that can be recognized or heard by la québécois.

A Ghost Who Speaks Our Language: Robert Gurik's Hamlet, The Prince of the Québec

Hamlet, prince du Québec, by Robert Gurik, is another example of a Québécois adaptation that makes major changes to the original text. In this par- tudy of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Gurik translates only specific passages of the original text (italicized in the excerpt below), selecting parts of the text according to their capacity to express a Québécois situation; that is, the usurpation of francophone power by anglophones.

Shakespeare

Hamlet

GHOST – Ay, that insensuous, that ambrosial feast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts. –
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce — won in his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-veracious queen.
O Hamlet! what a falling-off was there
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage; and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lost, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will state itself in a celestial bed,
And pray on garbage.
But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air.
Brief let me be. Sleeping within mine ear
My custom always in the afternoon,
Upon my secure heart thy white stole
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the perruce of mine ears did pour
The heinous distillation whose effect
Holds such an emprise with blood of man
That as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gills and arteries of the body,
And with a sudden vigour it doth pome:
And curb, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine,
And a most instant terror bark'd about,
Most lazuline, with vile and toadstool crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of reason, of queen, of wife, of love;
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unknown, despoiled, unwant'd.
No warning sent, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my hook.
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal blood of Denmark be
A虚构 for luxury and damned incect.
But, hampered thus purs'y's this art,
then, is English, the language whose hegemony leads to the assimilation of francophones.

In Gurré's translation, parody becomes a double transitive operation: as it moves from one text to the other and from one time period to the other, there is a shift from fictive narrative to experienced reality, filtered through the social discourse. From a pragmatic point of view, this operation is at once transitive and parodic, accentuates the shift from the poétique discours to the grand discours. It is easy to see what audience Hamlet, prince du Québec is aimed at; while it speaks to the Québécois audience, it also speaks to the latter's adversary, the English – hence, the agonic nature of this discourse, a discourse of action, of the theme of which is the political, economic, and cultural alienation of Québécois society, a society that should free itself from the anglophone 'colonizer'.

Gurré's translation also grafts new elements onto extracts retained from the foreign text. These additions, which function as homogenizing glosses, are entirely rooted in the discourse of Québécois liberation, which is attempting to become the dominant discourse. As in Le Cid magnan or Le Buffalo impromptu, these glosses 'caricature' the text, provoking laughter from the audience. Laughter, which is an integral part of the 'in' code, reinforces the cohesion of the group. In its history of laughter and mockery, Jean Duviignon stresses the importance of 'the conviviality of the comic'; for him, the notion of popular laughter is a myth, the fantasy of an ideology.238 Laughter, relies on the enclosure and warmth of the group. The theatre functions as an 'enclave of laughter', a separate place that solicits and maintains the complicity of those who are laughing. The 'spontaneity' of popular laughter is produced by a code worked out in camera before the performance. Similarly, 'Carnival parade' are orchestrated and in no way escape from this principle. The enclosure and conviviality of the theatrical space combine with this 'manipulation' to create or accentuate the illocutionary force of laughter, a force that contributes to the doxological effectiveness of the performance, of the grand discours.

As we have seen, the original text functions only as passive material support. The Other of the foreign text has no real right to his identity, no more than he has the right to speak, unless it is to express Québécois reality and to mediate the political aspirations of a group seeking to supplant the old hegemony:

Respect for the written text, for the specific thought of a dramatist, should be of interest to only servile, lazy, third-class artisans ... I would gladly pay without baulk-

ing, royalties to Aeschylus or Shakespeare for certain well-executed dramatic structures; but, as far as the psychology of a sixteenth-century character or an Elizabethan clair de lune, or even Greek pantheism, reproducing them would be pure indulgence, for a small course of literary types, those supranational, intellectualGoods, a luxury, not a necessity, and the theatre comes alive only with necessities.

When Québécois dramatists find a framework, a theatrical structure which is our own, that really expresses our uniqueness, we will have not only an authentic drama but also a country.239

Henceforth, the theatre had to give itself over entirely to the nationalist cause – this idea partially determined the new relation to foreign plays. Foreign theatre was no longer significant and, even worse, it was an obstacle to self-affirmation. Old buildings that were blocking construction of a new road had to be torn down. Reusable material would be retained from the rubble and used for a better cause, to build a 'national' drama.

Towards a New Canon

The new relation to foreign works was reflected in Québec's literary system and resulted in changes to the component parts of that system. The examples analysed above show that the definition of a foreign work now included the literary legacy of France; it was even extended to include the French-Canadian repertoire, contaminated by its connection with French drama,240 and by the resulting linguistic overlapping. Witness a theatrical production from the beginning of the period under discussion, whose aim was to have done with 'traditional theatre', to tear down the models and create a 'truly Québécois theatrical space'.241 This was the goal of Les Enfants de Chénier dans un grand spectacle d'indeux, a collective creation by Le Théâtre du Même Nom, under Jean-Claude Germain. The following is Michel Bélair's synopsis of the play, quoted in its entirety, despite its length, as the play is a perfect illustration of the agonic relation to foreign drama, to mainstream, classic, official theatre – in a word, to French theatre.

In the left corner, les Enfants de Chénier! (Applause. Bravo. Silence.) In the right corner, the sons of b...! (Boo!) The French champions. (More boo!) Molkère, Musket, Giroudoux ... and others. The champions' coach: (silence). The champions' coach: absent or deceased. (Laughter.) The 'trainer' of Les Enfants de Chénier: J.-C. Germain! (Hurrrah!). (The announcer addresses the room and starts in again.) You know the rules of the game: no hitting below the belt, but
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annihilate each other! A fight to the death in two rounds. Go ahead and beat each other up.

FIRST ROUND

Marivaux comes out of his corner cautiously. Jean-Luc Buisine and Louisette Dussault from Le TMN watch him, amored. Assisted by Nicole Leblanc and Gilles Renaut, they quickly overpower him. Marivaux is out of breath. His tongue is hanging out. He is starting to look ridiculous. The next thing is an arm lock and a pull-down. Marivaux collapses on the ground, like an old mott: he doesn't get up again, as if the ridiculous were killing him. The first call of the first round goes to Le TMN J-B. Poquelin gets up fearfully, now, slowly regaining confidence. Dissension reigns among Les Enfants de Chénier: they all want to participate in the match. Finally, Gilles Renaut and Monique Konas are declared the winners. The fight starts again. Poquelin, known as Montalb, also collar less than a couple of minutes of a one-sided fight. (And what a pleasure it is to see him destroyed!) Before he even comes out of his corner, Mows. Allô! dede de, admits defeat. Gilles Renaut, claiming that his authenticity resembles that of Yvon Deschamps, knocks him out by using his jaw muscles. In less than two rounds, Giraudoux succumbs to the same fate. The victory is total: the first round goes to Les Enfants de Chénier, with no resistance whatsoever from the team from France.

INTERMISSION

In collaboration with Le Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, Le Théâtre du Même Nom managed, in this collective creation, to stigmatize all the banalities and all the clichés of conventional theatre. And also to ridicule it completely. Inspired by the most well-known scenes of the so-called classical repertoire, Jean-Claude Germain's team demonstrates the ridiculousness of the situation. Proof by absence. Beyond the label 'chôter engage' and all its restrictions. Les Enfants de Chénier, beneath their facile exterior, re-poses the question of the relation of the theatre to the society that gives it birth. It is not so much what is questioned in this endeavour, but the social reality in which we live, a reality that is put at the bottom of the list by 'official' theatre. When this theatre exists. The social reality of Quebec exists concretely. It questions not only a language but a whole cultural reality that one is trying to make people forget. To bury and hide under the cloak of the few manifestations of it that one sometimes lets out of the bag. From time to time [...]
no coincidence that this homogenization is found primarily within a specific field of the literary system, that is, the theatre. Indeed, the quest for Québécois specificity, for québécoisité, is carried out through the quest for a language distinct from the Franco-French code, on which Québécois theatre used to be based. But the difference between français-québécois (French spoken in Quebec) and français-français (French spoken in France) is mainly phonetic; and although this difference is relative, since it varies according to the social and cultural status of its speakers, one can readily see why an 'oral' literary genre such as the theatre, the only genre in which this difference can make itself heard, has become the preferred area of translation.