

The Alt Stage and the Po-mo Page: Canadian Spaces for an Anglo- Portuguese Dramaturgy¹

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In this article, Jordão documents the 1991 staging and 2013 publication of her bilingual play *Funeral in White*. Examining the performance and literary texts, she considers why and how Portuguese and English are used in the play: the conditions that create a space for bilingual theatre and drama in Toronto, the disciplinary requirements of employing two languages on stage and page, and the formal alterations enacted when transitioning from one medium to another. The linguistic dramaturgy of such a project raises several questions. What linguistic conventions will make a Portuguese-English play performable for a cast of English-Canadian actors from a diversity of backgrounds—some who speak Portuguese, others Italian and/or French, and some only English? How will the play be comprehensible to spectators that may be monolingual in English or Portuguese? And, upon publication, will it be accessible to readers who may not master both languages but may have a basic knowledge of Romance languages other than Portuguese? Jordão adopts an auto-ethnographic perspective based on her practice to document the playwriting, production, and publication of *Funeral in White*, and to argue that the sociocultural diversity of theatre makers and spectators is vital to the creation of bilingual theatre.

Dans cet article, Jordão documente la mise en scène en 1991 et la publication en 2013 de sa pièce bilingue Funeral in White. S'appuyant sur le spectacle et le texte écrit, elle montre comment et pourquoi elle s'est servi du portugais et de l'anglais dans la pièce. Au fil de son examen, elle expose les conditions rattachées à la création d'un espace réservé au théâtre bilingue à Toronto, les exigences rattachées à l'usage de deux langues sur la scène et à l'écrit, et les alternances formelles qu'entraîne le passage d'un médium à un autre. La dramaturgie linguistique d'un projet comme celui de Jordão soulève toute une série de questions : quelles conventions linguistiques permettront à une troupe de comédiens anglo-canadiens d'origines diverses—des locuteurs du portugais, d'autres de l'italien ou du français, d'autres ne parlant que l'anglais—de jouer une pièce écrite en portugais et en anglais? Comment les spectateurs anglophones ou portugais monolingues réussiront-ils à comprendre la pièce? Quant à la pièce publiée, sera-t-elle accessible aux lecteurs qui ne maîtrisent peut-être pas les deux langues, mais possèdent une connaissance de base d'une langue romane autre que le portugais? Jordão emprunte une perspective auto-ethnographique inspirée de sa pratique pour documenter l'écriture, la production, et la publication de Funeral in White et faire valoir que la diversité socioculturelle des artisans et des spectateurs est essentielle à la création du théâtre bilingue.



Funeral in White: Possible Readings

The performance: the stage is dark; non-verbal sounds and some mutterings in Portuguese and English are heard; disparate words float into the audience and are heard by all but fully

understood only by some; when the lights come up a silent scene ensues and spectators watch uniformly; two women comment bilingually on the action; a song in Portuguese follows; then, for the next hour or so of this one-act play, the theatre is filled with English and Portuguese phrases, music, and choreographed dumb-shows.

The publication: the page is filled with italicized text in English and normal text in Portuguese and English; the bilingual reader navigates freely gleaned an entire literal meaning from the text; an English reader understands all the stage directions and fragments of dialogue and grasps the gist but, even with some knowledge of French or Spanish, misses details in Portuguese; a Portuguese reader, having some knowledge of the dominant language, skims the English and savours the longer passages and dialogues in Portuguese.

In his study of multilingualism in the theatre, Marvin Carlson argues that the coexistence of two or more languages or dialects in a play has a long history in Western theatre and is a precedent to the post-modern and post-colonial heteroglossic stage. Late medieval shifts of population brought demographic changes to Europe that “created a[n] intermingling and contestation of languages and dialects” and resulted in “a widespread consciousness of the operations of language and an openness to experimentation with the cultural implications of linguistic mixing” (27). Hundreds of years later across the pond, cultural production necessarily engages with a multiplicity of languages (and languages in the process of creolization²) as ethnically and linguistically diverse populations create, spectate, and publish theatre in North America.³ This theatrical heteroglossia is borne out in the past fifty years in southern Ontario where an “intermingling” of cultures and languages has encouraged experimental theatre companies and small presses to engage in “linguistic mixing” for a unique phonic variety on stage and page.⁴ In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, the children of the generation recruited to test-drive Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s multicultural policies gained a stronghold in the theatre mainstream with a linguistic dramaturgy that defied anglocentric norms. Carlson notes that “[t]he linguistic range of [the] heteroglossic ethnic minority writing in Canada today is impressive” (144) and cites issues of *Canadian Theatre Review* dedicated to Italian-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian theatre, several multilingual plays, and bilingual monologue artists.⁵

Adding to Carlson’s necessarily brief overview of multilingual Canadian theatre, this article documents and analyses one case study of bilingual theatre in Toronto: the workshop production and publication of my own first play, *Funeral in White*, by, respectively, the Company of Sirens (1991) and Fidalgo Books (2013). More than twenty years separate the two events, which has caused me to muse, first, on the conditions that create a space for bilingual theatre and drama; second, on the disciplinary requirements of the performance text and the literary text where two languages are used; and third, on the formal alterations enacted when transitioning from one to the other. I first consider why and how bilingualism is used in this particular play. Second, I argue that, despite the dominance of monolingual theatre in English Canada and the status of Portuguese as a minority language, the Portuguese-Canadian population of Toronto, theatre companies with an ethnically diverse make-up, and a publisher concerned with language and identity can ensure that a space exists for a bilingual dramaturgy. Finally, I demonstrate how the fluidity of the Toronto Portuguese community—its ever-changing demographics—affects the linguistic choices made throughout the processes of staging and publishing.

Motivations of the Heteroglossic Stage

In many plays performed or published in more than one language, the presence of characters and spectators with divergent linguistic abilities leads to scenes about language acquisition and instruction: Shakespeare's *Henry V*'s famous third-act English lesson between Princess Katherine and her maid Alice, Brian Friel's *Translations*, and Toronto Laboratory Theatre's experiment in multilingual theatre, "*In Sundry Languages*". (See Samur in this issue for more on "*In Sundry Languages*".) These scenes can reflect troubles in intercultural communication, but they are also often built into the play to help more unilingual audience members understand multilingual plays as they acquire essential bits of language alongside clueless characters. *Funeral in White* is not completely exempt from this category of play, since most stories that involve immigration from a land that does not share the language of the host country will feature characters with communication issues. However, in *Funeral in White*, the scenes that are directly about language skills are not central to the plot and while they may impact the play thematically, they do not ultimately determine the protagonist's fate. Based on family history, my play tells the story of Anita, a seamstress who specializes in bridal dresses and dreams of walking down the aisle in white on her own wedding day. But, through a series of misfortunes involving patriarchal traditions, immigration, epilepsy, and cancer, Anita weds the black earth dressed in a bridal gown that matches the white satin lining of her coffin. The first part of the play tells Anita's story in Lisbon, from conception to adulthood, and the second part follows her immigration to Toronto and rapidly declining health over a couple of years. In Lisbon, all the characters are Portuguese-speaking, while in Toronto some are bilingual (English-Portuguese) and some are unilingual (English only). Rather than focusing on language acquisition, the way languages play out on stage denotes the real context of each scene while setting up conditions for spectators to share a believable experience with the actors.

Dramatic verisimilitude is usually achieved by establishing conventions that spectators grasp and accept. As Patrice Pavis notes,

The believable is an intermediary link between the two extremes, the theatricality of theatrical illusion and the reality of the thing imitated in theatre. The author seeks a way of reconciling these two requirements: how to reflect reality by seeming to be true, how to signify the theatrical by creating a self-enclosed artistic system. [...] The very word "verisimilitude" implies both the illusion of truth (absolute realism) and the truth of illusion (consummate theatricality). (432)

Some scenes in *Funeral in White* side with the "illusion of truth," such as a scene about the difficulty of intergenerational communication between the grandmother, Albertina, who is newly arrived from Portugal, and her granddaughter, Susana, who was raised in Toronto. Albertina speaks only in Portuguese and Susana replies in English. On the other hand, other scenes uphold "the truth of illusion": when Susana and her aunt Anita converse in English with few Portuguese words, Anita's similar newcomer difficulty with English is sidestepped in favour of intimacy between the characters. There is no linguistic fidelity (or "absolute realism") to such a situation, because the character of Anita is a monolingual Portuguese-language

speaker. Yet, in the 1991 workshop production by the Company of Sirens a degree of theatrical verisimilitude (“consummate theatricality”) was possible because Lorraine Pelletier, the French-Canadian actor playing Anita, has been speaking in English even in the scenes set in Lisbon. Bypassing the linguistic verisimilitude of this situation in favour of characters speaking in the language(s) their actors speak was decided largely by the composition of the cast. At the time of *Funeral in White’s* development, the Company of Sirens boasted a roster of associate artists from a variety of linguistic backgrounds (French, Italian, Jamaican creole, Hindi, Spanish, and Greek) but only two actors who spoke Portuguese. Writing the play for the company, then, meant creating characters who spoke mostly in English; only the actors fluent in Portuguese could actually perform the bilingual lines and speeches in the play. This was not a liability but a condition of producing a play in Toronto. Only a certain percentage of the actors could be expected to be bilingual in Portuguese and English.

Another condition motivating the multilingualism of the play was the composition of the audience. Toronto multilingual theatre companies often target minority groups with convergent linguistic abilities.⁶ The Company of Sirens supported the bilingual writing and performance of *Funeral in White* to attract a mostly bilingual Portuguese speaking audience. In the 1980s, numerous Portuguese Canadians lived in the Greater Toronto Area, and the community was becoming increasingly bilingual. As documented in Teixeira and Murdie’s “On the Move: The Portuguese in Toronto,” the 1971 census shows 39,550 residents with Portuguese as their mother tongue and for 1981 and 1991, 127,635 and 124,330, respectively, with Portuguese as their single ethnic origin (200). (The change in nomenclature seems to be a government decision⁷ but it results in the researchers’ listing of numbers that reflect background and not language, suggesting that there are Portuguese-Canadians who were born in Toronto and may not speak Portuguese.) Immigration from Portugal began to decline in the 1980s as a result of democratic and economic reforms in Portugal. After the initial immigration period from the 1950s and 1960s that brought in 17,114 and 59,677 Portuguese citizens, respectively, Teixeira and Da Rosa note a peak in Portuguese immigration to Canada in 1970-79 with 79,891 people but show a steady decline in successive decades: 1980-89 with 38,187 and 1990-99 with 19,235 (6). It follows that the number of Toronto residents who list Portuguese as a single ethnic origin include a generation who immigrated as children (such as myself) and are bilingual, or who were born in Canada and may be monolingual English speakers with an aural understanding of Portuguese, like the character of Anita’s niece, Susana, in *Funeral in White*. Consequently, when the play was performed in 1991, the Portuguese-Canadian members of the audience were those whose mother tongue was Portuguese (they had been in Canada for about twenty to thirty years and understood English relatively well), as well as their children, who were likely fluent in both languages or had a limited bilingualism, speaking English but only understanding Portuguese. Because of the expected bilingualism of the target audience, the issue of literal comprehension was of secondary concern and scenes of language acquisition and instruction could be kept to a minimum. Rather, the priority became to unite multicultural and multilingual performers and spectators around a Portuguese-English theatre experience.

By opting for the commonality to revolve around a bilingual theatre experience rather than a monolingual one, the Company of Sirens thus subverted the authority of English language theatre culture in Toronto, a consequence of choosing not to translate minority

languages in the theatre (Byczynski 34).⁸ As Carlson notes, “In this multicultural world many theatres mount multicultural productions, recognizing that the culture that surrounds them is no longer, if it ever was, truly monolingual, and seeking to appeal to and accurately reflect the concerns and interests of a multicultural society” (49). Indeed, *Funeral in White* was produced for the Women and Live Words Festival which featured multilingual performance that aimed to engage a multicultural audience: Caribbean (*black/stage/women* by b current), South Asian (“An Evening of Sass,” readings from *Diva: a Quarterly Journal of South Asian Women*), and Pacific Rim (“Ten Fingers” by the Filipino group then called Carlos Bulosan Cultural Workshop). Thus, a feminist theatre in a radical ideological theatre milieu was the alternative space where spoken language could be deconstructed and experimented upon so as to intersect with the language of theatre for a truly heteroglossic result.



Aida Jordão and
Lina Garcia, Lusovox:
Readings by
Portuguese Canadian
Writers, Dundas West
Fest, June 7, 2014;
Photo: Nuno Cristo

From Stage to Page

The publication of *Funeral in White* also needed a dedicated space and that was to be *Memória: An Anthology of Portuguese Canadian Writers*, the first Portuguese-English collection of Canadian short stories, poetry, and drama.⁹ Submissions were first sought in 2005 but this project was abandoned because the editors had a difference of opinion as to what could be considered Portuguese-Canadian.¹⁰ It wasn't until 2011 that one of the original editors, Fernanda Viveiros, began a new search for fictional texts from writers in Portuguese communities across Canada. *Funeral in White* was accepted for the anthology and the editing process began. Viveiros had not published a dramatic work before so I had to negotiate the inclusion of the 1991 workshop cast and creative team, the accurate formatting of dialogue, and the stage directions. There was no discussion about providing a translation of the Portuguese dialogue. This is an omission I later found quite conspicuous; when *Memória* was launched in 2013 my play was the only text in the anthology containing untranslated Portuguese. As I explain below, this choice would impact the interpretation of *Funeral in White* by monolingual anglophone as well as lusophone readers.

In both the performance text and the literary text, the question of how bilingualism is enacted is the most challenging aspect of the Portuguese-Canadian theatre/drama project. For once the space for a bilingual play has been secured, what linguistic conventions will make it 1) performable for actors who are not fluent in Portuguese, 2) comprehensible to spectators that may be only English-speaking, and upon publication, 3) accessible to readers who may not master both languages? In a recent *TRIC/RTAC* special issue on theatre and immigration, the question of a diversity of languages on the Canadian stage is a recurring theme (see Meerzon, ed.). That is, representing immigrant communities in theatre necessarily involves a negotiation of mother tongues in relation to the dominant language, and a consideration of literal comprehension for an audience that includes both. Nonetheless, experiments have been conducted that bypass factual meaning, as documented in Lina de Guevara's description of *Algarabía/Danza* (2008), a performance of poetry readings in several languages accompanied by dance:

The dancers did not know the meaning of the poems. We agreed that the important thing was the sound of the words and the feelings vocalized by the readers. Language became like music, separated from factual meaning.

We discovered that the audience, which at the beginning was taken aback by not being offered translation, became exhilarated by the freedom from analytical thought they experienced when they yielded to enjoying their senses: seeing the movements, hearing the sounds, and experiencing the mystery. (318)

This multilingual experiment of Puente (Guevara's theatre company) is similar to *Tongues*, a short piece I conceived and directed in 2003 that consisted of the performance of the same text in the five mother tongues of the actors — Portuguese, German, Greek, Romanian, and Igbo — with no translation offered into a dominant Canadian language like English or French. The aural text, movement and music transcended factual meaning, and, as in Puente's poetry/dance piece, freed the intellect to privilege the senses. Admittedly, literal comprehension is not a major issue for these non-linear pieces, but abstract meaning — Carlson makes this clear when discussing “macaronic” theatre (20-61) and other heteroglossic productions through the ages¹¹ — is not the objective in most bilingual or multilingual performances that are realist or have scenes of dialogue divested of action.

The content of *Funeral in White* was communicated in a variety of forms that, if not literally understood, could be followed by spectators who were not bilingual. Namely, the visual and embodied aspects of the performance ensured that reception was paralinguistic: tableaux, dumb-shows, and songs and dances created an aesthetic space with iconic images — white wedding dresses, black-clad wailing mourners, red carnations, magazines, chess sets, TV sets, and lost shoes — that carried the story. About halfway through the play, seven scenes that happened simultaneously in Lisbon and Toronto were acted without text, accompanied only by Portuguese guitar music and snatches of letters spoken in voice-off, to show the passing of fifteen years. In the written text, the scenes appear as stage directions with an explanatory note about the simultaneous actions. This is, for example, how Scene 7e appears in writing:

Scene 7. Lisboa and Toronto. 1960 to 1975.

[...]

e) ANITA is ill and wrapped in a shawl. She is dressing a doll with a baby outfit. She holds it lovingly. She has an epileptic seizure. ALBERTINA rushes in and shoves a rolled-up facecloth between her teeth. She tries to hold her down as the convulsions get more violent.

e) TERESA is holding a baby. MÁRIO enters with a parcel. They open it and find baby clothes made by ANITA and a rattle. MÁRIO waves the rattle at the baby. TERESA smiles. (114)

This scene contrasts the life situation of Anita, ill and unable to have a family, with that of her brother Mário who is in Toronto with his new wife, Teresa. Anita's doll and Teresa's baby at once symbolize the lack of one and the comfort of the other. Likewise, the other chronologically organized actions of this scene have objects common to both settings: a letter, a glass of wine, a photograph, or a vase of carnations. The choice of recounting the journeys of Anita and Mário without dialogue resulted in a whimsical scene that foregrounded "consummate theatricality" and united the audience in its reception. Additionally, it caused an awareness of the different languages of the play, both spoken and visualized, suggesting that each was a construct.

The actual lines spoken by the characters, about half and half in English and Portuguese, developed from a first draft where linguistic fidelity was observed (i.e. the characters in Lisbon spoke Portuguese and the characters in Toronto spoke both English and Portuguese), to the workshop in 1991 where linguistic realism was abandoned because, as noted above, most of the actors did not speak Portuguese and part of the expected Toronto audience would not understand it. Thus, the character's ability to speak English and/or Portuguese was not observed except to illustrate the cultural contact and conflict when Anita and her mother, Albertina, immigrate to Toronto and reproduce the diasporic reality of a Portuguese-Canadian community by engaging in code-switching. This is a common convention in plays that deal with immigration or colonization and, as Carlson observes, a "long tradition of theatrical attempts to negotiate with, if not absorb, this contact, often by means of contrasting languages" (24). In the following scene, Portuguese and English are realistically juxtaposed when Anita, who carries the plot and speaks mostly in English throughout the play, uses only Portuguese to represent her status as a newcomer.

Scene 13. A few months later. Department store.

ANITA, ALBERTINA and SUSANA are browsing in the perfume section of a large department store. SUSANA gets ANITA to try on some perfume. ALBERTINA doesn't like this. SUSANA leads the way to the escalator and is about to go up when her grandmother stops her [...]

SUSANA:

Avó, nothing's gonna happen to Tia. It's only an escalator. Nunca andas num escada assim?¹²

ANITA:

Não, sobrinha, a Avó pensa que eu sou uma criança que não aguento uma brincadeira dessas.

ALBERTINA:

Anita, é verdade que o teu coração não aguenta! Não digas que não é verdade. Anda daí e vamos procurar as escadas e subir devagarinho.

SUSANA:

Avozinha, it's OK. Come on Tia, you go first and I'll go behind you in case you trip. Vai na frente. Come on, it's easy.

ALBERTINA:

Anita, não te atrevas. Não faças isso, Anita.

SUSANA:

Come on! It's not a big deal!

SUSANA steps onto the escalator but ANITA and ALBERTINA stay behind. ALBERTINA starts to walk away. ANITA stares up at SUSANA who beckons for her to follow. ANITA doesn't move.

(126-27)

This scene hinges on physical action and Susana's lines clarify the characters' words. Chantal Zabus, in *The African Palimpsest*, calls this clarification strategy "cushioning," and explains that it allows for other languages to appear intelligible to non-speakers without relying on a full-out translation (7). For most of the play, this combination worked to create meaning without the need of surtitles or simultaneous translation. Moreover, in this instance the code-switching gave the audience a cultural context familiar to Torontonians who often overhear diverse languages with a sprinkling of English.

The closest convention to a direct translation—and we kept this to a minimum because it is tedious for bilingual spectators—was the presence of two characters who comment on the action in English and Portuguese, more or less repeating each other's words in agreement. Dona Rosa and Dona Eugénia function as a type of Greek chorus of neighbourhood women who assess characters' psychological states, judge, condemn, and support, just as neighbours might do in a Portuguese or Portuguese-Canadian setting. Their observations also clarify content and intent for monolingual spectators.

[DONA] ROSA:

O sonho de todas as raparigas é ir de véu e grinalda.¹³

[DONA] EUGÉNIA:

Lots of lace and a very long train.

D. ROSA:

É o dia mais bonito na vida de uma mulher.

D. EUGÉNIA:

Such a special day! And then a little house with lace curtains in the windows.

D. ROSA:

Toalhas de mesa bordadas com naperons [sic] iguais.

D. EUGÉNIA:

Matching doilies.

D. ROSA:

Um mimo! Tudo limpinho.

D. EUGÉNIA:

Ah yes! A spotless house is everything. And children!

D. ROSA: Crianças. As meninas de trancinhas e os rapazes a jogar à bola ...

(106-07)

In the second half of the play, when Anita and Albertina immigrate, the Donas are theatrically transported from Lisbon to Toronto, challenging verisimilitude in more than just language. Again, the notion of “consummate theatricality” that makes possible the “truth of illusion” ensured that the Donas’ bilingualism and unexplained change in setting was accepted as a dramaturgical and staging convention.

The two scenes above appear here as they do in the published play, without a translation of the Portuguese. Comparing this with other plays that are bilingual or multilingual, it is clear that it is an unorthodox choice and risky in terms of guaranteeing a readership of the play. From a small but representative sample of multilingual plays published in North America and the UK, few recreate the conditions of occasional non-comprehension when a language that is not English is introduced. That is, when performed, the bilingual/multilingual scenes are unaccompanied by any sort of translation but when published every word can be read in English. As long as four hundred years ago this was the case with Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* where Hieronimo’s polyglot play is printed in English with the following *avertissement*:

*Gentlemen, this play of HIERONIMO in sundry Languages, was
thought good to be set downe in English more largely,
for the easier understanding to every
public reader. (112)*

In the twentieth century, Brian Friel uses a similar justification in *Translations* for including an appendix with original Greek and Latin lines and their translations “for the convenience of readers and performers unfamiliar with the language” (10), as does Charles L. Mee in *Time to Burn*:

*[Nikos emerges from the shadows and approaches Tertius, talking to him, in Greek.
The English translation is not delivered; it’s given here just for the actors’ convenience.]*
NIKOS

Leepon, eenu chris mos apop sila-stall menos y anna cani ola ta pragh mata ee bua hoha.
[So it is the oracle from high, sent to make all things amenable.]

David Edgar, whose *Pentecost* relies on the performance of several languages, prefaces the published play with a lengthy note about the translation: “All characters speak the languages they know, whether their own or indeed English. For information, I have identified the languages and given English translations of the non-English speeches (printed in square brackets and not intended to be spoken)” (xx). The transliteration that is provided “[renders] the languages in a form that will be accessible to actors” (xx). Tony Kushner likewise transliterates and translates Dari and Pashtun in the published *Homebody/Kabul* though he doesn’t give a reason for this choice; on stage, the lines are not translated (Carlson 52). A recent publication of Hispanic-Canadian plays, *Fronteras Vivientes: Eight Latina/o Canadian Plays*, also provides English translations of Spanish lines. In the above examples, the translation of a language other than English is largely the choice of playwrights for readers’ or performers’ “convenience” or perhaps an editorial requirement, one that was not requested of me by Fidalgo Books.

Funeral in White, without the translation of Portuguese lines, was published as per the staged version. During the performance, we did not have sidebars or surtitles, so I did not attempt a literary equivalent and submitted the play in a version similar to the script the actors and creative team received in 1991 (it had a few summaries of Portuguese speeches but no direct dialogue translation). But while I did not emulate playwrights who published italicized translations of non-English lines, I did follow the convention of rendering stage language (tableaux and movement) as text by adding detailed descriptions of stage images. The stage directions thus create a strong through-line for the English-language reader—reviewer Lise Watson confirms that “even where the Portuguese is not translated to English, it is easy to understand the flow”—and, ultimately, favouring that reader because a unilingual Portuguese speaker would not be able to follow the action of the play. I suppose this is the thorny compromise I reached in appealing to English-speaking or bilingual readers. On the one hand, I denied English-only speakers the authority of the dominant language by not providing translation of the English. On the other hand, I denied Portuguese-only speakers the chance to follow the action or indeed comprehend the longer English speeches. Indeed, this choice led a reviewer who doesn’t read Portuguese, Jaclyn Qua-Hiansen, to speculate that the monolingual English reader might even have an advantage over the monolingual spectator: “the stage directions are so descriptive that one can clearly picture the scene, perhaps at times to an even greater extent than would have been evident on stage,” and “even reading it phonetically sounds beautiful, and the advantage of reading the script rather than watching the performance is being able to find an online translation.” Her review supports Byczynski’s argument that providing translations reduces the resistance to the dominant language and suggests that “untranslated dialogue is often easier to grasp when printed than when spoken, the former being permanent, visual and easy to look up in a dictionary, the latter fleeting, oral and difficult to visualize or comprehend as individual words” (35). Qua-Hiansen adds that “the sections in Portuguese add a richness to the text, inviting the reader to immerse himself or herself fully into the lives of the characters, for whom transitioning from Portuguese to English and back is effortless, and translation unnecessary.” I, however, contend that here she conflates character and convention, ignoring the reality of code-switching in a Portuguese-Canadian milieu and lauding the use of two languages even in scenes set in Lisbon where that would not happen. This shows a misreading of the text and I wonder if providing a summary of the Portuguese speeches might have been a good idea after all. An Anglo-Canadian friend said he simply could not read my play because there was too much Portuguese in it. Not enough for a Portuguese colleague, though, who did not find it believable that Lisbon-based characters spoke English. The conventions established in the stage production, where verisimilitude, or the “truth of illusion” and “illusion of truth” (Pavis 432) was achieved without linguistic fidelity, clearly did not carry over into the published text for readers on either side of the English/Portuguese divide.

The Toronto Portuguese community press, accustomed to publications by Portuguese-Canadian writers in Portuguese only, commented on the Englishness of the anthology: “vamos andando [...] nesta caminhada de dizer a todos—mesmo em Inglês—que também temos Escritores” [“we are on the path of telling everyone—even in English—that we have writers”] (“Escritores” 10). The linguistic development in the Portuguese community(ies) of Toronto is evident in the reporter’s “even in English” interjection. Twenty years earlier, when

Funeral in White was staged, self-published Portuguese-Canadian writing was invariably in Portuguese for a Portuguese-speaking readership. But in the twenty-first century, English-speaking (and reading) members of the community bought all the copies available at the launch of *Memória*. This current situation is noted by scholar José Pedro Ferreira:

[J]á temos um espaço aqui no Canadá e temos agora uma grande oportunidade para mostrar aos que escrevem só em Inglês [...] que nós somos capazes de escrever, de reflectir sobre as nossa experiências, tanto em Inglês como em Português” [“we already have a space here in Canada and now we have a great opportunity to show those who write only in English [...] that we are able to reflect on our experiences as much in English as in Portuguese.”] (qtd. in “Escritores” 10)

The bilingual nature of the community, developing when the play was performed in 1991, is now firmly established. Indeed, it is leaning ever more strongly towards an English monolingualism. From a high of almost 80,000 Portuguese immigrants to Canada in the seventies, the years 2000-2007 show under 3000 (Teixeira and Da Rosa 6). With a decrease in immigration, the reduced number of Portuguese-Canadians whose native language is Portuguese means that in 2013 a great number is third generation, typically not speaking their heritage language. The grandchildren of the original Portuguese immigrants thus become subtractive bilinguals, losing the language of their grandparents in favour of a monolingual (read anglo-centric) norm (Dagenais 287, 297). This demographic reality, however, constitutes the space necessary for the success of *Memória* and the affirmation of a Portuguese-Canadian identity in print. Fernanda Viveiros, in her efforts to publish Portuguese-Canadian writers of the twenty-first century, fully recognizes this. Through her perspicacity, *Funeral in White*, a brief blip in the history of Canadian theatre performance, made its way to the printed page, to a readership, and to potential theatre producers. The ephemeral theatrical space provided by the Company of Sirens in 1991 was reified in 2013 by Fidalgo Books.

Raise Your (Multilingual) Voices

For bilingual theatre creation in Canada, many questions remain regarding linguistic blends that will create an effective play that defies monolingualism; multilingual theatre artists are persistently seeking innovation in this area. In 2016-17, Aluna Theatre’s New Interpretation Lab Ensemble staged English-Spanish projects to experiment with translation strategies, and Toronto Laboratory Theatre continues to create versions of “*In Sundry Languages*”, the multilingual play that enchants with its heteroglossic sound. Documentation of bilingual and multilingual theatre is wanting, yet there is more to come in the near future (see Babayants). One relevant analysis of bilingual theatre in a diasporic setting is Maria Shevtsova’s paper about Italian-Australian community theatre in the 1980s. It includes the results of an audience questionnaire with a few comments on the reception of bilingualism and language comprehension, the reaction of Anglo-Celt spectators who gleaned understanding from “the performers’ mimicry and physicality,” and program summaries (151). Of the 315 respondents, six percent commented favourably on bilingualism, and of the 135 Anglo-Celts surveyed only twelve percent complained of feeling left out because there was “not

enough English” (154-55). Shevtsova does observe, however, that bilingual and bicultural theatre “insists upon the existence of ethnic diversity” and “pushes ethnic cultures out of [...] debilitating confines” (150), an assertion akin to the mandate of the Company of Sirens in producing multilingual theatre. Spectators from a diversity of Toronto communities had access to the non-verbal semiotics of a performance, even if they did not understand the languages being spoken on stage. I would like to believe that, more than twenty years later, we have moved beyond the problem identified by Art Babayants:

[T]he conceptual lens typically employed to carry out as well as understand stage multilingualism is still very much rooted in the monolingual modernist perspective. It is often jarring to see how an additional language is expected to be perceived and treated as foreign whilst actors and audiences are almost invariably seen as a monolith of monolingual and monocultural beings.

Certainly, the casting of multilingual performers and the assumption of a bilingual spectatorship and readership in Toronto’s Portuguese-Canadian communities was the moving force behind the respective production and publication of *Funeral in White*. Notwithstanding the trepidation of conservative marketers who worry about the bottom line in theatre ticket and book sales, in a society shaped by diverse economic and socio-cultural practices, the space now surely exists for bilingual and multilingual theatre that “disrupt[s] the conventionality of language-culture ascription” (Babayants). This brave new space boldly challenges a “monolinguist modernist perspective” by producing alternative and post-modern linguistic theatre.

Notes

- 1 A version of this paper was presented at CATR 2015 in the session “Defying Stage Monolingualism: Bi- and Multilingual Theatre Practices in Canada.”
- 2 For example, the code-switching that occurs when vocabulary from two standard languages is combined and shared by a diasporic group: Portuguese + English = portinglês, Spanish + English = Spanglish, etc.
- 3 Moreover, hemispheric art events and publications in the Americas seek to unite the official languages of several countries to produce an inclusive and integrative soundscape of French-English-Spanish or Spanish-Portuguese-English. Antares Publishing House of Spanish Culture’s trilingual mandate was most recently celebrated in 2015 during the Toronto Pan Am games with the event *Sharing Spaces / Espaces Partagés / Espacios Compartidos* and a corresponding publication in 2016; at NYU, the Hemispheric Institute’s Encuentro conference/festivals are enacted in three intercontinental languages, English, Portuguese, and Spanish. Having said that, I note that this paper considers Portuguese as it pertains to Portugal and the Portuguese communities in Toronto. The inclusion of Brazilian and African lusophone texts, readers, or spectators is beyond the scope of this particular inquiry.
- 4 A recent example of such a publication is the play collection *Fronteras Vvientes: Eight Latina/o Canadian Plays*, which documents Hispanic-English theatre in Canada. In Toronto, Aluna Theatre is at the forefront of bilingual production with respect to Spanish-speaking peoples; its New Interpretation Lab Ensemble tours Hispanic performance to diverse communities.

- 5 The special case of Quebec and the co-habitation of Canada's two official languages being mirrored in theatre is outside the scope of this paper, but it should be mentioned that Carlson's inquiry includes the "modern multiculturalism" of David Fennario (49-50), the "linguistic collages" of Quebec's Carbone 14 and playwright René Daniel Dubois (172-73), and the onstage translations of Robert Lepage (184-85).
- 6 This workshop production of *Funeral in White* at the Women and Live Words Festival had its genesis in the feminist precursor to the Sirens, Nightwood Theatre. When, in 1981, Nightwood produced *Flashbacks of Tomorrow/Memorias del Mañana*, a Spanish-English play with the collaboration of Hispanic-Canadian artists, I approached director Cynthia Grant to offer my polyglot self for future productions and I subsequently worked as an actor and assistant to the director on the production of a bilingual *Antigone* in Greek and English. A few years later Grant founded the Company of Sirens and I then had the chance to write and perform in my mother tongue, first with a monologue in Portuguese (echoed in English and French) for *The Working People's Picture Show*, then in a 1988 performance at the Portuguese-Canadian Democratic Association that included scenes wholly in Portuguese (written in collaboration with members of the cultural centre), and finally with *Funeral in White*. At the time, Nightwood and the Sirens were among very few companies in Toronto to consider that two (or more) distinctly different languages could be performed to an audience that might or might not be made up of speakers of the target languages.
- 7 According to Statistics Canada: "Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the respondent's ancestors. An ancestor is someone from whom a person is descended and is usually more distant than a grandparent. Other than Aboriginal persons, most people can trace their origins to their ancestors who first came to this continent. A person may have only a single ethnic origin, or may have multiple ethnicities."
- 8 Curiously, Byczynski contradicts her argument for the presence of non-dominant languages on Canadian stages by cautioning against the use of too much of those languages, lest it frustrate regular theatregoers and affect ticket sales; she advises minimizing negative responses (33).
- 9 Ironically, the anthology was published in the United States, editor Fernanda Viveiros's place of residence at the time. Two US-based lusophone fiction collections preceded it: *Luso-American Literature: Writings by Portuguese-Speaking Authors in North America* (Moser and Tosta), and *The Gávea-Brown Book of Portuguese-American Poetry* (Clemente and Monteiro).
- 10 While the disagreement between the editors is anecdotal—one was willing to accept work from non-Portuguese writers as long as the subject was Portuguese but the other was not—it is worth noting that the final anthology was strictly work by writers of Portuguese background. The broader criteria of including other lusophone contributors (as in the first US collection with writing by visitors from Brazil, for example), or even anglophone and francophone contributors, was abandoned when Fernanda Viveiros helmed the project on her own.
- 11 In his chapter "The Macaronic Stage," Carlson notes that in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries "[w]orks, dramatic and nondramatic, that incorporated Latin and the vernaculars in varying combinations came to be called macaronic" (27).
- 12 Note that Susana's Portuguese is elementary and laced with grammatical mistakes; I have tried to reproduce that in this translation for TRIC readers: "SUSANA: [...] You've never been on a stair like this? / ANITA: No, my niece, your grandmother thinks I'm a child who can't handle this toy. / ALBERTINA: Anita, it's true that your heart can't take it! Don't say it isn't true. Come away from there and let's look for the stairs and climb slowly. / SUSANA: [...] Go to front. [...] /

ALBERTINA: Anita, don't you dare. Don't do it, Anita."

- 13 ROSA's lines in English are: "The dream of every girl is to be dressed as a bride. / It's the most beautiful day in the life of a woman. / Embroidered tablecloths with matching napkins. / Everything clean and shiny. / Little children. The girls in braids and the boys playing ball."

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