Making the Bedouins: Code-Switching[1] as Model for the Translation of Multilingual Drama

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The translation of theatre from one linguistic and cultural context to another can be uniquely challenging; these challenges are multiplied when the source text is itself multilingual. René-Daniel Dubois's *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins*, translated into English under the name *Don't Blame the Bedouins* by Martin Kevan, unfolds in English, French, Italian, German, Russian, and Mandarin. The original "French" text presents as postdramatic, deconstructing language and identity in a sometimes frenetic pastiche. Kevan's "Anglophone" text, however, resists the postdramatic deconstruction in the original, instead bulking up Dubois' macaronic and archetype-heavy collage with some attempts at psychological depth. Because of its polyglossic complexity and because it has been translated, published, and produced in both English and French, it proves an excellent case study that allows for an in-depth analysis of how multilingual theatrical translation can be carried out. I propose that Kevan's translation of Dubois' play exhibits not only textual and performative translation, but that he also translates the linguistically-coded aesthetic conventions that distinguish Quebecois and English Canadian drama and their respective audiences. Kevan shows sensitivity to the gap between the politics of language in French and English Canada as well as to the gap between theatrical codes in both linguistic communities by amplifying the psychological realism and consequently tempering the language politics in his "English" version of Dubois's work. The choices that Kevan made in his translation are here elucidated by borrowing linguistic theories of conversational code-switching to analyze both versions of the play.

Traduire le théâtre d'un contexte linguistique et culturel à un autre est un exercice qui pose toute une série de défis, d'autant plus nombreux quand le texte source est lui-même multilingue. La pièce Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins *de René-Daniel Dubois, traduite en anglais par Martin Kevan (*Don't Blame the Bedouins*), se déroule en anglais, en français, en italien, en allemand, en russe et en mandarin. Le texte « français » de départ, postdramatique, déconstruit la langue et l'identité pour en faire un pastiche marqué par moments par la frénésie. Le texte « anglais » de Kevan, par contre, résiste à la déconstruction postdramatique du texte de départ, choisissant plutôt de renforcer le collage macaronique et lourd en archétypes de Dubois en tentant d'y apporter une profondeur psychologique. En raison de sa complexité linguistique, et aussi parce qu'il a été traduit, publié et mis en scène en français et en anglais, ce texte polyglossique nous permet d'analyser en profondeur la traduction théâtrale multilingue dans sa mise en œuvre. Dans cet article, Silver propose que la traduction par Kevan de la pièce de Dubois constitue non seulement une traduction textuelle et performative, mais également une transposition des conventions esthétiques codifiées par la langue qui servent à distinguer le théâtre québécois et canadien-anglais et leurs publics respectifs. Selon Silver, Kevan montre une sensibilité à l'endroit du fossé entre les politiques linguistiques du Canada français et du Canada anglais, et aussi entre les codes théâtraux en usage dans les deux communautés linguistiques, lorsqu'il décide d'amplifier le réalisme*

psychologique de la pièce et, ce faisant, d'adoucir les politiques langagières de la version « anglaise ».
En analysant les choix de traduction de Kevan, Silver emprunte aux théories linguistiques de l'alternance
codique du discours et étudie en détail la pièce dans ses deux versions.

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Multilingual drama has the potential to challenge hegemonic monolingual power, deconstruct theatrical conventions that call for cohesive narratives, and can potentially speak to international audiences with minimal linguistic support. However, authorial intentions with respect to polyglossia[2] can become muddied when the multilingual source text (ST) is translated for a new target audience.[3] The target text (TT) must not only negotiate the multilingualism (and hence language politics) in the play, but also the (potential) multilingualism and politics of the new audience. These are almost inevitably socially- and politically-loaded negotiations. Building on ideas articulated by Erica Fischer-Lichte and Annie Brisset, Sirkku Aaltonen considers how translation is a fundamentally egotistical practice because it necessarily focusses on the target culture. She explains that, "one of the conditions of the acceptance of a foreign text for translation is that it must be possible to bring its discourse in line with that of the receiving theatrical system and society at large" (47-48). The problem of cultural intelligibility is compounded by the usual difficulties associated with the translation of a (unilingual) theatre text. Louise Ladouceur, who writes on theatre translation in Canada, reminds us:

> The translation of a theatre text involves a difficulty not to be found in any other type of translation. This difficulty resides in the very nature of the dramatic work, the translation of which involves not only a textual transfer from the source language to the target language, but also the transfer of numerous linguistic and paralinguistic factors that are intrinsic to its performative function and that shape the text in various ways. (37)

Fruitfully for this article and for those interested in how polyglossic theatre moves between cultures, one of the most wildly multilingual plays ever written in Quebec, implicitly for a Francophone audience, has been translated into an equally multilingual play for an Anglophone Canadian audience. René-Daniel Dubois's *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins*, translated into English under the name *Don't Blame the Bedouins* by Martin Kevan, unfolds in English, French, Italian, German, Russian, and Mandarin, as well as in thickly accented source language interpretations of each of the above. Both versions of the play also employ gibberish liberally. The original 'French' text presents as postdramatic, deconstructing language and identity in a sometimes frenetic pastiche that is also relentlessly political in no small part because of the circumstances of its writing and production in the early 1980s (recall that the first Quebecois separation referendum was *in* 1980). Kevan's "Anglophone" text, however, resists the postdramatic deconstruction in the original, instead bulking up Dubois's macaronic[4] and archetype-heavy collage with some attempts at psychological depth. Because of its polyglossic complexity and because it has been translated, published, and produced in both English and French, it proves an excellent case-study, which allows for an in-depth analysis of how multilingual theatrical translation can be carried out. These quixotic texts

together allow us to take up the call of Reine Meylaerts, who reminds us that multilingual texts in translation have

> the potential to lay bare the blind spots of translation studies' models. Since multilingual literary texts often embody the larger tensions between codes of different literary value and prestige within a multilingual culture, their translation may highlight multilingual cultures' internal cleavages, their linguistic and identity conflicts. (521)

Recalling Pavis's assertion that "in the context of the activity of *translating*, the text is much more than a series of words: grafted on to it are ideological, ethnological, and cultural dimensions" (41), I propose Kevan's translation of Dubois's play exhibits not only textual and performative translation, but that he also translates the linguistically-coded aesthetic conventions[5] that distinguish Quebecois and English Canadian drama and their respective audiences. Kevan shows sensitivity to the gap between the politics of language in French and English Canada as well as to the gap between theatrical codes in both linguistic communities by amplifying the psychological realism and consequently tempering the language politics in his "English" version of Dubois's work. The choices that Kevan made in his translation are here elucidated by borrowing linguistic theories of conversational code-switching to analyze both versions of the play.

The Tale of Two Plays: Postdramatic Deconstruction in French

Like much of his work, *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins* suggests that Dubois was interrogating identity. It is a play about ideas: "The central metaphor in [the play] is that of an Italian opera singer tied to a railway track in the desert, menaced by speeding trains approaching on either side. It pretty well sums up life in Quebec, [says Dubois]" (Canadian Press). The play has three protagonists: the opera singer, Michaela; Weulf, a sporty and stylish man of "Germanic origin"; and Flip, an unattractive eighteen-year-old student with a photographic memory. These three find their way into an Australian desert, "à la recherche d'une 'réalité'" (Huffman 560). The Diva is indeed tied to railway tracks, a staging of early American cinema tropes, bemoaning her fate. She is spotted by Weulf who hangs athletically from a far-away cliff; he expresses his desire to come to her rescue. They both spy Flip off in the distance and take him for a terrible monster that is headed straight towards Michaela to tear her to shreds. In a concurrent storyline, two trains carrying nuclear weapons are racing towards each other on the same railway track that restricts Michaela. One train, Anglophone, is manned by Santa Claus[6]; the other, Russian, is helmed by Stalin. Backed up with military support, their only purpose is to destroy the other. They are, not surprisingly, exaggerated emblems for the economic and political systems of West and East respectively; trapped on tracks, heading toward one another, their fates are inescapable.

As the trains thunder closer, the three protagonists find their way to where the Diva is bound and come to the realization: "[o]n m'a menti" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 168). Their revelation is one of disappointment in society's rules. Michaela has worked long and sacrificed much in order to perfect her voice, but ends up living only for praise and hounded by paparazzi who report on her every mistake. Weulf, the heroic athlete, strings together short-term

Don't Blame the Bedouins - Emma Ferrante, Martin Glassford, William March, Department of Theatre at the University of Ottawa, 2009; Photo: Pierre Bertrand

relationships with women and realizes abruptly that the wake of lovers he has left behind are all broken, and ultimately that he too is ruined. He admits, softly, in the English translation that, "[i]f I vant to do gut, I need(t) zomeone who zuffers. I need(t) zomeone who zuffers" (Dubois and Kevan 147). In the French version, the young Flip is succinctly coached by his Ethics Professor that "le refus nie l'amitié" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 118); he becomes so paralyzed by his desire to win friends that he compromises his sense of integrity and so feels abused and just as hollow as his co-protagonists by the end of the play. The larger message in their recognition is that "[t]he dominant force in western society is exchange value—exemplified by the power of systems of signs and of money—to which Dubois opposes real or practical value—the individual valued for himself" (Lefebvre 13). Having realized their inability and, indeed, lack of will to live up to the world's expectations, all three merge into a new entity, La Bête, a corporealization of what it is to be "other". La Bête is an "[ê]tre mythique, à six bras et six jambes" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 104) that is at peace with its separation from civilization and so accepts its impending obliteration by the ever-nearing trains. The trains and their respective forces have, in the interim, discovered La Bête and focus their attack on it; it stands defiantly apart and so must be exterminated in their world of order. The play's action stops short of staging the conflict, and ends instead in an alienating Brechtian turn where characters directly address the audience to describe their circumstances. Jean-Marie Lelièvre, who introduced the translated script in publication, explains:

> After giving the world a new creature [La Bête] and delineating a soul for the inhabitants of America by restoring their rightful ambition and their heritage, René-Daniel Dubois is very careful not to restrain them. He allows this new myth to develop in its own way. He has respect for the life he has created. (110)

The actors assemble and address the spectators directly to say that they know how the story ends, but will keep the ending to themselves. The implication in their silence is that the audience is tasked with sorting out what they have seen, and are meant to extrapolate their own conclusions.

A large part of the reason that this play can be successful at both the level of narrative and the level of metaphor at once is because of the manner in which Dubois plays with structure in order to weave in layers of intertextuality, particularly on a linguistic level: "The text rejects linear narrative and, instead of adopting an immediately comprehensible order, seems on the surface to be simultaneously de-organizing and developing within a chaos from which it never emerges" (Lelièvre 108). Here, Kevan's translation work is deeply important since he mediates how Anglophone audiences might deal with Dubois's intertextuality. As noted by Ritva Leppihalme in her study of the translation of allusion, a text's implied reader, particularly in translation, can misunderstand the original author's meaning based on the translator's intervention.

> I prefer to adopt the more controversial but surely common-sense positions that some of the TT [Target Text] reader[s … have] either missed the point or [are] expressing an interpretation that clearly differs from one suggested by a textual analysis of the corresponding ST [Source Text] passage. Such responses are due to the reader failing to note the presence of intertextual elements, but it is the translator's choice of strategy that largely determines whether the meaning suggested by the intertextuality *can* be received by monocultural TT readers. (132-33)

The play's intertextuality extends to the ways in which it represents and functions as a medium as well. Alvina Ruprecht astutely recognizes intermediality in the text. Not only does Michaela explicitly reference a canon of work that is exclusive to the world of opera, but it is suggested that she even breaks into song on a few occasions. More interesting, however, is the text's regular allusions to and use of the cinematic: "Un montage discursif donc, qui simule l'enchaînement des plans filmés d'une séquence entière avec des images cadrées et un plan hors-champ: la coexistence des codes théâtral et cinématographique qui intègre les deux préoccupations esthétiques" (Ruprecht 366). It proves quite destabilizing for the dominant codes of theatre to be intermingled so liberally with the rules governing cinema. The play also dabbles freely in a variety of literary forms: "[t]he use of various types of discourse, ranging from passages from encyclopedias [sic] to poems and folk talks, contributes to the impression of the play as a microcosm of human experience" (Lefebvre 13). Intertextuality and intermediality here combine forces to rupture the theatrical tendency towards dramatic and narrative specificity. Although the play tells the *story* of Weulf, Michaela, and Flip, it highlights its own abstract themes and politics because it so conspicuously relies on the kind of cultural and mediated citation noted by Ruprecht and Lefebvre.

More intriguing still is the manner in which Dubois manipulates the associations his audience might make about language and cultural identity in this play. From the outset, in the dramatis personae, each character is placed in a cultural and linguistic context that sometimes contradicts the origins of the archetype being referenced. Weulf is "d'origine teutonne," Santa Claus is explicitly labelled as "Anglophone," while Lénine is "sinophone"

Don't Blame the Bedouins - Maggie Nagle and David Marr, Prairie Theatre Exchange, 1987;
Photo: Hubert Pantel

(Dubois, *Blâmez* 103-4). Ruprecht suggests that the bewildering mix of languages on stage reflects linguistic heterogeneity characteristic of the Quebecois cultural context, but importantly notes that "Dubois déjoue une certaine optique québécoise quand il refuse d'établir une hiérarchie des cultures" (Ruprecht 365). In much of French Canadian polyglossic theatre, each language is presented in its real-world context, making the stratification of linguistic power quite explicit; by refusing to play into societal linguistic relationships, Dubois is effectively subverting how we construct identity. Further, Huffman argues that this lack of stability "[met] en relief une identité linguistique hétérogène et plurielle qui échappe à une conception identitaire basée sur l'origine" (Huffman 564). Rather than relying on societal and historical constructions of the individual, the play's multilingualism renders simple assumptions about the connection between belonging and identity impossible. In this play, polyglossia necessitates that both characters and spectators build identity from the ground up inside the framing of the performance.

Towards a Translation: Theories of Code-Switching and the Problem of Realism

To translate a multilingual text, the translator must first make sense of why a character troubles to switch between languages in the first place. Linguistic verisimilitude, in plays which mimic the real conditions in which a person might switch languages, can be sussed out logically; a multilingual person will tend to switch the language they speak to communicate with different linguistic communities. Perhaps unexpectedly then, while language and characterisation work together in *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins* to *pull apart* cohesive and singular constructions of character, an understanding of code-switching—the (often psychologically-grounded) study of what motivates a person to change languages in a conversation—is still feasible in *Bédouins* because Dubois stages archetypes.[7] These archetypes, while not deeply rounded characters, still interact in ways that translation and linguistic theorists would recognize. The following exchange between Lutin Vert, the central controller of Santa Claus and related forces, and Santa Claus, the train conductor named Père Noël in the quotation below, serves to demonstrate how code-switching operates in this play:

> LUTIN VERT
> Allô. Allô. Père Noël? Ici Lutin Vert. Père Noël? (...) Père Noël? Allô? Me lisez-vous? Allô?
> PÈRE NOËL
> Oh! Sorry guy. Oh! Euh ... Yeah! Here's Santa Claus. I read you ninety percent... euh... What's his name again? ... euh ... Little Red Riding Hood.
> LUTIN VERT
> Pas Chaperon Rouge, Père Noël. Lutin Vert! Lutin-vert.
> PÈRE NOËL
> Oh! OK! OK! Little Green ... euh... Music Stand. [...]
> LUTIN VERT
> Raidi for de tchèque-liste?
> PÈRE NOËL
> Oué! Prête pour leuh check-out. (Dubois, *Blâmez* 133)

Lutin Vert's escalating frustration with Père Noël is quite clear, so we can easily make sense of his broken English version of "Ready for the check-list?". Père Noël, on the other hand, comes across as something of a blunt object, playing on the military trope of an officer who cannot be bothered with details like correctly remembering a "foreign" name. He is, however, endlessly good-natured, so his switch to broken French reads as an accommodation of Lutin Vert.

I will here present three code-switching frameworks that seem particularly well suited to understanding the multilingualism in the above exchange, taking the plural nature of identity construction into account. Peter Auer classifies the motivation for switching between languages into three categories: *discourse-related code-switching*, which "organise[s] the conversation by contributing to the interactional meaning of a particular utterance" (Auer 4); *discourse-related insertions*, which "often evoke episode-external ('ethnographic') knowledge about interaction histories and cultural contexts" (6); and *preference-related switching*, "which regularly indexes extra-conversational knowledge" (7). In applying Auer's model of code-switching to the above excerpt, Lutin Vert's English fits into the category of discourse-related insertions because the change is context specific. Père Noël's French, on the other hand, is a preference-related switch because he knows that he could continue in English and be understood. He chooses to switch because his conversational purposes will be better served by the change. I would also suggest that Lutin Vert's code switch is "unmarked." Carol Myers-Scotton's "markedness" model hinges on the understanding "that speakers make choices and others interpret them by considering their probable consequences. This process involves a consensus concerning the relative markedness of any choice for a specific exchange and a view of all choices as indexical of a negotiation of rights and obligations between participants" (148). A change in language that does not draw attention to itself would be considered unmarked (146); a marked choice, however, occurs when a code switch breaks the unspoken rules of linguistic decorum (150). The escalation that precedes Lutin Vert's switch renders it inevitable. Père Noël's switch, on the other hand, is quite marked because he's given no earlier indication that he is able to communicate in anything other than English. As a marked choice, then, we can consider Père Noël's French-language assertion that he is ready as a political move, aimed at mollifying his agitated controller. In another useful model, John Gumperz and Jan-Petter Blom explain that situational code-switching is frequently manifest in examinations of identity and the individual's construction of self: "The fact that the dialect reflects local values suggests that it symbolizes relationships based on shared identities with local culture" (Blom and Gumperz 116). By extension, the multiple and often fragmentary cultural conditions in which language is used necessarily position the speaker and accordingly can shape the interpretation of any speech act. In the above excerpt from *Ne blâmez jamais les Bedouins*, Lutin Vert's code switch would likely constitute what Gumperz would call addressee specification, while Père Noël's French might be considered an attempt at personalization versus objectification. None of these models perfectly unpack why characters switch languages—after all, code-switching scholars are after-the-fact analysts while Dubois was making deliberate and premeditated choices in writing—but together the models hint at how multilingual drama might conceivably be translated.

The Tale of Two Plays: Rounding Out Postdramatic Characters in English

In Martin Kevan's translation, those segments of text in English which adhere absolutely to the French text are worth noting for their literary accuracy, but the many instances in which Kevan took liberties with the source text in his preparation of the play for his target audience are much more interesting. As Rainier Grutman helpfully notes in his analysis of multilingual translations in literature:

> It will have become clear that an exclusively text-based approach to translation cannot possibly get to the bottom of what is in fact a clash between literatures qua institutions. The approach needed would combine contextual investigations of literature as a vector of (national) identity, and formal studies of literature as a body of texts with aesthetic value. (39)

The moments of slippage between French and English point to the choices that Kevan made and so help to understand the process of translating polyglossic theatre. These moments begin early: the first notable difference between texts is in the dramatis personae. For example, Flip is described in the French text as "[d]ix-huit ans. Étudiant: la 'bolle'... On nous le dit fort peu attrayant visuellement" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 103). In English, Kevan has added detail after the ellipsis in the French: "[f]rom an ethnic minority of working-class background, accent changing depending on the place of production, e.g. in the United States, black; in Western Canada, native Indian" (Dubois and Kevan 113). This raises an immediate question about the purpose of such a degree of specificity. Much of the play serves to paint Flip as a misunderstood loner, and likely one who draws sympathy because he is abused so regularly by his peers. In French, he vacillates between a formal dialect when speaking with his professor and a casual *joual*[8] when interacting with schoolmates: "[n]aow! Pus d'copiage su moi ... ! Pis arrêtez d'm'écoeurer avec ça!" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 114). It is conceivable that his casual lingo would identify him as a plucky Quebecois youth when performed for a French-Canadian audience,[9] making him into an emblem for the much-maligned province. In English, however, we might say that he is othered as a member of an "ethnic minority," a choice which translation theorist Lawrence Venuti might recognize as an example of a domestication strategy.[10] Venuti highlights the dominant trends of foreignization and domestication that emerge in the practice of post-colonial translation. The former strategy operates by emphasizing the otherness of the source culture in translation, and the latter by making it as similar as possible to the target culture. This strategy is not as simple as we may assume in the English version of Flip. Not only is he a misunderstood loner, but he is also a loner who has worked hard in a context where the odds were stacked against him to achieve academic success. Ultimately, in English, his character takes on something of the tone of an urban, twentieth-century hero, the archetype who makes it against all odds, rather than a stand-in for the downtrodden province. Although Kevan removes the geopolitical specificity of the character, it is arguable that his change offers the footing for an Anglophone audience to understand the character's social position, which might not have been possible were his identity preserved as Quebecois.

Moving into the text of the play itself, the dialogue of Weulf, the Germanic character, is modified considerably in different parts of the translation. He has an ongoing conversation with Greta, his last lover, whom he embodies on occasion for the sake of the exchange. Early in the play, he acts out the break-up of their relationship. In the French text, he speaks in a pseudo-German peppered with common German words and expressions:

Don't Blame the Bedouins - Julien Dancause, Graeme Pente, Emma Ferrant, Benoit Brunet-Poirier, Department of Theatre at the University of Ottawa, 2009; Photo: Pierre Bertrand

WEULF
Greta! Nicht prectent dush! Eusberg kömm blimzermish leuf grafteum fellingstremeune uper gran(e)fishömm. Auf wiedersen, Greta. Prestimg desert. (Dubois, *Blâmez* 116)

In the English translation, Kevan substitutes this text with some of the work from the first elegy in poet Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. The text he uses supports the Casanova image we get of Weulf:

WEULF [*said incomprehensibly fast*]: ' "Greta! Nicht sprechen. Ist es nicht Zeit, daß wir liebend uns vom Geliebten befrein und es bebend bestehn: wie der Pfeil die Sehne besteht, um gesammelt im Absprung mehr zu sein al ser selbst.[11] Auf wiedersehen, Greta. Ich gezoge in desert.'" (Dubois and Kevan 120)

For any germanophile in the audience, the Rilke passage might prove recognizable, adding a layer of sophistication to Weulf that was not as evident in the French version. For those who would not recognize the passage, the speech is just as incomprehensible in both Dubois's original and Kevan's translation, so the change makes little difference.

The question, then, is how this change serves an Anglophone audience better than the original might have were it translated word-for-word. For those who would have the means to grasp the authentic German, Weulf is revealed to be more than just a well-dressed jock. By reciting poetry as he ends a relationship, the rehearsed and repeated nature of the action is made abundantly clear—who memorizes the poetry of separation if not a person who often considers or lives through breakups? It further suggests that he is well read and a much rounder character than is indicated in the French text. However, it is again questionable that any significant component of any given audience would know German well enough to follow this line of reasoning. This signals a shift in *thinking* about these characters from Dubois's intentionally fragmentary archetype to Kevan's rounded individual with a back story.

Comparably, later in the play, the Russian and Chinese-speaking characters, Stalin and Lenin respectively, enter into a dialogue. In Dubois's original, both languages are grammelots[12] that *might* sound authentic to a spectator with no knowledge of the languages that are supposed to be spoken:

> LÉNINE
> Nistitio voumrou.
> STALINE
> Groupourr pork verg nan-probné; ié vorkneuh.
> LÉNINE
> Zniri. Yo. Snoï! (Dubois, *Blâmez* 140-1)

The illusion of accuracy in Dubois's text, like in the German example above, is undoubtedly made more "authentic" given a persuasive performance. However, Kevan transforms this exchange by substituting some recognizable language (actual Russian below) for the original pseudo-linguistic utterances:

> **LENIN**   Cha yuen ti. Ki shay pas.
> **STALIN**   Fsyo budyed. Shchaslivava puti. Mi vmyestye. Mi spisim. Iditye pryama. Dasvidaniya.
> **LENIN**   Yi chie shun pei. Chow![13] (Dubois and Kevan 132-3)

Not only is Kevan again flexing his linguistic muscle in this passage, but he is also creating the text himself rather than quoting like he did in the previous German example. This transition between the non-realistic portrayal of language to a realistic portrayal carries significant weight given that Dubois's original was recognized explicitly because of its inventive and non-literal representation of speech. Nevertheless, the analysis of this exchange follows in the same line of reasoning as the preceding analysis in that the significance of this linguistic correction will only be truly relevant for those with an understanding of the concerned languages. We are, however, again seeing Kevan add layers of specificity to the archetypes drawn from Dubois's work. Kevan continues to edge the play from postdramatic concept towards the Anglo-Canadian preference for realism.

In an amusing homage to the conventions of Anglo-Canadian drama, Kevan makes a substitution in one of Michaela's speeches to lend geographic specificity to her lament. In French, she melodramatically offers: "Aloré, après za, devoir morir en(e) prière, à zénoux, les bras zan(e) croix ... dévan(e) la déessé dé l'amor dé Phénicie ô de Laborre à Plouffé," (Dubois, *Blâmez* 123). In a comparably hyperbolic speech pattern, Kevan has her say much the same thing. However, she ends her wailing with, "inna fronta di goddess of l'amore offa Phonecia or offa Moose(a)jaw" (Dubois and Kevan 124). The reference to Moose Jaw mimics the small-town in the original and is undoubtedly comic—an Italian diva is unlikely to know anything of a small town in Saskatchewan—but it also points to the heritage of theatre created in Canada. Stereotypically, early English-Canadian drama is situated in a small community in the untamed wilds where despair dominated the lives of all.[14] The Diva's anguish parodies hardship like that seen in Denison's *Marsh Hay*, while signalling for the audience that *Bedouins* is indeed a text from here—that it is a Canadian, not just a Quebecois, play.

Kevan also makes choices in his translation for purely pragmatic reasons. In the exchange between Père Noël and Lutin Vert, discussed earlier, the code-switching is removed in the English version because Lutin Vert is presented as a Francophone who speaks in English throughout the play, with a few exceptions. He has no need to switch languages for the benefit of his interlocutor because they are both already speaking in English. Although, in Kevan's version, the fact that Lutin Vert is presented as a Francophone who agrees to speak in a second language could be read as a political statement, it is more productive to understand Kevan's choice in terms of the markedness model. Given that Lutin Vert speaks French in the original, an unmarked language choice to be sure, it follows that he could speak in English in the translation. Kevan strives to resolve the matter of his linguistic and cultural identity by giving him a strong French-Canadian accent. Père Noël, on the other hand, loses the edge from his blunt character as well because the word games that are staged as he tries to understand Lutin Vert's name are more subtle; Father Christmas, although certainly not the brightest, seems genuinely to be struggling with choppy radio transmissions in Kevan's translation, as opposed to being simply slow to understand.

> **FATHER CHRISTMAS** [...] euh ... what's his name again? ... Euh ... Lootin' Where.
> **LUTIN VERT**   Not "Lootin' Where," Fart'er Chreestmas. Looten Vair. Like a lepr(r)echaun. Ovair.
> **FATHER CHRISTMAS**   Oh. Okay. Okay. Little Lepper ... eh ... Lepper Corn. Over.
> [...]
> **LUTIN VERT**   Raidi for de tcheque-leest? Ovair.
> **FATHER CHRISTMAS**   Yea! Standin' by the check-out. Over. (Dubois and Kevan 129)

If Lutin Vert's line, "[r]aidi for de tcheque-leest," had been switched into French in order to maintain the pattern of code switching from the original, his question would have become a marked statement. That line, in French, would have been about defiantly putting Father Christmas in his place as an answer to his absent-minded behaviour.

Lutin Vert later revisits his frustration while tuning his radio, and again the translation elaborates upon what is offered in the French version. It is clear that Kevan is staging the difficulty inherent in speaking a second language because of the inevitability of accent:

LUTIN VERT   Mer-de. Not "Lepper(r) K(h)orn." Eez ze peemp deaf or somet'een? "Looten Vair," leek un Lepprracorn! … No. Leek un leep … Lek un leep … Ayeee! Zees bores me steef. (Dubois and Kevan 137)

Not only is the language quite playful in its repetition of the long "ē" sound, but the spectators are also given an opportunity to commiserate over the challenge intrinsic to speaking, and indeed communicating, in another tongue. The playfulness of Kevan's translation also exists in the manner that he capitalizes on assumed border knowledge of French—almost every school system in Canada insists on its students taking at least one course in their second language. Lutin Vert lets loose his frustration on an overly bureaucratic official on the phone with the common phrase, "mêlez-vous de vos oignons" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 174); in the English version, rather than substituting something like, "mind your own business," Kevan anglicises the expression: "meex your(r) own onyons" (Dubois and Kevan 151). For this joke to work, a certain level of French language knowledge is assumed in the (primarily) Anglophone spectators.

Many of Kevan's choices in his translation point to a desire to flesh out characters and lend them more specificity. The trend continues in his characterization of members of Patrol South Belvedere, a team of helicopters, and implicitly pilots, who are charged with ensuring that the rails in front of Father Christmas, the charging train, are clear. In Dubois's original, each of the ten helicopters is voiced in undifferentiated English. For Kevan, the two units of this team who speak as individuals, dubbed Minus One and Minus Seven, are given histories. So, in the French text, Minus One says: "[r]eady to take off. Waiting for confirmation of flight indications" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 135), which is quite flat when compared with the English, in which the character says: "Prepahred fah take orff. Standing by fah ver(w)ification of flight co-awdinates. Ove-ah" (Dubois and Kevan 130). Minus One is transformed into a British officer who draws out his vowels and who speaks in the r-less RP accent. Rather than just being a voice in the crowd, he echoes great British war heroes. Minus Seven, however, is labelled as an American with a conscience by Kevan and so retains the unaccented speech given to him by Dubois. The French, "Sir, its [sic] a huge wall of red sand. It's coming to me. Rolling. And trembling" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 190) is only corrected for minor grammatical variance in English. In translation, he says: "Sir, it's a huge wall of red sand. It's coming right to me. Rolling. And trembling" (Dubois and Kevan 160). If Minus One is the English hero of early war films, Minus Seven is set up as Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*. Kevan here is capitalizing on the Anglophone spectator's knowledge of the more common variants of English to point at the types who make up this fighting force. Once again, in a gesture that Venuti might call stylistic domestication, we see Kevan imply backstory in characters who did not need these small details in the original French.

In a final move to soften the symbolism and politics in Dubois's text, Kevan has the last beat of the play repeated in six different tongues, including the original French. As mentioned earlier, the play ends with a direct address to the audience during which spectators are called to discover the play's message on their own. Dubois's original is spoken by all of the actors at once: "La vie est ce combat sur lequel le temps ne revient pas. Voyez. Entendez. Mais le train, lui n'arrête pas. Aussi … go home. Bonsoir" (Dubois, *Blâmez* 197). In the English translation this same line is spoken in Arabic, English, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Given

Don't Blame the Bedouins - Allan Zinyk, David Marr, Maggie Nagle, Prairie Theatre Exchange, 1987; Photo: Hubert Pantel

that the entire play works to destabilize language, the translation ends with clear direct address: "Life is a fight and time does not return. You see. You hear. But the train; it does not stop" (Dubois and Kevan 163). Kevan is announcing that the play is addressing everybody, not just the Anglophones and Francophones in the audience.

Code-Switching in Translation: Domestication or Foreignization?

Given the degree of intertextuality in the source text, Kevan's work is admirable. Although he did not maintain the markers that make the "French" original *feel* Quebecois and thus did not foreignize his translation, he did not entirely domesticate the text either. This is to say that while the English version of the play was no longer Quebecois, it also was not markedly Anglophone at the textual level. Although Kevan removed some of what might have been constructed as overtly Quebecois, he replaced it with another "other" in English Canadian society instead of simply anglicizing everything. Kevan's domestication is more aesthetic than linguistic. One of the large currents in this work is that of elaborating on character, at least to the extent that a recognizable archetype emerges. In his version, the small characters (like Minus One and Minus Seven) that were more or less flat in Dubois's original are given form by placing them geographically; a flat character from a specific place offers an audience just enough information to intuit many other salient characterization details. The major characters are also plumped from the level of archetype in the French-language text into

something that might almost be called round, effectively psychologizing a postdramatic play, or at least sowing the seeds of psychological motivation. I suspect that these character modifications are largely there to serve the historically and economically shaped desire amongst English Canadians for back story and realism in their theatre. Kevan is offering an anchor so that Anglophones might dabble with an immersion into the narrative.

The other dominant trend in the translation of *Bedouins*, beyond that of the development of characterization, is sociopolitically motivated. As a result of the relationship between French and English Canada, an Anglophone spectator is likely well informed enough to recognize a piece of theatre which metaphorically deals with Quebec as oppressed in this country. Significantly, however, Dubois's play is not on this subject; as Shawn Huffman pointed out, it in fact works towards the negation of identity based on geography (564). Nevertheless, because there are Francophones in the play, there remains a risk that an English audience would read the polemics of provincial politics in a performance of the text, even though the play's politics lie elsewhere. And so, to counter this risk in the English translation, Flip, the underdog, is anglicized and othered, while Lutin Vert remains Francophone. This choice is motivated by the fact that Flip, as one of the story's protagonists, has the signifying potential to stand in for something else. Lutin Vert, however, can be presented as French to an Anglophone audience without representing anything other than himself because he is not the hero. The polyglossic multiplication at the end of the text also serves to dilute the potentially highly charged sociopolitical character of the play. Despite this, the play's reception in English Canada has been spotty. Although it was ultimately a modest success, during its premiere run in 1987 "[t]here [were] a number of walkouts […], phone calls of complaint to [artistic director Kim] McCaw's office, and, on one […] night, hostile mutters from some audience members apparently debating both courses of action" (Godfrey). Similarly, in later runs, reviewers applauded the show for its ingenuity but note that the story is "[c]lear as mud" (Drake) and that it can be difficult to sit through. It is quite possible that this unfavourable response is at least in part a reflection of the full cast version of the play; the solo version, as performed in French by Dubois, was roundly applauded for its virtuosity.

Ultimately, what Kevan's process tells us about the translation of multilingual theatre is that in order to code meaning across language boundaries, the translator needs to intimately know two things: not only her or his audience's linguistic baggage, but also the performance traditions implicated in multicultural and multilingual milieux. His complicated process of multilingual reception and translation is indicative of the reality that Meylaerts describes. She insists that multilingualism and translation are always intertwined: "[a]t the heart of multilingualism, we find translation. Translation is not taking place *in between monolingual* realities but rather *within multilingual* realities" [emphasis in the original] (519). Because of this, she envisions a practice of multilingual translation that questions

> linguistic, spatial or national boundaries in relation to which separate literatures are constructed, [and] moreover urges translation studies to rethink the nature of the relationships between literatures. New forms of literary translation emerge within multilingual cultures, from relations of proximity instead of distance, from contact zones instead of isolation. (528)

Because code-switching theories clarify the reasons for switching between languages, a close reading of language politics emerging in the source text allows a translator to avoid the peril of *violent* domestication in their iteration of the work for the assumed target audience. Although the examples drawn from *Don't Blame the Bedouins* cannot account for every instance of translated multilingual theatre, Kevan's particular sensitivity to the linguistic baggage of his target audience, along with a deep understanding of the theatrical conventions that govern their reception of a performance, are key to the success of his work.

Notes

1 In linguistics, code-switching describes the conversational switch between two or more languages.

2 The term polyglossia was first used in the 1970s by sociologists to describe the coexistence of several languages in a single geographic space or community. Heteroglossia, by contrast, is a critical term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe novels: "Heteroglossia […] is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. […] It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intentions of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (324). In this essay, I will use the words polyglossia and multilingualism interchangeably; in the strictest sense, these words are not exactly synonymous, but they are close enough that I will treat them as such for the sake of readability.

3 "Macaronic" refers to text in a mixture of languages. See Carlson.

4   I will elaborate on these variances in aesthetic convention by reading through the English and French *Bédouins*, but recommend Gregory Reid's "Mapping Jouissance: Insights from a Case Study in the Schizophrenia of Canadian Drama" for more on these stylistic differences.

5 Santa Claus is called "Father Christmas" in the English translation and "Père Noël" in the French version, but all three names in this article refer to the same character.

6 The damsel in distress, the athletic hero, and the awkward teen are all cultural identity tropes, represented with particular frequency in cinema.

7 *Joual* is a form of non-standard French spoken in Quebec, most notably in working class neighbourhoods in Montreal.

8 The history of the emergence of *joual* on Quebecois stages is well explained by Ladouceur in *Dramatic Licence*.

9 Venuti uses the term domestication. Antoine Berman, an earlier translation scholar, is more explicit in his word choice and might have called it ethnocentrist or annexationist when a translator domesticates a text.

10 In a translation not provided in the play text, Rilke's poetry—from "Ist es nicht" to "al ser selbst"—reads in English as follows:

> Isn't it time that, with love, we
> freed ourselves from our loved one and, trembling, endured:
> as the arrow endures the string so that, tensed
> for its flight, it is more than itself. (Rilke 5)

11 Grammelots are gibberish languages used playfully in theatre. They can feature onomatopoeic elements and can lean on sounds that produce puns when heard through the (presumed) native language of the audience. See Jaffe-Berg for more on the history of grammelots.

12 I have only been able to translate Stalin's Russian; it seems that Kevan's Chinese (Lenin's text) is gibberish. In rough translation, the Russian reads:

> **LENI**N Cha yuen ti. Ki shay pas.
>
> **STALIN** Have a good journey. We are together. We are in a hurry. Go straight. Goodbye.
>
> **LENIN** Yi chie shun pei. Chow!

13 English-Canadian theatre makers rushed in the first half of the twentieth century to develop a "Canadian" style of theatre that was distinct from the touring shows that visited from Britain and the United States. Herman Voaden's symphonic expressionism, among the first clearly articulated Canadian "styles," was visually inspired by the Canadian North and paintings by the Group of Seven (Wagner). In another instance, Denison's "*Marsh Hay* [...] was one of the first theatrical experiments to transpose the character motivations of environment and heredity [...] to fit a Canadian subject" (Lindgren). Although it is perhaps hyperbolic to say that that *all* English Canadian theatre before World War II was fixated on the harsh experiences of rural life, there was certainly a trend.

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