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"Travestis politiques"

The gay value of Michel Tremblay's dramatic work in translation

by

Matthew Kayahara

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ABSTRACT

Michel Tremblay often denies that he writes about gayness, despite frequent themes of sexual difference in his plays. In *Hosanna*, for example, he has suggested that the gay content is a metaphor for Quebec's aspirations to independence. In other plays, such as *Les anciennes odeurs* and *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été*, he seems to be advancing a "banalizing" conception of gay identity. Despite these interpretations, a number of Anglophone academics have mobilized Tremblay's texts to make arguments about community-based gay identity and have treated Tremblay as a gay writer. This thesis seeks to determine if this appropriation is facilitated by the translation process, as a result of the translators intervening in the texts to enhance their gay content. Ultimately, it seems this is not the case, suggesting that the appropriation of Tremblay's work results more from the gay community reading its own conceptions of gay identity into the texts than from the translation process.

RÉSUMÉ

Michel Tremblay nie souvent qu'il écrit sur l'homosexualité, malgré le fait que les thèmes de différence sexuelle paraissent souvent dans ses œuvres dramatiques. Dans *Hosanna*, par exemple, Tremblay a suggéré que le contenu gai sert de métaphore pour les aspirations indépendantistes du Québec. Dans le cas de certaines autres pièces, telles *Les anciennes odeurs* et *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été*, il paraît que Tremblay avance une conception "banalisante" de l'identité gaie. En dépit de ces interprétations, plusieurs théoriciens anglophones ont utilisé les textes de Tremblay comme point de départ pour des arguments sur l'identité communautaire de l'homosexualité et ont traité l'écrivain d'auteur gai. Cette thèse vise à déterminer si cette appropriation a été facilitée par l'opération traduisante, résultat de l'intervention de la part des traducteurs dans les textes pour mettre en évidence le contenu gai de ces derniers. En fin de compte, il semble que ce n'est pas le cas, cette appropriation résulterait de la capacité de la communauté gaie de voir ses propres conceptions de l'indentié gaie dans les textes plutôt que dans l'acte de traduire.

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"[Au Québec] on est un peuple qui s'est déguisé pendant des années pour ressembler à un autre peuple ... On a été travestis pendant 300 ans."
–Michel Tremblay, quoted in Dickinson (108).

Introduction

Gay authorhood

Is Michel Tremblay a gay author? This is one of the central questions that this thesis addresses. To arrive at an answer, I have had to take detours via gay and lesbian literary theory, studies of the cultural differences between the two solitudes of English and French Canada, comparative literature, and, of course, translation studies, and its specific subset of gay translation theory. Because, ultimately, the question of whether or not a given author is a gay author comes down to the ways in which the communities in which he is being read perceive and constitute him. As Foucault writes, "these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author ... are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice" (1993 [1977]:127). Like so many other aspects of identity in general, and gay identity in particular, gay authorhood is something that does not exist outside of discourse: it is a cultural construct. Not that this means it is unimportant; if there is one thing that post-structuralism has taught us, it is the tenacity of cultural constructs.

This is why the issue of translation is so important here. In a cultural terrain like Canada's, where two official languages exist side by side and institutionally interpenetrate, a given author can have multiple sets of identities: in the source-language community; in the target-language community; in the bilingual communities among those who have read the original text in their second language; and, of course, in the

communities who have read both source and target text, interested in comparing them. I consider myself to fall in this last category.

What do I mean by "gay author"? For the purposes of this introduction, let me start with the seemingly facile definition that a gay author is an author who writes (or is seen to have written) gay texts. As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 1, "gay texts" are, for my purposes, texts that contribute towards the elaboration of a gay identity; in other words, texts that are, in a very concrete way, about homosexuality. A "gay author" is, to a certain extent, a ghettoized subcategory of "author" the same way that a "gay community" is a ghettoized subcategory of "community."

What intrigued me about Michel Tremblay, at the start of this project, was his emphatic denial that he writes about homosexuality. Examples of this denial have been noted by numerous academics and other writers. Mireille Rosello, in an article about the national limitations of sexual identity (1997), quotes an interview from France's *Magazine Littéraire*, where Tremblay says, "That said, my books were never about gayness. I talked about gays, which is a completely different matter" (qtd. in Rosello 249). This authorial posture is reiterated in Peter Dickinson's book on the queer nature of Canadian literature (1999), where he quotes Tremblay in epigraph as saying, "Les premières fois que j'ai utilisé des personnages homosexuels, c'était pour exprimer un problème d'identité. *La Duchesse* ... [et] *Hosanna* ne sont pas des pièces sur l'homosexualité" (101). In the most interesting posturing in which Tremblay engages, he is quoted by Montreal journalist Luc Boulanger as saying:

> Le milieu gai, surtout au Canada anglais, m'a longtemps reproché de ne pas être assez militant, de ne pas écrire des pièces ou des livres « gais », comme le fait le dramaturge new-yorkais Larry Kramer, qui préconise un théâtre engagé, agressif, pour dénoncer l'homophobie dans la société

> américaine. Pour ma part, je ne crois pas que la littérature de fiction existe pour revendiquer des causes politiques ou sociales. Mais pour transposer et transcender la réalité. (2001:103)[1]

So if Tremblay says he doesn't write about gayness, then he doesn't – end of story, right? His texts aren't about gayness, they are not gay texts, and he is not a gay author? Wrong. Even setting aside the question of reader response, the differences of interpretation between the author and the communities that read his works (and these differences are legion) there is the very question of what Tremblay means when he makes his denial. What does he mean when he says his works are not "about" homosexuality? Certainly he cannot be suggesting that they do not *portray* homosexuality. Many of his works, not the least of which are *Hosanna*, *Les anciennes odeurs* and *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été*, the works I will be discussing in this thesis, deal with gay and lesbian characters and language, themes of gay identity, gay sexuality – indeed, they exhibit an isotopy of homosexuality on all levels. So how is he *not* writing about homosexuality?

Part of the answer lies, I think, in the way homosexuality is conceived in different cultures, the "national-sexual," as Rosello terms it. Rosello argues that sexual identity is conceived differently in different national contexts – and specifically includes problematic cases of "nationality" such as Quebec and Corsica in this formulation – and points to the notion that in France, sexual behaviour is not determinative of an identity position, unlike in North America, which uses sexuality as the basis for establishing communities (246). Using this concept, we can imagine (and, indeed, Rosello argues)

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[1] This is especially interesting in light of Tremblay's status as a nationalist, and his frequent use of this theme, especially in *Hosanna*, the very play he is discussing in this quote. It is also worth noting that in an earlier work, he said, "My conception of a good play is one with a message" (1978b:280).

that Michel Tremblay, in a vein similar to the so-called "French model," does not intend his texts to contribute to the elaboration of a separate, gay-community-based identity.

Of course, it is impossible to ascribe absolute meanings to authorial utterances such as Tremblay's denials on this issue, and my argument thus far hangs somewhat precariously on the idea that a text being "about" homosexuality means the text advances gay identity, or that a text *not* being "about" homosexuality necessarily means that the author is not a gay author, and that this is where Tremblay stands. There are other possible interpretations: perhaps Tremblay is happy to be seen as a gay author whose writings advance an Anglo-American model of gay identity but simply does not see homosexuality, while present in the plays and novels under discussion above, as their central preoccupation. Alternatively, it may be that he does not want his authorial persona to be "ghettoized" and have his works judged solely by their gay content, by how they advance or portray gay identity, but instead on their overall aesthetic merits, just as any other artist would.

If the only text under discussion here were *Hosanna*, these other lines of argumentation would be much more tenable. In the case of Hosanna, the alternative, non-gay reading that Tremblay has repeatedly offered is that the play, far from being "about" gay characters, can actually be read as an allegory of Quebec's relationship with the rest of Canada. However, Tremblay's denials that he writes about homosexuality do not apply strictly to *Hosanna*: the statement taken from Rosello above, for example, was in an article that was published to coincide with the release of *Le Coeur éclaté*, a novel involving the same characters as those in *Odeurs*. However, Tremblay has never tried to suggest that *Odeurs* or *Messe* are allegories of anything else and, as I will attempt to

demonstrate, both of these plays adopt and take great pains to deploy a conception of homosexuality where gays are "just like everybody else," except perhaps for the gender of the people they have relations with – in other words, they present a "banalized" view of homosexuality. Thus, his argument, in both his works and discussions of those works, seems to be that his texts do not take it as their project to help in the elaboration of a Anglo-American style separatist gay community, and they are therefore not "about" gayness, they are not gay texts, and he is not a gay author.

Tremblay in translation

Regardless of what Tremblay means in his denials, there are segments of English Canada that have not listened to him: whether he feels that homosexuality is not the central preoccupation of his texts, or does not want to be judged solely on the basis of it, or wants to present a banalizing view of it, he has been reproached in English Canada for not being "assez militant" (Boulanger 2001:103), a formulation which implies that he has been "somewhat militant," in other words, that his works are judged in terms of their gay content. Moreover, as I will discuss in more detail in chapter 1, a number of academics who have examined Tremblay's texts also do so through a lens of homosexuality. So the question is, then, what happened to these texts to make it possible for segments of English Canada constitute Tremblay as a gay author? There are a number of possibilities here: for audiences viewing *Hosanna*, it could be that the horizon of expectations in Toronto was centred around issues of homosexuality, at the birth of the gay liberation movement, and so *Hosanna* was read into that horizon; perhaps there was a central system of "gay writing" at the heart of the English Canadian literary polysystem in Toronto that corresponded to the similarly central system of "nationalist discourse" in

Quebec. Perhaps the translation of the texts, on a semantic or discursive level, effected a shift in the texts that inscribed them into gay discourse instead of the *joual* of the original French. I believe that this last possibility may in fact have been the case, that the translators of Tremblay's plays had adopted a *skopos*, to use Vermeer's term (221), in order to intervene directly in the texts and activate their gay content. In the case of *Odeurs* and *Messe*, where Tremblay's depiction of gay identity is not the same as that which predominated in English Canada, this approach would seem to be underscored by Keith Harvey's comment, in analyzing a French translation of an American gay text, that "the translator has (inevitably, one might say) produced a text that harmonizes with the prevailing view of human subjectivity that obtains in his – the target – culture" (1998:310). It is this word "inevitably" that interests me. Is this approach truly inevitable? If so, then we should see evidence that the translators of the three plays under study have intervened in Tremblay's proffered message (nationalist allegory in one case; banalized sexuality in the other) to produce texts that advance an Anglo-American-style gay identity.

Outline

In Chapter 1, I will discuss some of the ways in which Tremblay has been appropriated by gay academics as a "gay author," outline several central concepts, such as "gay texts" and "gay authorhood," and give some context on how gay and lesbian theory is deployed in the wider context of translation studies. In Chapter 2, I will give some of the historical context surrounding the texts under study, as well as discussing some of the theoretical aspects of dramatic translation and the translation of Tremblay's native tongue, *joual*. Chapter 3 will contain the analysis of the three plays themselves

and their translations. Finally, the conclusion will offer some explanations as to the divergent interpretations of these plays in English and French Canada.

Chapter 1: Gay translation theory

1.1 About the plays

The first question one could ask regarding the selection of my corpus is: why plays? After all, Tremblay is also the author of many novels, short stories, essays and poems. There are a number of answers to this. The first is that plays have held a position of particular regard in Quebec culture, especially during the period in which much of Tremblay's work appeared. As Brisset writes, "Theatre grows directly out of a society, its collective imagination and symbolic representations, and its system of ideas and values" (5). The second relates to the nature of Tremblay's fame: although he had published a handful of short stories before *Les Belles-Soeurs* (1993 [1968]), it was really with this play that his reputation was established and his career launched, in both French and English. In a word, theatre is what Tremblay is known for.

In these respects, the choice of text type to examine was relatively easy. However, examining Tremblay's *entire* body of playtexts would have been far too onerous a task for this project; therefore, I decided to select three plays in particular that I hope will provide a fairly representative picture of his production and reception as a gay author: *Hosanna* (written in 1971-1972 and first performed in 1973[1]), *Les anciennes odeurs* (written and performed in 1981), and *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été* (1994-1995; 1996). The primary reason why these are the plays I selected is that they all contain overt gay characters and gay themes; in other words, they resonate with Keith Harvey's remark on texts "whose subject matter is homosexual experience and struggle" (2000:137). However, they are not the only plays to do so: Tremblay's opus is heavily

populated with gay characters and gay themes, especially works like *Demain matin, Montéal m'attend* (1972) and *Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra (1977)*. As a result, I had to restrict my selection even further.

One of the bases of selection is that the chosen plays do not all treat the themes of homosexuality in the same way, nor even similarly. In fact, the plays are from almost entirely different historical eras: *Hosanna* was written at the very beginning of the gay liberation movement, during the same year as Canada's first major gay protest (Smith 3); *Odeurs* was written once the movement was in full swing in both Canada and the USA, and after homosexuality had been included in Quebec's human rights code as a prohibited grounds of discrimination; and *Messe* was written in a time when homosexuality had become acceptable in much of society, and in the era of AIDS.

Besides stemming from different eras in gay politics, these plays derive from different periods of Tremblay's authorial life. *Hosanna* constitutes a segment of the "Saga of *Les Belles-Soeurs*" which started with *Les Belles-Soeurs* in 1968 and ended twelve plays later with *Damnée Manon, sacrée Sandra* in 1977; after this last play, Tremblay announced his intention to withdraw from the theatre for a number of years (Tremblay 1978b:285), though he was back soon enough in 1979 with *L'impromptu d'Outremont*. It also falls into the period of his work where he aimed to use homosexuality (usually in the form of drag queens) as a metaphor for identity crisis in general, and Quebec's identity crisis in particular (Usmiani 79-80). *Odeurs* is the second play Tremblay wrote after this cycle had ended, and is the first one in which he addresses the issue of "banalized" homosexuality – an issue which I will discuss in more detail

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[1] The information on writing dates is from http://www.cead.qc.ca/repw3/tremblaymichel.htm. The information on first performances is taken from the published texts.

below – as well as the first one which draws on characters from his adult life, rather than his childhood (Boulanger 2001:102-103). *Messe* is remarkable as the first of his plays to deal with AIDS, as well as a sexuality that Tremblay has characterized as "politically incorrect" (Boulanger 2001:162).

Despite their differences, the plays do have certain features in common: both *Hosanna* and *Odeurs* are intimate plays, dealing with a single couple, where *Messe* contains eleven characters divided into a number of couples. Similarly, both *Messe* and *Odeurs* involve "normal" gay characters, while *Hosanna* revolves around a drag queen and her equally drag-outfitted (though in this case in biker drag) lover. Structurally, *Hosanna* and *Odeurs* are both traditional, *Hosanna* being a two-act dialogue, and *Odeurs* a one-act play. *Messe*, on the other hand, is based on the structure of a church mass. Even on the paratextual level, there are certain similarities: both *Hosanna* and *Messe* were translated by John Van Burek, while *Odeurs* was translated by John Stowe. Hopefully, all of these aspects mean that my corpus is representative enough to allow me to draw reasonable conclusions about the factors that have made it possible for certain English Canadians to constitute Tremblay as a gay author, although any conclusions drawn on such a small sample are necessarily provisional and subject to contradiction or confirmation.

1.2 Constructing Tremblay as a gay author

Before going any further, I would like to look at what evidence there is that Tremblay is considered a gay author within segments of English Canada. Where is such a construction constructed? As with all questions that rely on discourse, the answer is multifaceted: Harvey, in his discussion of French discourses on American gay identity,

looks at "journalistic commentary, polemic, travel writing, ethnography, original French novels and French translations of American English fiction" (2003:3), and this is by no means the limit. In the case of dramatic works such as those we are dealing with here, it seems sensible to look, at first, to those viewing the plays.

Unfortunately, audience recollections of the play are problematic, because they are not systematically recorded, making it impossible to draw any conclusions about what "most" spectators thought about the play or the playwright. Of course, there are individual occasions where they are recorded, and some of these seem promising. Schwartzwald, for example, writes about his first experience seeing *Hosanna*: "[I]t confirmed in the public space of the theatre the possibility of feeling not only comfortable with, but proud of, one's homosexual desire" (500). Moreover, upon attending a later production of the same play, he wondered, "Could Hosanna's coming out … resonate with the same liberationist energy that it did in the 1970s?" (501). Unfortunately, recollections like these are anecdotal at best, and there is no definitive way to ascertain whether they represent the opinions of significant segments of the population. However, there is a privileged subset of the audience whose opinions on such matters are able to have a much greater impact on long-term conceptions of authorial identity (not to mention on authorial pocketbooks): reviewers. For this discussion, I am going to look at academic critics as a particular type of reviewer. While it is interesting and perfectly valid to look at journalistic critics (indeed, one of the theorists I am about to discuss does this very thing), academic criticism of Tremblay is more interesting to me for a number of reasons. First of all, academic criticism has a longer life cycle, in that it tends to be written longer after the fact than journalism, making it possible for academic work to take

a diachronic approach in its analysis. Similarly, it is much longer-lived than the relatively ephemeral newspaper review, so it can have an impact over a greater period of time. Academic work also has the space to conduct a more sophisticated analysis of the material under study, and finds it easier to incorporate material that does not immediately appear germane. Concomitantly, academics have the ability to be more subtle in their construction of the author in question, which makes for a more interesting analysis.

Some academic work is very explicit in the way it recruits Tremblay to the gay cause. Take, for example, two articles dealing with Tremblay contained in an encyclopedia of gay literature (Summers 1995). Beyond the fact that the very inclusion of these articles indicates that the authors must have something to say about Tremblay and homosexuality, both also treat Tremblay's work as reductively gay: the article titled "Tremblay, Michel" suggests that Tremblay's central preoccupation, alongside class issues, is a "focus on gender and human relations," glossed as, "mothers and their complexes, the antics of divas of either gender, gay male couples involved in parenting" (Lachance 705). Moreover, observing a shift in Tremblay's work towards more intimate, autobiographical stories, Lachance suggests, "Perhaps because he was never out to his mother, who died in 1963, Tremblay's constant return to particular locales evokes a … mixture of suffering, homosexuality, and creativity." Poirier's article on broader gay issues in Quebec literature addresses Tremblay's use of "exotic" gay characters in his earlier works, although he also points to the fact that later works focus less on sexuality per se, and are "framed in the concerns of the post-modern Québécois novel and society: the extended family, urban life in Montréal, and travel beyond the province" (579). While this is a fairly mild appropriation of Tremblay's work, it is interesting to note that

Poirier draws a parallel between the use of poetry for gay liberation and national liberation, but mentions no similar parallel in Tremblay's works, dramatic or otherwise.

One could object that such articles in a pseudo-academic book explicitly devoted to gay writing and appropriation are to be expected ("This book cannot help partaking of a specific cultural (and political) agenda, the recovery and consolidation of a perpetually threatened legacy of same-sex love in literature a life," writes Summers in the introduction [*ix*]). However, this trend can also be observed in more purely academic work. Alain-Michel Rocheleau (1996) also appropriates *Hosanna* as a gay play. He writes:

> I postulate that by referring to the history of Quebec or by situating dramatic figures in an era when antigay repression was common practice, authors such as … Tremblay seek to increase audiences' awareness of present day homophobia. (119)

His subsequent analysis of *Hosanna* (120-26) focuses almost exclusively on the play's presentation of homosexuality, and he completely ignores the nationalist reading that Dickinson claims predominated in French Canada, as we will see below, suggesting that Rocheleau's appropriation is purposely targeted.

Other academic works take a more sophisticated stance. Dickinson, for example, uses journalistic evidence to explore the different conceptions of *Hosanna* between English and French Canada. On the one hand, he argues, many French Canadian reviewers claimed to have seen the play as an allegory for Quebec assuming its true identity as a nation-state. For example, Dickinson quotes a number of reviewers, including one who remarks that "le théâtre québécois est un théâtre politique" (Germain qtd. in Dickinson 110). Part of the reason for this interpretation prevailing among French Canadians seems to be the fact that Tremblay himself argued strenuously that he wrote

the play as an allegory of Quebec's search for identity, and that it should be read as such: "Although *Hosanna* concerns two homosexuals … it is really an allegory about Quebec. In the end, they drop their poses and embrace their real identity" (Tremblay 1978b:284). It is also important to keep in mind that the play was written at a point in history when the modern Quebec nationalist movement was in full swing; as I will discuss in more detail in section 2.1.1, the Quiet Revolution had effectively taken place, but the Parti Québécois had yet to be elected to government and the first referendum on Quebec independence had yet to occur. Nationalism was, in effect, on everybody's mind.

However, when the play was viewed in English translation, this nationalist interpretation did not obtain. Usmiani argues that Tremblay's work can be interpreted on three levels: " 'literal' = basic anecdote; 'moral' = socio-political message; 'allegorical' = universal significance" (17). According to Dickinson, reviewers of the English *Hosanna* tended to see it more on the literal level, as dealing with a homosexual love story, or at best an allegorical level as exploring the tensions inherent in all relations (111-112). Indeed, these reviewers, even when aware of the political implications claimed by the playwright, persisted in loudly proclaiming blindness to them. This perhaps reached its pinnacle with Clive Barnes's review of the Broadway production (which, it should be noted, used the same actors and director as the Tarragon one) where he writes: "The political symbolism is more well-meaning than meaningful. I doubt whether it will do much to raise Quebec's level of national consciousness."

In examining why the nationalist reading did not enjoy widespread favour in English Canada, Dickinson writes:

> This has less to do with any prevailing post-structuralist 'death of the author' critical methodology than with a trans*national* failure in

> trans*lation* of Hosanna's trans*culturation*, a refusal on the part of most anglophone critics and viewers to make the necessary link between sexual and national self-determination. (111)

He then goes on to explore this link itself, but bases his discussion in large part on Schwartzwald's work, which deserves a separate treatment here. Ultimately, his project seems to be, at least in part, to circumscribe Tremblay as a gay author: hence comments such as "Tremblay, the gay playwright" (113) and "Tremblay, the gay dramatist of Quebec's marginalized fringes" (114), as well as his claim that Tremblay has influenced "a whole generation of gay male playwrights in Quebec" (115), such as René-Daniel Dubois (*Being at home with Claude*) and Michel Marc Bouchard (*Les Feluettes).* Presumably, this is because of the fundamental argument of his book, namely:

> The identificatory *lack* upon which Canadian literary nationalism has historically been constructed ... is in large part facilitated by, if not wholly dependent on, a critical refusal to come to grips with the textual *superabundance* of a destabilizing and counter-normative sexuality. (4)

Nonetheless, Dickinson may be the most generous of the theorists under discussion here in terms of allowing both of the readings of Tremblay's work, as he remarks, "These two dominant sets of readings of *Hosanna* ... have ensured the play an almost mythical status in debates surrounding Québécois cultural production and English Canadian cultural reception" (112).

Like Dickinson, Schwartzwald is aware of the divergent readings *Hosanna* has received between English and French cultures in Canada. Yet he, too, frames the play largely in terms of its portrayal of homosexuality. I have already noted his reaction to viewing *Hosanna* for the first time in English translation, where it spoke to his own nascent gay identity, but his discussion hardly ends on this point. In fact, it centres around the 1991 remounting of the play, a number of whose elements were modified at

the time to turn the liberationist (national or sexual) ending into a more ambivalent one (501). Schwartzwald reads the modifications as emphasizing the play's interrogation of performative gender roles – an interrogation that he argues was always there, but overshadowed by the nationalist allegory reading.

It is his exploration of the convergent discourses of national and sexual self-determination that interest us here, however. Schwartzwald notes that the ending of the original *Hosanna* consists in the title character removing his drag outfit and coming to "accept his 'real' identity, stabilized in terms of his homosexual desire" (502). This authenticity was the cornerstone of the nationalist reading: Hosanna, who must accept that "it is *as a man* that he desires other men before he can … exist as an authentic interlocutor in the universal community of men" (503) is analogous to the people of Quebec, whose nationalist goals, if realized, would "authorize it [the province] to participate in the universal community of nations" by constructing itself as an authentic interlocutor that is specific in its "québécité" (502). This reading, Schwartzwald goes on to argue, is based on a conception of sexuality being a "more naturalized and radical arbiter of authenticity than gender, which in Tremblay is already encoded as more performative and therefore 'artificial'" (504).

However, Schwartzwald also points out that this conflation of national and sexual authenticity posed its own problems for some Quebec intellectuals, primarily because constructing homosexuality and nationalism as "adequate metaphorical substitutions for each other" (504) leads to certain paradoxes. Nationalism, Schwartzwald writes, was constructed around a discourse of progressive development from child to adult, while homosexuality was too easily seen as a state of *arrested* development. Moreover,

Hosanna's acceptance of her identity at the end of the play may authenticate her, but it also marginalizes her as a member of a homosexual minority among a heterosexual majority, and marginality within confederation was one of the reasons for Quebec to separate in the first place (504). Thus, Schwartzwald worries that the reason the 1991 production fronted the play's interrogation of gender roles over sexual ones was to "satisfy a desire for a 'writing out' of the play of its courageous valorization of homosexual desire," in response to the discomfort among the Quebec theatre establishment at the "'overrepresentation' of homosexuality on the Quebec stage" (507). So although Schwartzwald explores the "interpretive richness of Tremblay's interrogations of identity through the prisms of sexuality and gender" (502), he seems (presumably for reasons of his own community and political affiliations) to prefer the prism of sexuality.

While Dickinson and Schwartzwald examine the specific case of *Hosanna* and its differing reception in English and French Canada, Rosello, for her part, examines Tremblay's claims that his texts are "not about gayness." Advancing a notion of the "national-sexual," which is "a code … by which each national entity defines the realm of the sexual" (246), she looks at Tremblay's remark in a French literary magazine after the publication of his novel *Le Coeur éclaté*:

> But since I am gay, I found myself in a different family, a family in search of its identity too, within a world that continues, despite its claims, to justify the ghettoization of gay people. Whatever I do, I am always a member of some minority, as a Québécois first, then as a gay male. That said, my books were never about gayness. I talked about gays, which is a completely different matter. (Tremblay qtd. in Rosello 248-49)

Rosello points out that, in Quebec, this comment would be largely transparent, but in the transcultural communicative situation in which it actually occurs, it becomes

hybridized, because the notion of a double-minoritizing identity (Québécois *and* gay) "cannot be exported as-is" (250) into a national-sexual context that does not recognize minoritizing communities as legitimate. As a result, Rosello speculates, if the comment had been intended as a "moment of international coming-out" (250), it would probably fail, because "it would have been a nonevent because the French cultural landscape seems relatively impervious to the rhetoric of 'coming out'" (251). On the other hand, his comments regarding the negative state of the "ghetto" would immediately be seen as transparent by most French readers, because ghettoes tend to be considered as undesirable by the French (252). Therefore, Rosello argues, "Tremblay's formulation might … bring water to a typically French anti-queer theoretical mill," but at the same time, she wonders, "Could it be that this antighetto declaration is dissident within a Québécois context?" (254). Thus, Rosello concludes that Tremblay's position, despite being expressed in the same language as the one the reader speaks, "is *both* self-evidently obvious and unacceptable for a reader who would not recognize that two languages, two national-sexual codes are colliding inaudibly … between this interview and a certain French public" (259).

Rosello's analysis is complicated by the fact that, by her own admission, she inhabits a hybrid national-sexual position: "I often miss the American way of being gay when I am in France, and […] I am often surprised and offended by certain Americans' reactions to the so-called French way of being gay" (247). Thus, when she looks at the Tremblay novel in question, she writes, "I don't know what argument could help me demonstrate that [*Le Coeur éclaté*] is *not* about homosexuality" (260), and promptly veers off into a discussion of a different novel by a different author that she feels to be a

better example of "a novel about queers that does not talk about queerness" (261). In other words, although she devotes many pages to examining Tremblay's authorial claims about his sexual identity position, she ultimately inscribes his work into an Anglo-American gay identity position. We are not in the presence of a targeted political appropriation here, but simply an interpretive disagreement; it is not that Rosello fails to understand what Tremblay means in his claims, she simply does not believe that he is right when he makes them, because she sees a significant disconnect between his authorial statements and the content of his work. Thus, she ends up arguing that he is a gay author despite his assertion to the contrary.

I should note that if my discussion of academic work here revolves mostly around *Hosanna*, this is in large part because there is simply more written about *Hosanna* than about *Odeurs* and *Messe*, a condition that stems partly from these latter plays' relative recentness, but is also heavily influenced by the fact that they were not very well *liked* by critics. Nonetheless, I believe they are still interesting to examine, because there is a distinct disconnect between the uses to which Tremblay puts homosexuality in the earlier play and the later two. This is to be expected, since the plays come from different political moments: nationalism was a much more powerful force in 1973 than in 1981 or 1996, and homosexuality had a very different role in society at each of these three moments. Unlike *Hosanna*, which contained a nationalist message, *Odeurs* and *Messe*, I believe, derived from a conception of banalized homosexuality (compare this with Rosello's – admittedly ambivalent – argument about *Le Coeur éclaté*, which involves the same characters as *Odeurs*). In this respect, my work could be seen in part to be advancing an argument about Tremblay's uses of homosexuality in the latter two plays,

rather than simply describing what has been argued by others, in order to try to elucidate what Tremblay means when he says his work is not "about gayness," and why English academics do not accept this claim at face value.

Although it is difficult to argue how "most" academics view Tremblay's work, the discussion above has demonstrated that at least some English academics read Tremblay's work in terms of its portrayals of gay identity. Even if they do not read it *solely* in those terms, they view this interpretive framework as a privileged one. What is it that has allowed them to do this? In their discussions of the different readings of Tremblay's work between English and French Canada, none of the authors noted above have specifically addressed the translation of the texts themselves. While it would be oversimplifying to suggest that the translations alone are responsible for the readings these authors give to Tremblay's work – especially when it seems clear that many of them have read the French versions – it is equally irresponsible to ignore the possibility that the English translations influenced their reading, especially when we have no way of knowing which they read first and to what degree that informed their opinion of the other. Schwartzwald is an excellent case in point here: his first impression of Hosanna was, by his own admission, influenced by his encounter with it in English translation, and in that encounter it spoke to his conceptions of gay identity. More importantly, however, given that the national-sexual position from which these authors are writing seems generally to be an Anglo-American-style community identity one, this may have contributed to their reading these texts, even in French, as portraying a sexuality that Tremblay himself simply does not see and did not intend; it also seems possible that the translators, writing in this same national-sexual context, interpreted the texts in a similar fashion, and

translated accordingly, an approach that Mira has suggested is highly desirable, and Harvey has suggested is "inevitable" (1998:310). If this is the case, then we should see textual evidence of the differences between the conception of sexuality Tremblay claims, and that which predominates in the community from which Van Burek, Glassco and Stowe hail. To examine this question, we will first need to look at some of the theoretical basis of gay translation theory.

1.3 What is gay translation? What is a gay text?

The prime question facing the would-be scholar of gay translation theory is, What do we mean by "gay translation" or "gay translation theory"? With a dearth of available texts on the topic, it is hard to arrive at an authoritative answer for this, but the existing texts (Keenaghan, Harvey 1998 and 2000, and Mira) so far seem to indicate that it lies in the direction of "How do you translate gay texts?"

There are two parts to this formulation: the first is the question "How do you translate...?" Without ignoring the fact that the answer to such a question inevitably lies in the specificity of the text one is faced with, it is useful to distinguish between two theoretical positions that can be observed in the literature. Eric Keenaghan (1998), for example, takes a descriptive and historicized approach to looking at the ways in which translator Jack Spicer made explicit the "homoerotic poesis founded upon a practice of encryption" (276) in poems by Federico García Lorca in order to articulate a gay politics relevant to his time and place (1950s San Francisco). Keith Harvey also takes a descriptive approach in his two articles on gay translation. In the first, he looks at the use of camp language in English and French and examines cases where it has been translated

between the two such that it corresponds to target cultural[2] camp practices (1998). In his second article, he looks at the role played by the translation of gay texts in the construction of gay identity and community, and the ways that target culture gay community/identity inform the translation of gay texts (2000). The other approach, which reads more along the prescriptive lines of "How *should* you translate…," can be found in the article by Alberto Mira (1999). Drawing on Lawrence Venuti's work (specifically Venuti 1992), Mira writes, "Traditional views of faithfulness can be constraining for gay-positive translators, keeping them from preserving some of the more politically active meanings of gay literature" (110). While one is left to guess at what he means by "traditional views of faithfulness," Mira argues that, for political reasons, gay-positive translators should make potential gay meanings in a text explicit in translation.

This is not, of course, a fundamentally new way of looking at translation; it is simply a functionalist approach with a particular purpose in mind, or a particular form of what Venuti refers to as "domesticating" translation (1995:20), as I will discuss in more detail below. It is also an approach that carries a particular ideological load, since it can be debated whether or not the gay content of the text *should* be prioritized over other readings.

The second part of my observation above is that the texts under analysis are "gay texts." To demonstrate this, I would first like to explain what I mean by a gay text for the purposes of this discussion. This question is one that puzzles literary theorists as much as translation theorists, and to give a tentative answer to it, I would like to draw on Keith Harvey's work on gay identity and community. Harvey suggests that homosexuality in

[2] It should be understood that when I say "target cultural," I do not mean the dominant culture in the target language, but gay culture, such as it is, in that language.

Britain and the US (and, I dare add, Canada) has taken the form of a "communal identity in order to resist forms of oppression and to forge a sense of history and a distinct set of socio-cultural values" (2000:138). This is in contradistinction to what is widely considered the French model of homosexuality, which can be (simplistically) glossed as positing a "universal subject" whose behaviours and allegiances are not definitional of its identity (Rosello 246). Harvey argues that one result of the Anglo-American model, which Rosello refers to as a "ghettoizing" model and I will refer to, not without a certain sense of political irony, as a "separatist" model, is the creation of a distinct category of writing, known as "gay writing," which both derives from this project of elaborating a separate gay community, and actively contributes to it (2000:138). "The *space of literature* ... is one in which a (gay) community can be imagined by the reader" (147; original emphasis). Mira agrees that there is a strong interrelation between identity and text, arguing that "any attempt to provide a theoretical basis for gay translation needs to articulate the relationship between homosexual identities and writing" (111). Thus, I would like to propose that gay texts are, for my purposes, texts that contribute to the elaboration of a specifically separatist gay community/identity. This, of course, is not an exhaustive definition of the gay text, but it is a useful one that will serve to delineate the terrain needed to explore my opening question of Tremblay's status as a gay author, as an author whose texts can be used to advance a community-based gay identity. Indeed, far from impoverishing the notion of the gay text, this definition in fact enriches it; while it may limit *what* a gay text does (and I would dispute even this assertion), it gives no indication of *how* it does it. In other words, what are the markers of a gay text?

First of all, there is a question of authorship: Keenaghan, for example, repeatedly identifies Lorca as gay, and points out that Spicer was as well (274). So can any text by an author who self-identifies as gay be considered a gay text? This would contradict my starting point that texts by Michel Tremblay, who has openly acknowledged his homosexuality since coming out on national television in 1975 (Boulanger 2001:65), may or may not be gay texts, and would certainly contradict *his* assertion that they are indeed not gay texts. Examined from the complementary angle, does an author even *have* to be gay in order for the text to be a possible gay text? Some certainly think not: Douglas Chambers, in his article on gay English-Canadian literature, claims, "one of the best gay Canadian short stories, 'The Turkey Season,' is by the straight writer, Alice Munro, [and] the most powerful piece of Canadian homoeroticism is in the first chapter of *The English Patient* (1992) by the straight novelist Michael Ondaatje" (136). Moreover, what do you do with authors who are "gay" but closeted? Or with those who do not self-identify as gay, but who are identified by the community at large as gay, such as Oscar Wilde?

The problem becomes even more intractable as the 21st century opens and conceptions of "gay" cede to ever-more-varied "queer" identities: what do we do with authors who engage in same-sex sexual relationships, but identify as straight? Or with authors who engage in both same-sex and opposite-sex affective and sexual relationships? Or with those who refuse to claim a sexual identity at all? More insidiously, if we accept the argument made by Foucault, and adopted by many, that homosexuality as an identity category did not even exist before the late 19th century, (see, for example, Sedgwick 2, Mira 111, Archer *passim*, Edelman 7-8, among others) what do we do with authors who were writing before this period? Certainly such authors' works

have been known to be appropriated as gay texts, such as Homer's *Iliad* or Shakespeare's Sonnets, but it is unclear whether these texts are in the same category as those by Edmund White and Larry Kramer, both 20th-century gay authors who write extensively about American gay culture, in their ability to contribute towards the elaboration of a gay community/identity.

Ultimately, the authorship issue is a tricky enough problem that Christopher Robinson, in his survey of 20th century gay French literature (1995), excuses himself from dealing with it at all, choosing instead to restrict his corpus to openly gay writers who deal with "strong homosexual themes," and disregarding the ways in which closeted writers encrypt their homosexuality into the text, and the ways in which straight writers portray gay experience (viii). Clearly, the sexuality of the author is in itself neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for determining the "gayness" of a text.[3]

Perhaps a more obvious determiner may be the content of the text. Turning again to Keenaghan, we see that he points out there is a great deal of homoerotic content in *Oda a Walt Whitman* (274-75). So does a text have to contain material that deals explicitly with same-sex desire in order for it to be a gay text?

Again, the answer to this question seems to be "no." Mira, for example, discusses the fact that many texts that do not deal explicitly with male-male desire have been appropriated into gay culture and now serve as markers of homosexuality whenever they appear. He gives the example of Mart Crowley's play *The Boys in the Band*, which includes references to *Sunset Boulevard*, Cole Porter's "Down in the Depths (On the 90th

[3] Strangely, translation theorists seem to think that the case is somehow different regarding translated texts. Mira: "Such political concerns affect translators in many ways [including] legitimating translators' social identity as relevant to their task" (109). Harvey: "Recognition of the macro-functional dimension of camp

Floor)," and Judy Garland, and he suggests, "none of these intertextual references are specifically homosexual, in the sense of focusing on male-to-male desire. But all of these have been appropriated by American gays" (118). This kind of intertextuality, originally used as one strategy among many in oral gay discourse to affirm one's own sexuality and establish that of others without explicitly mentioning homosexuality, for fear of negative reactions (see Leap 26-27 and chapter 4), is now widespread in gay writing. In one sense, then, this marker of gay writing seems somewhat circular: a gay text is any text which has been appropriated by other gay texts, and a gay text is any text which appropriates texts and deploys them "gaily."

Thus gay content, in the sense of explicit discussions of same-sex desire, is not a necessary or sufficient condition for a gay text, either. As Bredbeck points out, "any text, even one as 'factual' and 'nonsexual' as a parking ticket or a recipe for a casserole, can become the object of gay, lesbian, and queer theorization" (449).[4] Certainly there are linguistic markers that, when they appear, tend to indicate a gay presence in the text, such as specifically gay lexical items (Ball) and stylistic devices such as camp talk (Harvey 1998), but both of these are linguistic features that one needs to appropriate in their own right, as well; gay discourse is a mode of speech into which one needs to be initiated. As Barrett puts it, "Generally, people do not raise their children to talk like homosexuals" (qtd. in Harvey 1998:297). In other words, the gay lexicon and camp talk are both contingent on the reader's familiarity with them in order to signal the text as a gay text.

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will depend on a cluster of factors that go beyond close attention to the source text and involve cultural and even autobiographical issues for the translator" (1998, 296).

[4] Though it seems more likely that the recipe in question would be one for quiche.

They are closed systems requiring gay socialization in the same way that intertextual references are.[5]

How, then, can we tell a gay text from other texts? In attempting to answer this very question, Mira points to Lee Edelman's concept of "homographesis," which Mira defines as "a neologism that refers to the way homosexuality is both inscribed and read" (111). Homographesis, in the eyes of Mira and Edelman both, points to the impossibility of unequivocally identifying a gay text. Because homosexuality is not a "determinate entity," but rather an "unstable differential relation" (Edelman 3), its presence in a given text is dependent on that differentiality, or what Mira refers to as a "chain of unstable signifiers" (109).

Ultimately, then, appropriation is the most important byword for determining a text's gayness. For a text to be a gay text, that is, for it to contribute towards the elaboration of gay community/identity, it must be accepted by the gay community as contributing towards that identity. In this regard, the gay community can seem like a juggernaut that is willing to appropriate almost any text, from *The Iliad* to *Queer as Folk*.[6] This position is certainly not unproblematic. If there are no explicit markers of a text's gayness, then arguing one way or the other for it can be an arduous task that involves examining extra-textual features such as reception.

However, the appropriation model of gay writing has an extremely important ramification for the purposes of this thesis in that it removes any semblance of

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[5] Moreover, some of the lexical items *are* intertextual references; for example, the term "friend of Dorothy," taken from the appropriated gay text of *The Wizard of Oz*, came to be nothing more than a euphemism for a gay man.

[6] Homer's *Iliad* is often considered a gay text because of the way it depicts Achilles' relationship with Patroclus (see Crompton); *Queer as Folk* is a British television show that was remade for American television in 2000, and is still running as of this writing. It depicts a hyper-sexual "American queer culture" in all its lurid detail.

intentionality on the part of the author writing the gay text, much as reader-response theory does (Fortier 87-88). As Harvey points out with respect to his own early readings of Gide, it does not matter that Gide was "indifferent – maybe even hostile – to adult same-sex relationships," (2000:150) because Harvey managed to work out the message he wanted to hear in the distance between source and target texts. By the same token, one presumes that L. Frank Baum did not intend early generations of gay men, drawing from the appropriated gay text of *The Wizard of Oz*, to refer to themselves as "friends of Dorothy," but they nonetheless did. It is in this space between the author's intention and the gay community's reception of a text that my work resides, since I argue that the plays by Michel Tremblay that I have chosen to examine have become "gay plays" in translation; that is, they are appropriated by the English-Canadian gay community, especially the gay academic community.

The strong intertextuality- and appropriation-oriented nature of gay texts raises a number of issues for those who take them as an object of study. The first is that, as most gay translation theorists are quick to point out, gay writing is exceptionally culture-bound. Mira, in the most politically self-aware of the published texts on gay translation, asserts that "gay identity is … a mainly Anglo-American phenomenon" that "demands translation and yet is stubbornly resistant to it" (114). If a text's "gay value," that is, its ability to reinforce gay community/identity, is derived from the appropriation of certain other texts, then it becomes rooted in a cultural tradition, and to transpose it into another language involves uprooting it. The second issue is that, in many cases, the gay content of a text can be so heavily encoded that it is hidden even to members of the dominant community, and difficult to establish unequivocally. As Mira points out with respect to

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, "No amount of research will produce conclusive proof for the existence of a homosexual subtext, whether intended or perceived" (113). As with other forms of gay discourse, gay writing requires that readers be initiated into the signifiers in question (see Leap chapter 7); this leads to difficulties both in translating gay writing and in commenting on it critically (either as literary or translation criticism).

Mira also discusses the way in which formal aspects of Anglo-American gay signifiers, such as camp language, can be exported to other cultures and languages, where they function as explicit, if inauthentic, signifiers of homosexuality. He suggests that a distinction be made between "camp as form and camp as conscious signifier of homosexuality," adding that camp's identity-reinforcing value in non-Anglo-American (in his case, Hispanic) culture is reduced. However, he does maintain that camp is a diachronic and transcultural marker of homosexuality (115).

Of course, much of the above theorizing about the nature of gay texts has been based exclusively on English-language texts. Because I am dealing with French-language texts, my preoccupations are somewhat different from those. As mentioned above, French thought has traditionally rejected the notion of separate but equal communities with membership aligned along identity axes, as the Anglo-American model tends to favour. Harvey writes, "In France there is a suspicion (even amongst those who practise 'homosexual activity') of the validity of a subcultural label such as 'gay'" (Harvey 1998:310). Rosello agrees: "The French tend to think we are all equal in a 'République une et indivisible' and that what you do in bed is nobody's business" (Rosello 246). It is clearly an extreme oversimplification to ascribe such a point of view

to an entire national group or language community, but it is nonetheless useful to take it into consideration, and assume that at least some people hold such a point of view. I should note that although many writers seem to accept that this is the French view of homosexuality, not all do. Christopher Robinson, for example, does not: he repeatedly points to "homosexual movements" and seems to take for granted that homosexuality is a distinct subcultural community in France, especially in the chapter surveying the historical contexts of homosexuality in France (1995:chapter 1).[7] However, given that Robinson himself is Anglo-Saxon, it is entirely possible that he is interpreting his data through the lens of the Anglo-American model, either unconsciously or for a specific political purpose. In any case, the point here is not to identify the model as being proper to a particular national group or language community, but to acknowledge that such a model exists and is deployed as one of many options which also include, as Mira points out, "homophobic constructions of the homosexual or even psychoanalytical delimitations" (111), and that this model seems to be one of the two most widespread in the Western world, together with the separatist one. Indeed, there are Anglo-American gay thinkers who reject the idea that gay people should have a distinct subculture (see, for example, Sullivan 1995). Because of this, I have tended to use the term "banalizing" to describe this conception of homosexuality, borrowing the term from Rosello (262), although I have occasionally continued to refer to it as the "French model" where this seemed to make sense.

This way of thinking about sexuality makes the notion of gay texts – or at least the notion of gay texts I am advancing for this project – especially problematic, as when

[7] It is also worth pointing out that it was a French philosopher, Foucault, who first unearthed the origins of the homosexual as a distinct identity category.

Harvey points to the "Gallic resistance to the notion of 'gay literature' even among writers whose homosexuality forms the major thematic occupation of their work" (2000:157). Elsewhere, Harvey underlines the importance of this when dealing with the translated text. In his analysis of Philippe Mikriammos's translation of Gore Vidal's *The City And The Pillar*, he points out that much of the camp value of the text is lost, and attributes it to the fact that "the translator has (inevitably, one might say) produced a text that harmonizes with the prevailing view of human subjectivity that obtains in his – the target – culture" (1998:310). So if the very question of a "separatist" gay identity is outside of this French ideology, this will naturally affect how other cultures' gay texts are translated into French (and at a more fundamental level than Mira seems concerned with). It will also affect the production of French texts on gay themes, which are then translated and appropriated by gay communities in other cultures and languages.

To further complicate the matter, I am not dealing with French texts in the European sense, but French-language texts produced in Canada. Rosello seems to indicate that this French "universalizing" ideology does *not* hold true for Quebec society as a whole; she writes, "Could it be [...] that Tremblay's antighetto statement is an original, unexpected, and difficult point to make in his own national-sexual context?" (254). It seems that this is not an issue on which extensive research has been conducted, but some have pointed to the fact that Quebec society, while drawing its linguistic and cultural sensibilities from France, draws many of its social and political ones from the US (Lazure qtd. in Usmiani 82). By the same token, Michel Tremblay holds an ambivalent, not to say paradoxical, relationship towards the "universal subject" ideology.[8] He clearly

[8] Indeed, it seems suspect to argue that Tremblay would draw explicitly on a European French cultural tradition, given Quebec nationalism's attempts to break with that tradition (Brisset 8).

identifies as a member of different minority communities, one of which he labels "gay" and one of which he labels "Québécois" (Rosello 248-49), and can accept the Long-Standing Public Service award at the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Festival ("Michel Tremblay." <www.talonbooks.com>). At the same time, he has consistently denied that he writes "about gayness." As I mentioned in the introduction, and will try to demonstrate in chapter 3, I conclude from this ambivalence that he does not see his work as advancing a "separatist" conception of gay identity, but rather a "banalizing" one. By this, I mean that he tries to make homosexuality *matter* as little as possible within his texts; his characters may be gay (so his position is not entirely in line with the French conception of sexual non-identity), but this does not affect their daily lives: his gay characters are fundamentally the same as his straight ones. Yet it remains true, as I pointed out in the section 1.2, that his works are appropriated by segments of the English gay community as meaningful for their lives, and segments of the academic community as meaningful for their work, and therefore as separatist gay texts. The question I want to examine is whether this was somehow a function of the translation process.

1.4 "Translators go both ways": A review of the existing literature

For many years, the objects of study in translation studies had been predominantly the linguistic structures that make up texts. Lefevere and Bassnett identify the beginning of the 1990s as the moment a dramatic shift in emphasis took place, in what has come to be known as the cultural turn.[9] In the broadest possible terms, the cultural turn refers to the moment when texts and their translations ceased to be examined in a vacuum and

[9] In a later article, Bassnett suggests that the roots of the cultural turn date back to 1976 (1998:124), the same year Nord identifies as the founding of the *Skopostheorie* school with the publication of Vermeer's first work on the subject (Nord 10).

began to be examined as a function of their context: translation studies "moved on from a formalist approach and turned instead to the larger issues of context, history and convention" (Lefevere and Bassnett 11). In other words, its object of study moved "from 'text' as a putative 'translation unit,' to culture" (4). Venuti agrees that this is the moment that "cultural studies ... brings a renewed functionalism to translation theory," and adds, "The conceptual paradigms that animate translation research are a diverse mix of the theories and methodologies that characterized the previous decade ... but also reflect[...] developments in linguistics ... and in literary and cultural theory" (2000:333).

Some of the theories and methodologies Venuti identifies include feminist translation, which emphasizes the translator's identity in the process of text selection, interpretation and reconstitution, and functions as a structuralist critique of the patriarchy of language (von Flotow 1997) and postcolonial translation, which emphasizes the effect of cross-cultural power differentials on translation: the relative values ascribed to dominated and hegemonic languages, the different approaches to text-production adopted by writers and translators in the dominated and hegemonic cultures, the way in which translated texts present the "Other," and even simply the number of texts translated in each direction (Douglas Robinson 1997; on the relational and constructed nature of "Self" and "Other," see also Wolf 2002, especially pp.183-84). Compared to these fields, gay and lesbian studies in translation has both a short history and a dearth of material published so far. Indeed, at the time of this writing, this area of study is dominated by one theorist, Keith Harvey, who has published two of the only four articles of any note

that seem to have been published on this topic (Harvey 1998 and 2000),[10] and the only book (Harvey 2003).

At the root of gay translation theory is the discursively constructed and performative nature of gay identity: it has become a common, though by no means undisputed, theoretical manoeuvre to deny that categories such as "gay/straight" and "male/female" are essential and fixed; that is, there is nothing inherent, transcultural or transhistorical in the experience of being gay or straight, male or female. Instead, these identities are dynamic, socially and culturally constituted in different ways.

Discursive construction is at the root of much theorizing in gay and lesbian studies. Discursive construction of sexuality, derived in large part from Michel Foucault's work *La volonté de savoir* (volume one of his *Histoire de la sexualité* and variously translated under the titles *An Introduction* [1990] and *The Will to Knowledge*) suggests that, although people have been having sex with members of their own sex for millennia, it was not until the late 19th century that this led to an identity, in the sense of "homosexual" becoming a category of person, rather than simply one of acts (Hall 382; Sedgwick 2; Edelman 7-8). Part of the reason given for why this identity was established at this precise historical moment is because of the work of various psychologists and sexologists in inventing the term "homosexual." (And devotees of discursive construction rarely fail to point out that "homosexual" was adopted even before its peer, "heterosexual"; see Sedgwick 2) Archer, for one, attributes the term to German-Hungarian psychologist Karl Maria Kertbeny (67; also Christopher Robinson 7), but notes that it first received widespread distribution in Germany thanks to Magnus Hirschfeld (79). In other words, homosexuals as a category of persons came into being

[10] At least in English. There is at least a German article as well (Limbeck).

because people started talking about them *as though they were* a category of persons. Hall writes:

> [B]efore Havelock Ellis and other researchers of the period branded the "homosexual" as a "type," there were no discursive means by which sexual activity alone could lead to an identification of the self that would be socially uniform enough to allow us to responsibly analyze it as "homosexuality." (382)

One consequence of the discursive nature of homosexuality, and one that is central to my project, seems to be that it allows the possibility of appropriation. In the wake of the establishment of such an identity, written works that contain references to same-sex sexual desire are often read to reinforce sexual identity, thus appropriated, even if they were written before the identity was constructed. This is done both deliberately, in the sense of "reclaiming" works of homosexuality (Christopher Robinson *ix*), and unconsciously, by failing to recognize that modern conceptions of sexual identity do not necessarily apply to the works in question (Hall 382).

This concept of identity being constructed discursively has proven to be very fruitful. Judith Butler, for one, draws on it in part in order to propose a new model of gender in her book *Gender Trouble*; and this has become the second major theoretical starting point for much gay and lesbian theory. She argues that the traditional model posited that gender was essential, until feminism came along to argue that it was constructed. But the feminist model in turn became equally deterministic by arguing that gender was "inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law" (8). In questioning this view, Butler argues that gender is not the product of or the inexorable construction on a given type of body, but that it is "performative," in the sense that gender consists of

"various acts of gender that create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (140). In other words, gender is not *who you are* but *what you do*, and moreover, it is something that you must repeat *again and again* to maintain a coherent gender identity (140).

Gender Trouble does not explicitly extend the notion of performativity to sexual identity, except inasmuch as it draws on a typically gay practice, drag, to underline the possibility of disrupting gender identity, and posits a continuum between biological sex, gender and desire, arguing that because society requires heterosexuality, it must posit two stable genders (112). Butler formulates a "heterosexual matrix" which she defines as:

> [A] hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense, there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (151n6)

So if gay identity is inscribed in a text, it must comprise part of the meaning of that text, and should be translatable. As mentioned above, Mira's prescribed approach to carrying out such translation is to borrow from feminist translation theory the idea of "hijacking" a text (Mira 110), manipulating it so that the gay political and identity-reinforcing value of the references is given precedence over their semantic value in the framework of strict lexical/textual "equivalence" that Lefevere and Bassnett suggest has been overthrown by the cultural turn (8). This position is also the one observed by Keenaghan and, to a lesser extent, Harvey. With this approach, the performative function of a "gay reference" becomes more important than its semantic content. Moreover, these theorists argue, simple semantic fidelity is usually not sufficient in conveying the gay content of the text, because gay codes (whether lexical, stylistic or otherwise symbolic)

are bound into a given culture, and those codes may not function as indicative of homosexuality in other cultures (Mira 112).

This "hijacking," or interventionist, approach is found in descriptive criticism of translated texts as well as being advocated in theoretical works. Keenaghan and Harvey both tend to take a descriptive approach in analyzing translations of gay texts, but they implicitly support the intervention taken by the translators in question in the name of reinforcing gay identity. Keenaghan points out that Spicer's translation of Lorca is politically motivated, saying that "Given the social climate in which he was translating Lorca, merely gesturing to homoerotic elements through imagistic language suggested an invisibility that was no longer politically viable for gay communities" (289). Harvey does the same in his discussion of Flores's translation of Duvert, suggesting that Duvert may have seen the role a "gayed" translation could play in elaborating a gay community during the liberation movement of the mid-1970s (1998:316). However, by far the most ardent advocate of explicit intervention in the translation of gay texts is Mira. Where Keenaghan's analysis is rooted in the lexicon and Harvey's examines the discursive effect of gay language in elaborating gay community, Mira's response is powerfully political: he proposes that "faithfulness" is meaningless as a basis for translation (109),[11] and that gay-positive translators should activate gay meaning in translation for political reasons: "Bringing homosexuality in translation out of the closet has to be regarded, first and foremost, as a political gesture" (112). The politics Mira is advancing, however, are highly problematic, because they are the politics of imperialism. He argues that the goal

[11] His argument on this point is strangely circular: "[Faithfulness] is even more limiting when translators are aware of the political value of language and wish to activate it in the versions" (109). In other words, when translators want to intervene in a text and make semantic changes, the ideology of faithfulness is limiting.

of Anglo-American gay politics is to integrate the gay community into mainstream society, for the purpose of fighting prejudice; therefore, these politics (and the discursive identities in which they are inscribed) should be exported to other cultures with "less effective" gay identities (113–14). He admits that this "contains an element of imperialism," but excuses himself by simply arguing that "one cannot help but sympathize with it. The gay movement in Spain, France, Italy, lacks the coherence and strength of its Anglo-American counterparts" (114). This is the familiar refrain of "civilizing the barbarians" used by every imperial power from (at least) Rome up to modern America. One wonders how postcolonial thought could inform studies in the imperialism of Anglo-American gay culture.

Most interestingly, this argument is the site of multiple contradictions. First of all, Mira seems to be arguing that gay identity is both constructed and essential: gays exist in other cultures (or else who would we be liberating?), but "gay identity is … a mainly Anglo-American phenomenon" (114), presumably because of its textual production. At the very least, he is denying the possibility that different cultures express different gay identities differently, and cannot borrow American gay liberation tactics (or devise their own) without also adopting Anglo-American modes of expression. Additionally, he takes his argument so far as to suggest that, despite the need to export American gay identity, the target culture may "lack the very language" necessary to express that gay identity (109). Yet he deprecates the use of camp in Spanish literature, claiming it to be inauthentic and performatively void because it is only representative of Anglo-American gay identity (115). One wonders, then, where the missing language is supposed to come from. To be fair, he does argue that *The Boys in the Band* needs to be

retranslated in the modern day, with an eye to the modes of expression developed during the past 25 years in Spanish gay liberation (122), implying that Spanish culture has developed its own modes of gay expression during that time—but if this is the case, then why the need for imperialism?

Moreover, his claim that a culture can "lack" the language to express gay identity and needs to import it from another culture denies the possibility of translators innovating gay language in the target language. If gay language is conceptualized as consisting of theme, style (i.e., camp), lexicon and intertextuality, then innovation is certainly possible: gay themes can be expressed in any Western society, camp is already used in Spanish culture, and there is certainly the lexicon to describe the gay body in Spanish. Intertextual references present somewhat more of a problem, since they take time and political commitment to build up, but this cannot be solved by importing Anglo-American texts, since those cultural features appropriated as "gay" still would not be recognized as such in Spanish.[12]

Fortunately, not all authors agree with Mira's sense of imperial duty. Harvey, for example, focuses greatly on how gay texts are appropriated in translation to function within the target culture's *existing* conception of gay identity, giving the example of Gore Vidal's *The City And The Pillar* and its translation into French, where the camp language was changed in order to function within a culture that fears "the construction of a distinct gay community would constitute a regrettable retreat into separatism" (1998:311). Moreover, he points out that the *otherness* of translated gay texts can provide a safe space for the elaboration of a gay identity in the target culture. He gives the autobiographical example of his readings of Jean Genet, André Gide and Marcel Proust, and says, "The

very distance inscribed in these texts (through their historical and cultural settings) and in their textuality (I never forgot that they were translations of an original that was inaccessible to me) … was the space in which I was able to work out the message I wanted to hear" (2000:150). In other words, the very *(f)act* of translation provided the texts with an otherness that was simultaneously "an image of the sexual otherness [he] was seeking to articulate" (150). Thus, while Harvey does argue that translated literature can create a sense of gay community, he is not arguing that this is the result of translating gay identity as such, but rather of providing a *space* in which to work out a gay identity (147), and by mobilizing gay *themes* in the translated literature (139).

It would seem, then, that gay translation theory has gone from one political question (that of gay visibility) to another: should it be oriented around gay cultural imperialism, or target-culture appropriation of the source text? At least the question is being debated. The gay content of too many gay texts has been expunged in the past, by criticism and translation alike.[13] While some translators have justified this by giving primacy to the semantic content of the source text, inquiries into how gay meaning is produced show that this kind of strict semantic fidelity as a translation strategy does not deal adequately with these aspects when transferring them to other languages, because they are not linguistic so much as they are cultural. Because gay content is performative and inherently culture-bound, it is necessary to work outside of a paradigm of strict adherence to the semantics of the source text.

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[12] However, supposed American cultural dominance may be able to help in this regard.
[13] Harvey cites, for example, Gideon Toury's discussion of the suppression of the same-sex content in Shakespeare's sonnet cycle in Hebrew translation (2000:139), and Keenaghan points out that critics of Lorca's work "often chose to be silent about the homoerotic elements in his texts" (277).

1.4.1 Interventionism in translation theory

As mentioned above, it is important to understand that these interventionist tactics are not a new invention in translation or translation studies. Many translators throughout history have, in practice, intervened explicitly in the texts they are translating, from the famous *belles infidèles* of 17th century France (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995:143) to the theatre translators in mid-20th century Quebec creating a national(ist) literature and resulting identity (Brisset 1996). In the area of translation theory, a number of writers have examined the question of diverting the target text from the semantics of the source text. Schleiermacher, for example, suggests that there are only two ways for the "true translator" to render a text: "Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader" (42), with the first approach corresponding to a "literal" translation and the second to a "free" translation, or what is for our purposes intervention. In more recent times, Eugene Nida has proposed a model of "dynamic" or "functional equivalence," which would give translators license to change semantic content of an utterance in order to "relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture" (Nida 1964:159), the classical example of this being the translation of "white as snow" as "white as egret feathers" (Nida 1966:29). With this approach, Nida's unstated aim was to facilitate converting people to Christianity, and it drew on a Eurocentric anthropological tradition (Bassnett 1998:129).

Venuti criticizes Nida's approach not only on this basis, but also on the basis that it is what Venuti calls a "domesticating" approach to translation: drawing on Schleiermacher's dichotomy, Venuti posits a spectrum between "domesticating" and "foreignizing" translations, where the former is "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign

text to target-language cultural values" and the latter "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (1995:20). Moreover, Venuti argues, the domesticating approach is the dominant practice today, at the very least in the United States and Britain, and is underwritten by what he calls "transparency" or "fluency," which "in practice, manifests itself as a stress on immediate intelligibility" (1995:60). More to the point, however, a fluent translation strategy is "capable not only of executing the ethnocentric violence of domestication, but also of concealing this violence by producing the effect of transparency, the illusion that this is not a translation, but the foreign text" (61), and therefore free from interpretation on the part of the translator, leading to Venuti's titular "translator's invisibility." Nida's dynamic equivalence approach succumbs to this problem, claiming to "draw aside the curtains of linguistic and cultural difference so that people may see clearly the relevance of the original message" (Nida and de Waard 1986:14), when in fact it is "an interested interpretation … an appropriation of a foreign text for domestic purposes" (Venuti 1995:22).

Because Venuti's project is based, in part, on a critique of Anglo-American hegemony, a situation where Americans provide substantially more source text material than target text market share, Venuti gives transparency a negative ideological load, saying that it leads to a culture that is "aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to the foreign, accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with English-language values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other" (1995:15). He goes on to encourage translators to engage in foreignizing translation as a "form of resistance against

ethnocentrism" (1995:20), noting "foreignizing translations … are equally partial in their interpretation of the foreign text, but they tend to flaunt their partiality instead of concealing it" (1995:34). His pro-foreignizing position is antagonistic towards the politics of interventionism advocated by Mira, which are domesticating inasmuch as they consist in translating a text so that target-culture gay readers have "the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own [i.e., gay] culture in a cultural other." In Mira's view, this narcissism is not narcissism at all, but a tool for political advancement, or even survival (114). It is important to note, however, that Venuti views all translation as intervention: "The 'foreign' in foreignizing translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text … but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current target-language situation" (1995:20). Given Venuti's admission of the contingency of his politics, Mira's approach might not be entirely incommensurate with Venuti's critique; they simply have differing political goals.

Venuti's approach clearly falls under post-cultural turn translation studies and, as such, exhibits a central preoccupation that Lefevere and Bassnett identify: the problematization of what constitutes a translation. Instead of being measured against "standards so absolute that any text presenting itself as a translation would be found wanting," post-cultural turn translation studies emphasizes the idea "that texts presenting themselves as translations of other texts can and do satisfy appropriateness conditions and intersubjectively mediated rules and norms" (Lefevere and Bassnett 5). In other words, different types of textual manipulations, whether "transformation," "appropriation," or "mimicry" (7), are considered to be translations at different times and under different conditions, so it is important to historicize the texts in question and look at "how complex

manipulative textual practices take place: how a text is selected for translation, for example … what criteria determine the strategies that will be employed by the translator, how a text might be received in the target system" (Bassnett 1998:123). Lefevere and Bassnett also identify a second preoccupation, underscored by Nida's approach, which is the move from a largely structuralist, evaluative approach to a functional one: faithfulness, Lefevere and Bassnett propose, would no longer be determined by examining equivalence between words, but by whether "the target text function[s] in the target culture the way the source text functioned in the source culture" in the recognition that "To achieve 'functional equivalence' a translator may have to substantially adapt the source text" (8). Both norm theory and Skopostheorie are theories that emphasize these characteristics of translation studies and translation analyses, which are clearly central to any interventionist project.

Skopostheorie was developed largely by Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss and extended by Christiane Nord, although many others have deployed it, often expanding it in the process. The term "*skopos*" comes from the Greek word for "purpose" (Nord 27) and is taken as a technical term to mean just that: "the aim or purpose of a translation" (Vermeer 221). Indeed, there are many types of purpose accounted for in Skopostheorie; for example, in the Vermeer text I am citing, the author distinguishes between "the goal of the translation process," "the function of the translatum" or translated text, and "the intention of [the translation] mode" (224). Nord, however, comments that *skopos* "usually refers to the purpose of the target text" (28). The *skopos* is defined in the translation commission (or "translation brief" in Nord's nomenclature [30]), which is the "instruction … to carry out a given action – here: to translate" (Vermeer 229). Vermeer

points out that while commissions are usually given explicitly, they often do not specify the ultimate purpose of the text, giving no more instruction than "please translate the accompanying text" (229). It is up to the translator to seek clarification from the commissioner, although he can often assume that the purpose of the target text in the target culture is to be the same as the apparent purpose of the source text in the source culture. As Vermeer puts it, "unless otherwise indicated, it will be assumed in our culture that for instance a technical articles about some astronomical discovery is to be translated as a technical article for astronomers" (229). Nord refers to the commission corresponding to such an assumption as a "conventional assignment" (31).

The fundamental tenet of Skopostheorie, which Nord calls the "*skopos* rule" (29), is summed up by Vermeer as "a translatum [target text] is primarily determined by its skopos or its commission, accepted by the translator as being adequate to the goal of the action" (230). This does not presume to tell the translator what approach to use in the actual transfer process; as the expert in the process, he is assumed to be best positioned to make those decisions (Vermeer 222). Moreover, it does not automatically imply a "target-oriented" or "acceptable" translation: "True translation, with an adequate skopos, does not mean that the translator *must* adapt to the customs and usage of the target culture, only that he *can* so adapt." (Vermeer 228). This misunderstanding often causes Skopostheorie to be seen as a target-oriented theory, because it does provide for the possibility of radically adapting the source text if the target text is to have a different goal from the source text's (Vermeer 223), or even of not translating the source text at all, if it is not possible given the *skopos* and conditions requested (229-30).

In the case of Mira, we could argue, the *skopos* when translating gay texts is "to make apparent the textual encoding of homosexuality," thereby reinforcing gay identity. Because Skopostheorie simply dictates that the translator must translate in accordance with his *skopos*, there would be no ethical problem for the translator modifying the semantic content of the source text if he were given this *skopos*, even to the degree that it runs directly counter to what the source text author had originally intended, thus misrepresenting him to the target audience. In other words, Skopostheorie tends to take an "ends justify the means" approach (indeed, Nord argues against pure Skopostheorie for exactly this reason, and argues instead for a "function plus loyalty" approach; see 123-28), thus providing a theoretical basis justifying Mira's approach. So gay interventionism could be seen to be a subclass of Skopostheorie.

However, the Skopostheorie conception of Mira's approach raises an ethical concern: Mira does not say that gay-positive translators should intervene and activate gay meaning only if they have been commissioned to do so, but rather that it "has to be regarded, first and foremost, as a political gesture" and that "if we believe they [homosexual elements] *can* be there, it is easy to bring them out" (112). So if a translator is asked to translate a text without being asked to activate gay meanings, but he chooses to intervene and activate these meanings anyway, he is no longer respecting the commissioned *skopos*, but instead has adopted his own.[14] While this does not mean that gay intervention is *not* a translation approach driven by a particular *skopos*, it does pose an ethical problem for the interventionist translator. However, presuming that the commissioned *skopos* and the gay interventionist *skopos* cannot simply co-exist, I would

[14] Of course, there is always the possibility that the translator has commissioned his own translation, and thus defined his own *skopos*, as Vermeer points out (229, 230).

argue that such a translator can find a way out of this quandary by relying on Vermeer's insistence upon sub-*skopoi*: Vermeer writes that Skopostheorie is "not only intended to be valid for complete actions, such as whole texts, but also apply as far as possible to segments of actions, parts of a text" (222). Therefore, one could see the interventionist translator choosing to intervene in particular subsections of the text in order to highlight their gay content, while still respecting the commissioned *skopos* for the majority of the text. These subsections, when taken collectively, could then be seen to form a network of gay meaning throughout the text which renders the whole text gay. In many cases, this approach could be seen to restrict the ethical problem to *subsections* where the two *skopoi* collide, rather than forcing the translator to choose one approach for the whole text. Of course, there is always the possibility that the original *skopos* would completely preclude Mira's interventionist approach; such might be the case if the skopos required the translation to be as "literal" as possible. In this case, the would-be interventionist translator will have to decide which is more important to him: obeying the *skopos* that he is commissioned for, or advancing gay politics.

It should be noted that Skopostheorie does not in fact give the translator license to produce any text he wants and claim that it is a translation of the source text; the theory is not devoid of the notion of equivalence. Indeed, Vermeer writes, "if the discrepancy [between source text and commission] is too great, however, no translation is possible – at most a rewritten text or the like" (230).[15] In other words, some commissions are simply not realizable. So what exactly is the nature of the relationship between source and target texts, as envisioned by Skopostheorie? It is governed by what Vermeer calls

[15] This despite what some critics of Skopostheorie think; for more on the criticism that the theory "transgress[es] the limits of translation proper," see Nord 112-14.

"intertextual coherence" (223). Two texts can be said to be intertextually coherent "to the extent that a translator judges the form and function of a source text to be basically adequate per se as regards the predetermined skopos in the target culture" (223). In other words, "equivalence" does exist, it simply represents the condition whereby the *skopos* matches the existing source text. Equivalence in Skopostheorie is not judged in terms of the source text, but in terms of the skopos. Moreover, it is subordinated to the notion of adequacy: a translator who meets the requirements of the translation brief is said to have produced a translation that is "adequate to" that brief; equivalence is thus one particular type of adequacy (Nord 35).

While Skopostheorie seems like a very pragmatic theory for translation (although I admit that this is not an entirely objective assessment), it is not without its detractors, especially in terms of its applicability to literary texts, which the majority of gay texts are, or so existing gay translation scholarship would imply. Vermeer addresses three particular criticisms of the theory, which I will summarize here. The first objection is that not all actions have an aim. Vermeer counters this in a number of ways: first, he says, it is not necessary to be able to specify the purpose of an action in order for it to have one; indeed, it is more accurate to speak of purposes being *attributed* to actions, and different parties (e.g., authors and readers) may differ in their opinion of what that purpose is. Second, he notes that "action" is a technical term, and that any "act of behaviour" that has no purpose is not technically an action. Finally, he points out that someone choosing to write something down and have it published, when he could have chosen not to, *is* a purpose, and thus is a purposeful action (224-25). Vermeer also gives a variant sub-argument here, that literature is only literature if it is art, and "art has no

purpose, no intention." He simply disagrees with this assertion, and points out that the fact that the "*art pour l'art*" movement, by virtue of its being a movement, implies that most art *does* have a purpose (225). Moreover, we can point to the evidence offered by Mira and Harvey that certain literary texts *do* have a purpose; namely, to reinforce gay identity.

The second major criticism Vermeer addresses is another variant of the first one: that *translation* has no purpose, but "simply" conveys what is in the source text, and that choosing a purpose restricts the possible interpretations of the text. Putting applications of this criticism to literature aside as being treated in the first objection, he responds to this objection by saying that if we accept that pragmatic texts have a purpose ("advertising texts are supposed to advertise … newspaper reports … inform the recipient" [226]), then even saying that the translation should convey what is in the original *is* a purpose. Moreover, he says it is true that a given *skopos* may restrict certain interpretation possibilities, but this does not matter if they are irrelevant to that *skopos*. If the multiplicity of interpretations *is* relevant to the *skopos*, then the translator is justified in striving to "preserve the breadth of interpretation of the source text" (227).

Vermeer does discuss other criticisms, but they are specific interpretations of these two overarching objections, and need not concern us here. What is important here is that Skopostheorie provides the theoretical justification for the intervention advocated by Mira: as long as the translator has a *skopos* of, for example, "reinforcing gay identity," he can go about achieving that purpose in whatever way he deems appropriate, up to and including overriding the semantic content of the source text.

While Skopostheorie provides a *justification* for intervention tactics, it does not account for how the translator *goes about* intervening. For his part, Mira seems to act as though translators had complete agency in facing their interventionist task. In the eyes of norm theory, also known as Descriptive Translation Studies, this is a problematic idea. Popularized in translation studies by Gideon Toury (1978 Rev. 1995), norm theory is based on the idea that translation is not simply a linguistic activity, but a social one, and therefore it is not simply a question of the translator's volition, but is governed by norms – that is to say, constraints placed on the translator (not necessarily – indeed, frequently not – explicitly), that circumscribe the decisions she/he can or cannot make (200). These apply to varying degrees, from "general, relatively absolute *rules*" to "pure *idiosyncrasies*" (199; original emphasis). They also involve "*sanctions* – actual or potential, negative as well as positive" (199); negative ones, for example, can range from "a (culturally determined) need to submit the end product to revision" to "taking away one's earned recognition as a translator" (206), and positive ones would presumably include things such as being awarded a degree or a job, or being recognized for a literary translation. Unlike Skopostheorie, norm theory is explicitly target oriented: "As strictly translational norms can only be applied at the *receiving* end, establishing them is not merely *justified* by a target-oriented approach but should be seen as its very *epitome*" (198).[16]

Toury posits a number of different types of norms, some of which precede others (logically if not always temporally). He starts with the "initial norm" in the translator's choice to "submit him-/herself either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or

[16] Douglas Robinson notes that postcolonial theorists disagree with this assessment and "stress the political control and influence exerted by dominant or hegemonic *source* cultures" (36; original emphasis).

to the norms active in the target culture, or, in that section of it which would host the end product" (201). The first approach results in "adequate" translations and the second in "acceptable" ones, corresponding loosely to what are frequently called "source-oriented" versus "target-oriented" translations. Although Toury calls the initial norm a "basic choice" (200), suggesting that the translator has agency in this fundamental aspect which then determines all other translation decisions, I would argue that even this first choice is constrained: Venuti, for example argues that "appropriateness" (or, in Venuti's terms, a "domesticating" approach) is the dominant practice in the Anglo-American translation tradition (1995:21), and Lefevere and Bassnett agree (11). Nonetheless, Venuti also argues that the "canons of accuracy" change over time and gives the example of Robert Graves's translation of Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars*, in which the translator intervened heavily (29). Later, the extent of this intervention was criticized, because "the canons of accuracy underwent a change, requiring a translation to be both fluent and … to follow the foreign text more closely" (37).

Once the initial norm has been established, Toury argues, all other choices made by the translator follow from it, although it is rare that a translator will adhere absolutely to one of these positions to the total exclusion of the other (201). The other choices in question include both obligatory and non-obligatory shifts, and range from the micro- to the macro-textual level. Toury classes these translation decisions under a number of additional norms, which govern them. The two overarching classes of norms are preliminary norms and operational norms. Preliminary norms include such issues as *translation policy*, that is, how individual texts are selected for translation; and *directness of translation,* that is, tolerance for pivot languages. Operational norms, on the other

hand, include those issues that affect the translator during the translation process itself: *matricial norms* that deal with additions, omissions, and arrangement of target text material; *textual linguistic norms*, which govern the actual selection of target text material (i.e., the choice of words and structures), whether for translation in general or for particular text types or translation modes (and which may or may not have features in common with non-translated text production) (202-03).

Norm theory can make the translation process seem rather deterministic, and, as mentioned above, raises questions of the translator's agency, and therefore about the viability of Mira's injunction for translators to intervene at will in a text to activate its gay potential. Of course, translators always have the option of transgressing norms, but "there would normally be a price to pay for opting for any kind of deviant behaviour" (200), a price that ranges from simply having the text revised to losing one's status of being a translator (206). Fortunately for Mira, Toury also points out that norms change over time: a given norm "often does move into its neighbouring domain(s) through processes of rise and decline. Thus, mere whims may catch on and become more and more normative, and norms can gain so much validity that, for all practical purposes, they become as binding as rules; or the other way around, of course" (199). Moreover, Toury emphasizes that "it is not as if all translators are *passive*" (204) vis-à-vis norms: indeed, because norms are social in nature, translators can *effect* these changes. They do this in a variety of ways, including not only actual translation practice (in which, in any case, there are conflicts within a given community [205]), but also through translation criticism, translator training institutions and, of course, translation theory. This, I would argue, is one goal of Mira's article: he is attempting to legitimize an interventionist

approach by using academic channels to adjust norms; the very way in which he frames his text implies that this kind of intervention would contravene current hegemonic translation norms in the Anglo-American translation community (see especially 112).[17]

[17] Indeed, one imagines that the question can only be framed in this way *because* Mira's approach contravenes current hegemonic norms, since, if the practices he is advocating were not transgressive, they would not be "intervention," but simply "appropriate translation."

Chapter 2: Contexts

2.1 Historical contexts

2.1.1 Historical contexts I – Quebec nationalism

In the interests of historicizing the works under examination, works that very much form part of the cultural institution in Canada, it seems pertinent to give a brief summary of the history of modern Quebec. This is especially true when looking at the works of Michel Tremblay, who identifies himself as a Québécois and a nationalist. Since Quebec nationalism holds a central place in modern Canadian and Québécois history and politics, it is essential to briefly present the role of nationalism/separatism in the Canadian federation. This factor becomes even more important when nationalist aspects of Tremblay's work go missing in translation.

It is a Canadian truism to say that, ever since the Conquest of 1759-60, the French and English populations have had a tenuous relationship. The last forty years, however, have seen the rise of the modern Québécois nationalist movement, starting with the Quiet Revolution.[1]

The Quiet Revolution, commonly dated from 1960 to 1966, though extending over the course of at least two decades (446), was in many ways a response to the previous period, known to some as the *grande noirceur*, or dark ages. The prior period saw Quebec governed for 16 years by premier Maurice Duplessis and his party, the Union nationale, a right-wing party that encouraged foreign investment, especially American and especially in primary industry. Duplessis was strenuously opposed to workers' rights, and ensured that trade unions had a difficult time in the province. He also benefited from widespread support within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church

(444). Moreover, there was questionable patronage, electoral fraud and widespread corruption, and while no gerrymandering as such took place, Duplessis refused to redistribute electoral ridings in function of the demographic trends towards urbanization, so rural voters were over-represented (445).

Over the course of the 1950s, there was growing opposition to Duplessis's government. That fact, coupled with the death of both Duplessis and his chosen successor before the 1960 election, led to a Liberal government coming to power under the leadership of Jean Lesage. Lesage's mission: widespread, rapid change in the province, but without violence, whence the "Quiet" in Quiet Revolution (445). The Liberal government instituted extensive electoral cleanups, ended the system of patronage, reorganized the education system (removing it from the Church's exclusive control in the process), improved health care, improved the government's relations with organized labour, and nationalized the province's power companies, amalgamating them into a mega-company known as Hydro Québec (446). Nonetheless, McRoberts argues that the structural changes to Quebec during this era were not terribly broad; the real revolution was in the realm of "ideologies, i.e., beliefs about the purpose and character of society and polity" (McRoberts 128). He suggests that the traditional view of Québécois nationalists was that Quebec was essentially a rural, agrarian society, the trend towards urbanization notwithstanding; during the Quiet Revolution, this traditionalist view was abandoned in favour of a view of Quebec as a "highly efficient technological society led by French Canadians and animated by a French spirit" (McRoberts 129).

In 1966, the Lesage government was voted out of office in favour of Daniel Johnson's Union nationale government. Surprisingly, the new government did not try to

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[1] All references in this section are taken from Francis, unless otherwise noted.

undo the changes wrought by Lesage's government, but it did mitigate them, especially in the area of education, which had been a contentious issue during the election (448). Under Johnson's government, language rights became a significant issue: at the time, most francophones in Quebec spoke English, but few anglophones spoke French, so business was conducted in the language of the minority (449). Moreover, Anglo-Quebeckers had a complete system of parallel public services, a situation unique among minority language communities in the country, and francophones outside of Quebec were being assimilated at an alarming rate. Even within Quebec, many parents saw no need for their children to be educated in French, since English would afford them more employment opportunities (450). All of these factors led to resentment from French Québécois towards English Québécois, and fed the linguistic aspects of the new Quebec nationalism, setting the stage for language legislation in the province.

As a result of the Quiet Revolution, Quebec nationalism escalated steadily towards the end of the 1960s. When the Liberals came back into power in 1970 under Robert Bourassa, they faced a number of immediate and serious problems. One of these is known as the "October Crisis." In October, 1970, the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), a nationalist terrorist organization that had been active since 1963, kidnapped James Richard Cross, a British trade representative, and Pierre Laporte, a provincial cabinet minister, whom they killed. When Bourassa hesitated to take action, the federal government (under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau) did so, marking the only peacetime use of the War Measures Act, which allowed the police to make mass arrests of suspected terrorists without charging them. On the language issue, Bourassa's government passed Bill 22, a language law that lacked teeth in protecting French in Quebec (451).

In 1967, the important Liberal party member René Lévesque had quit the party over ideological differences and founded the Parti Québécois the following year (452). By 1976, the PQ had been elected to the provincial National Assembly (453). There, they implemented a number of social reforms, but gave a particular emphasis to language rights. In 1977, they passed Bill 101, the now-infamous *Charte de la langue française*. This law made English education open only to children who had a parent educated in English in Quebec, made French the province's official language of work, and made it illegal to post commercial signs in any language other than French. This led to an exodus of anglophones and corporate headquarters from Montreal, but bilingualism in the anglophones who remained became widespread (454).

Nationalism, especially in the form of separatism, was another major focus for the PQ. In 1980, they held a referendum seeking a mandate from the population to negotiate independence for Quebec, but with economic association, including a common currency. Unfortunately for the PQ, the referendum failed, with the "no" camp winning with sixty per cent of the vote (456). In the wake of the referendum, and with the ensuing recession in the early 1980s, the PQ was re-elected, but immediately faced difficulties (458). Moreover, nationalism seemed to be on the decline, despite the unpopularity of the Canadian constitutional package being proposed by the Canadian government, and the fact that Quebec ultimately did not sign on to the constitution. Although the new constitution had legal force in Quebec, it lacked popular legitimacy (457-58). Split over how to face the nationalism question, the PQ lost the 1985 election to the Liberals and saw two successive leaders resign: Lévesque, and then his replacement, Daniel Johnson's son Pierre-Marc Johnson (458).

By the late 1980s, however, nationalism was again on the rise. In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the sign law included in Bill 101 contravened both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Quebec's own human rights code. In response, premier Bourassa invoked the constitution's notwithstanding clause, allowing him to override the court's decision for a period of five years, and angering the province's anglophone population in the process. As a result, many anglophones abandoned the Liberal party in the 1989 election in favour of the Equality party, which had anglophone rights as its focus (459). The use of the notwithstanding clause also fed into a rising resentment in the wake of the Meech Lake accord, where the federal government had attempted to make concessions to Quebec in order to convince the province's government to ratify the constitution (460). When the accord fell apart, many Québécois felt that the rest of Canada was not willing to listen to their concerns about their place in the federation; independence seemed the only alternative. This resentment only deepened when the Charlottetown accord, from which Quebec was mostly absent, also failed (461). The election of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in 1993 also added fuel to the fire, since he was perceived as being a staunch supporter of the federalist system, and thus unwilling to give Quebec the political autonomy it wanted (462). In 1994, the PQ was re-elected, and they held another referendum in 1995, which they lost by the razor-thin margin of 50.6 to 49.4 per cent (463).

By this point, many English Canadians, both inside and outside Quebec, were becoming increasingly frustrated with the province. When the Meech Lake accord began to fail, polls showed that an increasing percentage of the population in English Canada had opposed it (461). Once the 1995 referendum results came out, many also thought

that separation was inevitable, and prepared themselves to make their own demands of any government that would allow the province to secede, including redrawing the borders of a separate Quebec such that parts of its territory would remain in Canada. However, once the PQ showed weak popular support in the 1998 election (although they still formed the government), antagonism towards Quebec cooled (463).

Nationalism is the defining characteristic of the modern Québécois psyche, whether in the form of "cultural nationalism," which views Quebec as a distinct society that should have a certain level of control over what takes place within its borders, or in the more extreme form of "territorial nationalism," whose ultimate goal is the secession of Quebec from the rest of Canada and the creation of an independent country. In either case, when examining the work of a writer who claims a Québécois identity, it is necessary to have an idea of nationalism's origins and history in order to understand the writer's context of production. Moreover, since the plays under examination are being studied in translation, it is important to understand how Quebec nationalism is considered in the rest of Canada, in order to appreciate the context of reception. This is especially true when considering a play such as *Hosanna*, where a nationalist message seems to have predominated in Quebec but not in English Canada, as mentioned in section 1.2.

2.1.2 Historical contexts II – gay liberation

In addition to Quebec nationalism, gay identity forms another focal point of this thesis. Thus, it seems pertinent to outline some of the history of the gay liberation movement in Canada. This is especially true since the movement had such an important impact on the formation of gay identity and community in Canada; indeed, it was central to that formation. Moreover, it took a different shape and produced very different results

in Quebec than in the rest of Canada – namely, the Quebec movement's early victory in securing codified rights undermined its own ability to make its gay and lesbian communities politically self-aware, and the nationalist project interfered in a number of ways. This implies that gay and lesbian community/identity is fundamentally different in Quebec than in the rest of Canada.[2]

Of course, a history of gay rights in Canada cannot be described without reference to the gay rights movement (and, indeed, other social movements) in the USA, with which the Canadian movement is intimately connected (4). The modern gay liberation movement is seen by many to have started in a small bar in New York city on the night of June 27, 1969. The bar was known as the Stonewall, and on the night in question, it was raided by the police. Raids of gay bars were extremely common at the time, but what made this one different was that many of the patrons fought back against the police (Adam 75). This was the opening salvo in a wider project of gay liberation worldwide; within two years of Stonewall, there were gay liberation groups throughout the Western world (Adam 82).

In Canada, the start of the gay liberation movement can be dated to slightly later than in the USA. Although homosexual "acts" between consenting adults were legalized in Canada in August 1969 (Adam 84), the first major gay rights protest was in August 1971, when a group gathered on Parliament Hill in Ottawa demanding the abolition of gross indecency laws, protection in human rights codes, and recognition of same-sex couples, among other things (Adam 85). Over the next few years, gay rights groups formed in many Canadian cities, including Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Montreal (Smith 43), and national coalitions formed in the latter half of the decade (58). These

[2] All references in this section are taken from Smith, unless otherwise noted.

groups tended to be fraught with internal divisions – Smith says that "it is difficult to speak of one lesbian and gay political movement in Canada" (9) – but there is a clear set of the large and important organizations. Smith argues that, over the course of the seventies, these groups employed various tactics, including court cases, picketing, electoralism and lobbying (49), in pursuit of equal civil rights, especially in housing and employment (47). Their tactics were largely informed by the (African-American) civil rights movement in the US, the women's movement, and the "institutional opening provided by human rights commissions" (46).

However, she also shows that while it was a political necessity in the 70s to suggest that gay and lesbian identity was immutable in order to argue legal rights claims, most of the gay rights groups of the era believed that homosexuality was socially constructed and their ultimate goal was the dissolution of sexual identity altogether, in favour of universal bisexuality (44-45). As a result of this prevailing constructionist view, the professed goal of many early gay rights organizers, rather than winning rights claims, was in fact the *construction* of gay identity and the politicization of gay communities (38-39).

In Canada, the movement was largely unsuccessful at winning legal battles in the years leading up to the passage of the Charter, but Quebec is the "exception that proves the rule" (48). The *Association pour les droits des gais du Québec* (ADGQ), a Montreal-based group, succeeded (with little difficulty) in having sexual orientation included as a prohibited grounds for discrimination in Quebec's *Charte des droits et libertés de la personne* in 1977 – it was the first province to do so (56).[3] However, this was not

[3] Sexual orientation was only included in provincial human rights legislation in Ontario in 1986, Nova Scotia in 1991, New Brunswick in 1992, and British Columbia in 1993 (Smith 134-35).

necessarily a completely positive development. As mentioned above, a major focus for the gay liberation movement in Canada was gay community-building. This goal was largely seen as successful in English Canada by the end of the 70s (63), but the case in Quebec was different. Smith writes:

> The early victory for formal equality (however limited) may have undercut gay liberation mobilizing. Hence the short duration of the struggle to assert rights claims denied the Quebec movement a mechanism and a frame for building political identification and community. (57)

Sivry seems to agree with this interpretation of events, suggesting that, shortly after this victory, many sympathizers of the cause wanted to move on and enjoy their newfound legal standing, taking advantage of "les dividendes des victoires initiales" (259). Demczuk and Remiggi also point to a drop in gay activist energies in this period (around 1982 and onwards), and point out that while this era also saw the rise of the gay village in Montreal, the village is not necessarily a reflection of the gay community's self-awareness so much as the financial interests of bar-, restaurant-, and other business-owners (17).

Of course, this negative impact of the early human rights victory in Quebec was not the only challenge facing that province's gay community in its early attempts to elaborate a community as a political reality. As with all things Canadian, there was a linguistic divide in Montreal's "potentially powerful" gay community, and the nationalist movement in Quebec attracted much of the activist energy that could have otherwise been directed towards gay liberation mobilizing. A lack of "militant" gay liberationist energy was noted in the ADGQ as early as 1978 (Sivry 245), and the situation worsened as organizational struggles and a desire to enjoy the fruits of their labours plagued the

association (258-59). Ultimately, the ADGQ disbanded in the mid-80s, and was not immediately replaced (Smith 57).

The passage of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as part of the 1982 Constitutional package naturally had a profound effect upon gay rights in Canada, or at least in English Canada. However, when the initial version of the Charter was proposed in 1980, gay and lesbian groups were not able to convince the government to include sexual orientation as a characteristic protected under section 15, equality rights (67). At the time, there was no functioning national gay rights organization, the CLGRC (Canadian Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, once a major national organization) having been dissolved in the summer of 1980 (64), and provincial organizations were occupied with other, more urgent problems, including increased police regulation of gay sexuality (bathhouse and bar raids), and a backlash from the Canadian right wing, connected with the moral majority movement in the US (67-68).

Nonetheless, the Charter proceeded to have an important effect on gay rights – not in the approach the gay community in English Canada took to gay equality seeking, but in the role that the pursuit of gay rights played in the gay community. Prior to the Charter, Smith argues, equality seeking was used as a way to bring about political and community identity among the gay population of English Canada; after the Charter, legal victories were the ends, not the means (101). Smith writes:

> The definition of winning for gay liberation included the creation of political identity, consciousness, and organizations; the definition of winning in the nineties is wringing concessions on changes to the Human Rights Act from the federal government or convincing the Supreme Court that lesbians can claim pension benefits for their partners. (112)

Moreover, while the gay community remained split over the best way to approach issues of equality, the split was no longer primarily between gay men and lesbians, as it had been before the Charter, although this split certainly did persist. Instead, the primary fracture was between those who believed that gay relationships were "just like" straight relationships, and litigated on that basis, and those who questioned the wisdom of privileging "the institutionalized family and compulsory heterosexuality" (105).[4] Nevertheless, there was an increase in litigation under the Charter (133), but for the most part, it did not represent the full diversity of the community's views on relationships, opting instead for an "undiluted formal equality view" (139).

Before such litigation could be successful, however, there had to be some assurance that sexual orientation would be protected under section 15 of the Charter. As mentioned above, the gay community was largely uninvolved with the Charter in the time leading up to its passage, with the result that sexual orientation was not specifically mentioned in the equality rights section. However, the section 15 provisions were not enacted until 1985, and the gay rights movement became heavily involved at this point, as parliament struck a subcommittee to examine the implementation of equality rights (79-80). This involvement included the founding of a major organization in the fight for gay rights at the federal level, Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere, or EGALE (77). Ultimately, after the parliamentary subcommittee on equality rights reported to parliament, the federal government issued a statement in early 1986 saying that they would interpret section 15 as including sexual orientation (83). This led to a large

[4] Naturally, these splits existed both before and after the passage of the Charter, and there were other fractures within the gay rights movement as well, most notably the issue of whether or not it was a good idea to argue that homosexuality was essential, not constructed, and therefore formed a basis for a category of people against which discrimination could be prohibited.

increase in litigation in many areas of the law (relationship recognition, federal employment discrimination, human rights codes, age of consent, obscenity, etc.) and by a number of different actors (133-35).[5] The "reading-in" of sexual orientation into section 15 of the Charter became codified in the common law by a Supreme Court ruling in 1995 (92). As well, the passage of the Charter led to an increase in complaints to human rights commissions. Sexual orientation was read in to the federal Human Rights Act in 1992 as the result of a court case claiming that its exclusion from the Act contravened section 15 of the Charter; the Act was formally amended in 1996 (134).

The effects of the Charter on the gay rights movement once again underlines the difference between Quebec and English Canada. As mentioned above, Quebec did not ratify the Canadian constitution, because of the strong nationalist movement in the province. As a result, the Charter was not recognized by Quebec's population as legitimate (126). This meant that gay and lesbian organizations brought almost no cases under the Charter, and so the new "rights talk" found no foothold in that province (127). Instead, having already won the right to freedom from discrimination in the provincial *Charte des droits*, Quebec's gays and lesbians took most of their challenges to that political level (127).

Instead of focusing on the issues under debate in other parts of the country, the gay movement in Quebec was galvanized by homophobic violence and police harassment (128). Eventually, under pressure from the major gay organization of the time, the *Commission des droits de la personne du Québec* (CDPQ) held a series of public consultations on a variety of issues affecting gays, which Smith refers to as a "virtual royal commission into the status of lesbians and gays in Canadian society" (130). The

[5] For a survey of cases regarding sexual orientation brought under the Charter, see Smith 133ff.

discussion in these consultations tended to ignore the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and focused instead on the *Charte des droits*, though this had the benefit of producing a discourse that was more diverse than the rights-based discourse in the rest of Canada (130-31). The result of this inquiry was the recognition of a number of areas where the needs of Quebec's gay and lesbian citizens were not being met, including health and social service provision, police relations, AIDS education and prevention, hate-based violence prevention, and provision of benefits to same-sex couples (131). The CDPQ recommended that the Quebec government recognize same-sex couples and provide them with benefits, and even suggested the creation of a system of voluntary relationship recognition for same-sex couples, analogous to marriage (132).

The major shift that Smith traces in English Canada, then, is the transition from the use of equality seeking as a tool for politicizing the gay and lesbian communities in the context of wider gay liberation goals, without much hope for legal success, to one where rights talk dominated, and the courts were seen as the most appropriate venue for social change. The point of transition between these two eras was the passage of the Charter. However, she underlines that the community was not of one mind on this approach to gay politics, because of a range of issues, including questions of the common ground of lesbians and gay men, the desirability of relationship recognition as "formal equality" to straight relationships, and the focus of the post-Charter movement on the rights goals of white male professionals.

However, it is important for the purposes of this thesis to underline that there is a significant disconnect between gay and lesbian politics in English and French Canada. While the Anglo-Canadian movement experienced the transition from gay liberation to

rights talk noted above, the Quebec movement won the inclusion of sexual orientation as a prohibited grounds of discrimination in provincial human rights legislation early on. This led to the Quebec movement depriving itself of a rallying point for politicizing its gay community, and the nationalist movement interfered with both activist involvement in the gay liberation movement, by acting as a "counterpole of attraction for activist energies" (132) and the recognition of the legitimacy of the Charter as a path for rights claims.

2.2 Textual contexts

2.2.1 How to translate joual

In her book-length treatment of Michel Tremblay, Usmiani argues that there are three key dates in the history of theatre in Quebec: the first is 1606, when the very first play was produced in New France; the second is 1948 when the first play depicting identifiably French-Canadian issues was produced; the third is 1968, when *Les Belles-Soeurs* was produced (1). One of the things that made *Les Belles-Soeurs* so revolutionary was that it was written entirely in *joual*, a working-class Montréalais dialect[6] whose name derives from the dialectal pronunciation of "cheval" (Usmiani 3). This was the first time any Québécois writer had attempted so thoroughly and systematically to produce theatre in dialect, rather than in standard French. Unfortunately, this fact presented Tremblay with some difficulty in getting the play produced: while it was written in 1965, it was rejected by all but one member of the selection committee of the 1967 Dominion Drama

[6] Some refer to *joual* as "slang" (Koustas 135), others as "patois" (Barnes); Dickinson glosses it as "a hybridized form of subcultural communication combining French and anglicized slang that frequently defies adequate translation" (107). It may be useful to consider it a "sociolect" given its class-oriented nature, but I will nonetheless be using the term "dialect," defined by Santerre as "toute variété d'une langue

Festival. It was not until after a public reading of the script was organized at the Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques (now the Centre des auteurs dramatiques; CEAD) in 1968 that not one, but five production companies competed for the rights to produce it (Usmiani 30).

As a result, *joual* is a central issue in Tremblay's oeuvre, and almost any text – academic, journalistic, even personal – that deals with his writing will include a discussion of the language. Moreover, any writing that deals with Tremblay's work in translation (and even much that does not) will include a discussion of how notoriously difficult *joual* is to translate adequately.

It is useful to distinguish, at the outset, between *joual* as a dialect and *joual* as a literary language. Usmiani does well to point out that the language in Tremblay's works is "not the *joual* of the streets, of course, but a transposed form of that speech which will create the illusion of a realistic idiom on the stage" (4). Gauvin concurs on this point, and treats it in more detail. Rather than accept Tremblay's language as some monolithic, pan-Quebec *joual*, Gauvin points to the specificity of Tremblay's "*effet joual,*" adding that Tremblay himself claims that he writes in the *joual* of one Montreal neighbourhood in particular: "Il n'y pas un seul écrivain au monde qui aurait la prétention de représenter son peuple au complet" (342). Gauvin suggests, with specific reference to *Les Belles-Soeurs* that this *effet joual* is achieved through a number of different techniques: first, by accurate mimetic transcription of the speech patterns and sounds of *joual* to convey the demotic and oral nature of the speech (342-44); second, by a "*transcodage*" that creates tension between the transcription of the *joual* and "l'orthographe classique" in the written

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parlée par une communauté linguistique" (qtd. in Gauvin 343), since most authors seem to agree on this term.

text, thus accentuating the oral elements when they appear; third, by rendering the *joual* into a literary language through "l'accumulation et … la concentration des éléments renvoyant à la langue populaire. … on a l'impression de se trouver devant un véritable « répertoire » du joual" (344-45). Moreover, this literary effect is accomplished through the artistry of the text in all the usual ways: the rhythm and ordering of lines, the prosody, the sound and word play; in other words, the poetry inherent in Tremblay's writing (345-46). Finally, the *effet joual* results from the fusion of the banality of the characters' actions and the lyricism of the language; this is, in Gauvin's opinion, "la cause première du scandale des *Belles-Soeurs*" (346-47).

What, then, are the distinguishing characteristics of Tremblay's *joual?* On a formal level, says Homel, "It is a simple recipe. Take standard Quebec French, increase the diphthongization, make the grammar remarkably flexible and add a healthy dose of Anglicisms – or better, Americanisms" (23). Gauvin gives an extensive catalogue of characteristics, with examples drawn from *Les Belles-Soeurs*. Generally, they fall into the categories of sentence structure (ellipsis, segmentation), phonetic reduction, syntactic reduction, and redundancy. It also tends to involve a large number of profanities, and extensive use of anglicisms and calques on English (343-44).

However, Tremblay's *joual* is not limited to certain formal dimensions; it also contains particular social and political connotations. Bosley points out that the attribution of *joual* to a character indicates that this character belongs to a "specific and limited linguistic group," that this group is circumscribed geographically (in Quebec) and situated in a working-class level of society (141-42). Moreover, Bosley argues that, upon reading a text written in *joual*, we immediately know that the author identifies with this

linguistic community, and that "this language is being used as a metaphor for a state of oppression and that those who use it are being used as instruments to sound the call of self-assertion" (142).[7] In a similar vein, Lachance suggests that "the status-signifying power of *joual* in Québec [*sic*] is akin to that of black English in the United States" (705). Central to this point is the question of the subjugation of French Canada: both to English Canada, socially and economically, and France, linguistically. As pointed out in section 2.1.1, language has long been an issue of contention in Quebec, especially because the province was largely run by anglophones, with francophones merely providing manual labour. *Joual*, as the language of these working-class francophones, is the language of the dominated.

However, this relationship of domination is not without its own debates. Even in Quebec, the role of *joual* was hotly contested; hence Bosley's observation that reading a play written in *joual* gives one a sense of the *terminus a quo* of the play's writing (142). Conservatives saw it as "a form of capitulation before the forces of mediocrity, vulgarity and cultural decline" and "a symptom of defeat: a language whose very texture expresses the alienation, lack of identity, inability to communicate and tragic impotence of Quebec society" (Usmiani 3-4); as a result, "There were *campagnes de bien parler* ... and the slogan *bien parler, c'est se respecter* ... was concocted" (Homel 23). Even the radicals were split: some saw it as the language of the revolution, the way in which Quebec would finally learn to express its unique culture and identity, free from the linguistic dominance of France and the political and cultural dominance of English Canada and the USA;

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[7] Interestingly, she argues this as a starting point for the interpretation of the text, one of a set of "assumptions on a semiotic basis even before we know anything at all about the content of the speech" (141). Yet, as we will see, not all nationalists were supportive of *joual*, and one can imagine a Québécois

others saw it as a "symptom of defeat: a language whose very texture expresses the alienation, lack of identity, inability to communicate and tragic impotence of Quebec society" (Usmiani 4). Thus, Tremblay's decision to use *joual* as a literary language was also politically motivated. Gauvin identifies five aspects of this politics of literary *joual*, based on comments made by Tremblay in newspaper interviews: *joual* as the only authentic language for the characters he creates; *joual* as a political weapon in the Quebec nationalist context; *joual* as the recuperation of the oral in literature; *joual* as the universal rooted in the local; *joual* as exercising the artist's right to choose the language in which he creates (337-39).

Despite the vigorousness of the early debates over literary *joual*, its political value has changed over time; as Gauvin says, "le théâtre et l'oeuvre de Tremblay passent par toutes les étapes d'une légitimation et d'une institutionnalisation acquises difficilement mais sûrement" (336). This implies that the language of Tremblay's oeuvre has moved from being a contested one in which to write literature to being an institutional one. This calls into question the political role of using *joual* in the present day, as well as potentially altering the reading given to earlier plays in the oeuvre.

The problem that arises in translation, then, consists in conveying all of these dimensions – both formal and political – in as compact a form as *joual* does. Unfortunately, there seems to be no existing translations into Canadian English that have accomplished this. Homel, as translator of Jacques Renaud's *joual*-based short novel *Le cassé*, writes, "The first thing to realize is that the act is impossible … Domination is a

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author writing in *joual* in order to parody it, much as Tremblay parodies "proper" French in *L'impromptu d'Outremont* (Bouchard 99-100) and even *Les Héros de mon enfance.*

one-way street" (23).[8] Usmiani points to five major deficiencies in the English translations of *Hosanna* and *La Duchesse de Langeais* specifically, though she argues that they apply to all of Tremblay's plays: the wide range of French expletives (many religious-based) are treated reductively in English, resulting in a heavy concentration of the word "shit"[9]; the political value of English expressions in the French text is lost; puns are untranslatable and inevitably lost; the translations tend to flatten out nuances of language (and therefore character), often vulgarizing them in the process; the translations tend to be conservative in rendering sexual expressions (27-28). Bosley concurs on the anglicism point and also notes the loss of the signifying power of Roman Catholic vocabulary, pointing to a number of instances where a religious term has been rendered secularly in English, and observes, "In translation … we lose sight of the ritual fact that religious belief has influenced everyday speech in this society" (143).

Moreover, not all of the loss in the translation of *joual* is in the details. Specifically, as mentioned above, there is an inherent political value in the use of *joual* which is lost in "drawing room" English translation (Bosley 140). Bosley says:

> The elements that we recognize immediately in the French text as being very specific to a relatively small linguistic group fall away and the language is diluted as it is standardized into generic North American. What this also means is that the linguistic specifics that we have come to associate with the valorization of Quebec's identity disappear, so that the overtones of nationalism which are inherent in the attempt to represent the speech associated with a movement of emancipation from the linguistic hegemony of the French of France are completely lost. (141)

As the "language of the Quiet Revolution" (Glassco qtd. in Koustas 133), when *joual* is translated, a whole set of nationalist meanings go missing; indeed, Koustas points to the

[8] He adds, "Of course, translating *joual* may be only slightly more impossible than translating any other work of literature" (23).

loss of *joual* as the principal reason that the nationalist metaphor in *Hosanna* is missed by English audiences (135).

While the points made by Usmiani and Bosley do tend to be borne out in the texts, some can, I think, be explained simply as the result of English and French being different languages. Something is always lost in translation. For example, paronomasia is rarely able to be consistently conveyed in any target language; this is not a problem peculiar to *joual*. Similarly, it seems that the diversity of profanities may simply be greater in French, especially the Québécois variety, than in English, and their origins differ; thus any translation into English of a French text, with its wide array of blasphemous expressions, will *have* to treat them reductively, unless it tries to innovate new religious profanities in English, an approach which would be much more open to failure and criticism. However, not all of the deficiencies in the translation of Tremblay's texts are necessarily a function of translation as such. Homel points out that there *are* dialects that exist that can represent similar power relations as English-French: "black, southern US, rural, immigrant and Atlantic dialects" (23-24). When translating Renaud's *Le cassé*, he chose not to use them for fear of treading the fine line between translation and adaptation (24), but they are available to be used. The results of such an experiment remain to be seen in North America, though this approach has been very successfully used in Scotland, as I will discuss below.

However, one of the above-noted deficiencies in the English translation, that of anglicisms in the French text, cannot be explained away as the inevitable result of translation, and thus deserves a more thorough discussion. There seems to be some

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[9] Indeed, Koustas points out that this was noticed by critics, citing one who criticized the text for containing "a repetition of the same four-letter words" (A. Asheley, qtd. in Koustas 133).

disagreement about the role of English in the French text: Usmiani attributes the use of English in *La Duchesse de Langeais* to "the cosmopolitan aura with which she [La Duchesse] likes to surround herself" (27), and goes on to observe that the insertion of French into the English translation "is quite effective, but does not completely solve the problem" (28). This is in line with Harvey's observation about the role of French in English camp talk, and vice versa (1998:300-01); moreover, it relates to Koustas's note about the first English production of *Hosanna*, where Richard Monette, as the title character, affected a French-Canadian accent (135). On the other hand, Bosley, writing about *Les Belles-Soeurs*, suggests that the use of anglicisms is intended to represent "social mores imported from another culture" saying "the use of English implies a naughtiness, a sexual licentiousness inconceivable in the French of the society which is making the judgments" (143). She offers no solutions to the problem of conveying this position in the translated text. Moreover, she seems to imply that the use of *joual* in general, and anglicisms in particular, is a reaction to the linguistic dominance of France, rather than a result of the political dominance of English Canada and the USA (141).

This is where Kathy Mezei's argument comes into play. In an article on Michèle Lalonde's protest poem "Speak White," Mezei does not write about *joual* specifically, but about the use of English in French texts, which she terms "diglossia" (235).[10] She highlights the fact that, as pointed out in section 2.1.1, Quebec has struggled with its French identity, in the face of a business world dominated by English (232-33). Thus, Lalonde's use of English phrases and references in the poem are "a reminder of the subordinate social and economic position of the Québécois and their alienation from

power" (234). This places a large ideological load on the decision to translate the text into English:

> There is potent irony in translating "Speak White" into English given that the subject of the poem is Quebec as "une culture traduite" ... and that English in all its manifestations serves as the instrument of betrayal. ... The danger of translating a text as reliant on confrontational bilingualism as 'Speak White' lies in how the translator responds to "cultural difference." (239)

Mezei credits D.G. Jones's translation of the poem for not attempting to colonize the poem, but instead attempting to "express and to recreate the energy and liberation promised by 'Speak White' even to a 'kid out of Ontario'" (239). How does he accomplish this? Mezei points to two techniques: first, the translation is presented in bilingual edition, with the original and the translation on facing pages; second, words that were in English in the original text are set in boldface in the translated text (239-40).

Naturally, the value of anglicisms in Tremblay's *joual* is not identical to that in Lalonde's poem; Tremblay may simply be aiming to represent *joual*, which by all accounts is colonized by a plethora of English words and even structures, as accurately as possible. However, it is important to realize that there is a political, even nationalist, value in the judicious use of such anglicisms. Unfortunately, the solution used by Jones in translating "Speak White," with which Mezei seems quite satisfied, cannot function in Tremblay's plays by simple virtue of the fact that they are spoken texts; there is no facing page on which to place the source text, and there is no boldface in which to type. The solution to this problem, it would seem, has yet to be found.

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[10] Mezei points out that "Lalonde upholds *la langue québécoise* against both the imperialism of standard French ... and *joual* ... which, with its borrowed anglicisms, is simply further evidence of English colonialism" (235).

None of this is to say that there have not been successful translations – even into English – that *do* convey many of these aspects. Perhaps the most famous of these are Martin Bowman and William Findlay's translations of a number of Tremblay's plays into Scots; in fact, Tremblay has been called "the greatest Scottish playwright Scotland never had" (Pautz R1). Bowman and Findlay, who have been translating plays of Tremblay's since 1979, when they translated *Les Belles-Soeurs* (Findlay 150), have suggested that there are strong parallels between Tremblay's *joual* and their Glaswegian Scots as a "socially stigmatized dialect in contemporary Scotland" (Pautz R2; see also Findlay 152). Moreover, all the different dialectal variations required by the Tremblay oeuvre are available in Scots. Lisette de Courval's attempts in *Les Belles-Soeurs* at speaking standard French, betrayed by the occasional *québécismes* she inserts; the range of ages and difference between urban and rural dialects in *Les Belles-Soeurs* and *La Maison suspendue*; the subtle variations in register by the eponymous hero(ine) in *Hosanna*; the wooden quality of the characters in the "play-within-a-play" of *Le Vrai monde?*: all have analogues in Scots dialect (Findlay 154ff).

In addition to purely linguistic analogues, there also seem to be similarities between Scotland's political position relative to Great Britain and Quebec's relative to Canada (Pautz R2). This is not to imply that their translations of Tremblay's plays are adaptations, transplanting the characters to Scotland; they deny this, saying, "*The Guid Sisters*, like all our Tremblay translations, retains the Quebec setting and is not adapted to Scotland" (Findlay 155). Nevertheless, there is an undeniable resonance of Bowman and Findlay's translations within Scotland, suggesting that Tremblay's language can be successfully translated, with the right combination of national politics and linguistic

registers. This success is confirmed by the critical reception of the plays; Findlay cites a number of reviews, all of whom have "recognized the appropriateness of the fit between Tremblay's Québécois and Scots" (161). Moreover, some of the reviews are from Canadian newspapers, suggesting, "the Scots of [their] translations have not provided a barrier for audiences in North America" (161).

Clearly, then, the issues surrounding the use and translation of *joual* are complex. What seems clear is that, at the time of Tremblay's early plays, it was still contentious to use it at all. Over time, however, and under the influence of the obvious strength of the work by Tremblay and others, it has become institutionalized. Nonetheless, it has yet to be adequately translated in a formulation for English-Canadian audiences. When it is rendered into "generic North American" (Bosley 141), beyond simply losing the formal characteristics of the language, Tremblay's *joual* loses a rich context of socio-political issues as well. This is what leads Koustas to ask, "Were audiences flocking to see the same *Hosanna* as that which had delighted Montrealers the previous year?" (129). The answer seems to be no. Still, it seems unlikely, *pace* Koustas, that the dilution of *joual* alone can account for the divergent readings of *Hosanna* by English and French audiences. Was there not some other cause? In the next chapter, I will address this question in more detail.

2.2.2 Theatrical translation: For the stage or for the page?

When dealing with translation in the realm of drama, the standard translation studies debate around "faithfulness" is recast in rather different terms. Namely, is the theatre text translated for the stage or for the page? In other words, has the translator

translated the dramatic text with an eye to performability, whatever that means, or merely as another literary text, with all of the problematics that entails?

The issues here are complex, and there seems to be little common ground. One of the roots of the debate is that theatre, as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, involves many different semiotic systems. Esslin, for example, identifies 22 such systems (103-04).[11] Of these, the theatrical text only explicitly governs five: "Basic lexical, syntactic, referential meaning of the words; Style – high/low, prose/verse, etc.; Individualisation of characters; Overall structure – rhythm – timing; Text as action – subtext" (104). In other words, there are many sign systems involved in the production of meaning in the theatre that are completely unrelated to the text. This leads to the idea that the theatrical text is unique among literature: unlike other literary texts, the theatrical script is frequently described as "unrealized" or "incomplete"; it is compared to a musical score, which is "complete" only once it is performed (Snell-Hornby, 187). As Esslin writes, "a dramatic text, unperformed, is literature" (24).[12]

Snell-Hornby argues the "incompleteness hypothesis" from the position that verbal signs, the only aspect of the play recorded in the script, are secondary to the visual/acoustic signs, and therefore the reception of the text is dependent on performance (189). Others, however, suggest that the dramatic text contains many levels. Esslin writes, "The written form of a text is far from containing an unambiguous statement of its 'real' meaning" (64).[13] In other words, the actors and director produce individual,

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[11] These are systems "common to all dramatic media"; he also identifies ten that are "confined to cinema and television."

[12] To his credit, he also concedes that a literary text, performed, is drama, and gives the example of books on tape.

[13] It is ironic that despite the often more complete and explicit statements of staging contained in a screenplay (Esslin 80), film is the field where the auteur theory, which accords the "meaning" of the text to the film's director, prevails, while play scripts are considered to contain some kind of inherent, "correct"

interpretive readings that lead to the performance, which in turn becomes a new text open to multiple interpretive readings. Susan Bassnett agrees, and while she concedes that many plays are written to be performed, she also argues that there are also plays that exist simply to be read on the page, and questions what becomes of these plays, "apparently devoid of a gestic dimension," if they are later performed against the author's intentions (1991:104).

Even if the "incompleteness" argument is accepted, this does not lead to automatic agreement on whether performability can somehow be inscribed into the text. Snell-Hornby argues that performability is something inherent in the text: "The performability of the verbal text depends on its capacity for generating nonverbal action and effects within its scope of interpretation as a system of theatrical signs" (191). Susan Bassnett, on the other hand, states very bluntly that, not only has "performability" never been satisfactorily defined beyond vague references to "fluent speech rhythms in the target text," but indeed "there is no sound theoretical base for arguing that 'performability' can or does exist" (1991:102). She goes on to point out that those who argue in favour of the existence of performability seem to have a "curiously old-fashioned notion of universality, the idea that the play [...] is a constant across cultural boundaries, and this is clearly historically inaccurate to say the least" (1991:102).

Even those who believe that performability can be inscribed into a text are not of one voice on who is responsible for ensuring the text is performable: Snell-Hornby seems to imply that the translator is alone responsible for ensuring the performability of the target text: "What is needed here is not a reproduction of the source-language script, but a

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reading, and the play director is accorded much less authorship of the final product, despite the greater role he or she has to play in interpreting the less explicit script.

new dramatic 'score' for a performance that is coherent and acceptable within the target culture" (195). She also suggests, however, that the published stage directions in a translation should be written in function of the performance, rather than vice-versa (198). Occupying the middle ground, Carl Weber recommends that the translator work closely with the actors and dramaturgs in order to rewrite those lines that do not elicit from the actors the physical gestures and intonations appropriate to the character's persona (what Weber terms "gestus," borrowing from Brecht), though he does recognize the fact that this process is too time-intensive for most productions (271-72). This still leaves the onus of performability on the translator, but it also recognizes the role of actors' idiosyncrasies in the process. Indeed, he goes on to argue that, "in a perfect world, a translation would be adapted for each new production of the text" (272). Bassnett, at the other end of the spectrum, takes the position that there is no reason for the translator to be responsible for ensuring the text is performable, saying, "The task of the translator thus becomes superhuman – he or she is expected to translate a text that *a priori* in the source language is incomplete, containing a concealed gestic text, into the target language which should also contain a concealed gestic text" (1991:100). While she does not deny that theatre texts are different from "texts written to be read," she argues that the performance dimension must not be put before textual considerations for the translator (1991:110-11).

The problem Bassnett raises with placing performability as the overriding criterion for the translated theatrical text is that it can be used to justify much that would be termed, in any other area of literary translation, "unfaithfulness." Indeed, Bassnett suggests that the main reason translators argue in favour of an inherently "performable text" is the right it accords the translator to adapt the text: "It is this term [performability]

that is used [...] to justify substantial variations in the target language text, including cuts and additions" (1991:102). This brings all of these questions back to the same issue which the translation studies community has struggled so unsuccessfully with for so long: whether (and why) to be "faithful" in translating texts. Naturally, these issues come into play as much for the theorist examining translated texts as for the directors and actors looking to produce a translation, or for the translator looking to produce a target text. When comparing a translation to a source text for critical purposes, having some estimation of whether the text was produced for the stage or for the page can be useful in determining the nature of divergences between source and target texts. That is, faced with a change from source to target text, can it be explained simply as an issue of "performability"? Koustas comes to the easy assumption that Glassco and Van Burek's translation of *Hosanna* is a performance-oriented text, because it was performed. The same could be said of Stowe's translation of *Les anciennes odeurs*; but it is impossible to tell on this basis whether or not Van Burek's translation of *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été* is performance-oriented, since it seems not to have been used in a major production. In any case, this is an example of the logical fallacy known as "begging the question," so the issue is not necessarily so easy. Surely there have been performances of plays that were translated without consideration of performability. Moreover, as Koustas points out, a major difference exists between the published text of *Hosanna* and the prompt script used in the production. So what guarantee is there that there were not, as Weber encourages, "two versions of a text, one as performed, the other one intended for reading and academic studies" (274)?

Ultimately, one wonders if it is necessary to establish in advance whether a translated text differs from the source text because of performability or for other reasons. Koustas wishes to determine this because she wants to be able to discuss the play from a perspective of audience reception, and she rightly points out that "an exhaustive comparison of the Montreal and Tarragon [i.e., Toronto] productions of *Hosanna* [...] would necessitate [...] a filmed version of both productions" (132). It is on this basis that she excuses herself from dealing with anything more than the text: the text is the only aspect of a play that endures, and so it is the only one that can be examined years after the production is finished. A similar argument is advanced by Fortier in his discussion of the applicability to what is usually called "literary theory" to the theatre, which is not primarily a literary genre. Fortier argues for a distinction between the written text, the text as performed, and the performance as an event (which he terms drama, theatre, and performance, respectively), and suggests that literary theory can still be fruitful for the theatre: "My subject, therefore, is theatre, but ... the reader will note that dramatic elements play a large part in my discussion. This is in part because drama, as fixed and recordable, is the part of theatre most accessible to examination and analysis. Moreover, the drama text remains, especially in the western tradition, a seminal aspect of theatre ... often words are not only one aspect among several modes of meaning, but are given a place of prominence" (13).

Of course, a certain amount of information about a given production can be gleaned from the same sources where reception information is recorded; reviewers – at least good reviewers – do not simply give their impression of a play without explaining *why*. However, the best one could hope for from reviews is a spotty, second-hand

description of a handful of aspects of the performance, which may be of questionable utility in a rigorous academic context. So the question of performability, while it may have an impact on the reception of the plays in question, is ultimately a red herring, since most academics are forced to work with the printed matter through lack of access to the audio-visual components of completed performances; this is the case here.

Chapter 3: The translations

3.1 Textual analysis of the plays

As I mentioned in the introduction, my analysis was based on the hypothesis that the translators of the chosen plays had adopted an interventionist approach to translation, similar to that advocated by Mira, by availing themselves of a *skopos* of "activating" the gay content. The reasons for suspecting such an approach are different in each case: in the instance of *Hosanna*, it is because of the remarkable difference in reception between English and French Canada, as documented by Dickinson and Schwartzwald (among others); in the case of *Les anciennes odeurs* and *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été*, it is because of the banalizing approach Tremblay takes to gay sexual identity, and the fact that this form of identity is *not* privileged in English Canada. Harvey suggests that translators will translate to "produce a text that harmonizes with the prevailing view of human subjectivity in his – the target – culture" (310); my purpose is to see if this is the case with these two plays.

In order to validate my hypothesis, I decided to examine the source and target texts to see if I could find evidence of shifts that would be in keeping with such intervention. For this analysis, I will be restricting myself to gay language, since general-language issues in the translation of this text (and the following ones) are not within the scope of this paper. Moreover, because of the difficulty of examining gay language as a general category, I will be restricting my discussion specifically to the translation of gay intertextuality, lexis, and sexual content. Naturally, this is far from the only possible way to analyze these texts: a more discourse-oriented approach, for example, could include an analysis of the actants and what message their relationships convey. For example, there is a strong dominant-dominated relationship between Cuirette and Hosanna in the French

Hosanna which could stand in for the relationship between English Canada and Quebec. Alternatively, one could have examined the ways in which the plays fit the intertextual theme of "je = nous = Quebec" found in many plays at the time and outlined by Brisset (140; 143-44). Similarly, an interdiscursive analysis could be conducted of how the plays fit in with the hegemonic literary theme of nationalism present in the respective time periods, periods when nationalism is a highly charged topic, as I mentioned above. To take a more semiotic tack, non-verbal elements in the performances could be examined; however, for reasons mentioned in section 2.2.2, I will not be discussing these.

Indeed, before any of these issues are addressed, it is essential to look at the micro-structural elements of the translations to see if shifts have occurred there, in part because it is extremely rare that a translator would change macro-structural elements (cf. Venuti 1995:37), so any change in the content of the play is likely the result of an aggregate of micro-structural changes. Also, as pointed out in section 1.4.1, it is possible to have a different overarching *skopos* than the broad and nebulous "activating gay meaning" (even if it is something equally broad and nebulous, such as "rendering the aesthetic effects of Tremblay's text," or more specific, such as "rendering the class consciousness of Tremblay's *joual*") while at the same time having the gay interventionism function as a sub-*skopos*. If this were the case, we would expect to see these interventions taking place in discrete, identifiable locations, with the overall message being the result of all of these individual interventions taken together as a network. In a similar vein, Toury writes: "Even if no clear macro-level tendency can be shown, any micro-level decision can still be accounted for in terms of adequacy vs. acceptability" (201). Moreover, the inclusion – or exclusion – of specific lexical

elements can give an important indication of the ideological bent of a given work, as Ball indicates in his discussion of ideology in lexicography (1998).

I would also like to make a note here about "gay language." Unfortunately (for the purposes of this analysis), one of the characteristics of gay language is that it is a closed system into which one must be initiated (Leap 125ff.). Moreover, gay language usually seems to be unique to each conventional language, making it difficult for a non-speaker of, say, gay French to identify a given French text's gay language, even if that speaker is fluent in gay English and standard French, as is the case with myself (and one to which Harvey also points; see Harvey 2003:20-21). The problem is compounded by the fact that gay language has evolved rapidly over the past half-century, and thus gay words that were *au courant* in 1973, for example, may no longer be used, much as any slang from that period may have become obsolete in 2004. Fortunately, lexicon can be catalogued and referenced, and characteristics of gay style(s) can be described and learned. Nonetheless, there seems to be a dearth of research of this nature that deals with French; most of the scholarship on gay language focuses on English, and especially on camp language.[1] Even among what French scholarship exists on the topic, there seems to be a lack of consideration of Québécois French. There is, for example, a book entitled *Vocabulaire de l'homosexualité masculine* (Courouve 1985), but it was published in Paris. We already know that Tremblay rejects Franco-French as inauthentic for his own writing (see, for example, Tremblay 1978b:283-84); why would his perspective be different for gay French? Clearly, this is an area where much more research remains to be done, and this means that many of my observations are provisional and subject to verification or refutation by native speakers of gay Québécois French (from 1973). Also,

it means that I will not be making any arguments on the basis of gay style, or camp, since there is insufficient academic work on this topic to draw any conclusions; Québécois camp could again provide sufficient material for a separate project.

There is another problem in identifying gay language that is specific to texts written in *joual*: the use of English words and phrases in these texts is multiply determined. Harvey notes that "French camp ... resorts to the use of English words and phrases. ... the French use of English here points ... to the spread of English-language popular culture across the world in the late 20th century" (1998:301). In this instance, Harvey is discussing Franco-French writing, but if we assume that the same holds true for Québécois French, then we find at least two sources for the use of English in the French text: as noted in section 2.2.1, *joual* is also often characterized by the use of anglicisms or English loanwords and phrases. Moreover, the political ramifications of this use (appropriating the language of the cultural dominator) is identical in both cases. So, when faced with an English word or phrase in the French text, how can we tell whether it is there because of gay language, or because of the use of *joual*? Unfortunately, there seems to be no satisfactory answer to this question, which could provide the basis for research in its own right. However, whatever the reason for the inclusion of these English phrases, it is impossible to convey their political value adequately in English translation (see section 2.2.1 and Mezei 1998); thus, it will be accepted as a constant that these English words and phrases are extremely problematic for the translator.

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[1] See, for example, Sontag (1964), Meyer (1994) and Bergman (1993).

3.1.1 "Chus t'un homme!": Hosanna

Hosanna is a two-act play about two men, the eponymous Hosanna (also known as Claude) and her[2] lover, Cuirette (Raymond). They are both aficionados of drag: in Hosanna's case, female drag; in Cuirette's, biker drag.[3] Specifically, Hosanna has always wanted to have the chance to dress as Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra*. The play begins *in medias res*: Hosanna enters the apartment (where all of the action is set) and is visibly upset. Over the course of the play, we learn what has transpired: she has returned from a Halloween party, whose theme had been described as "great women of history." Naturally, this was a ploy to humiliate Hosanna: everyone in her circle knew that she wanted to dress up as Cleopatra, and so they all arranged to do the same, and with better costumes, at least to Hosanna's mind. To make it worse, Cuirette is involved in the ruse. The first act consists of Hosanna slowly removing her costume, fighting constantly with Cuirette, and generally trying to avoid talking about or facing her recent humiliation. At the end of this act, Cuirette storms out of the apartment to return to the party. The second act consists mostly of Hosanna recounting the events of the evening, both from an idealized perspective of what she had *fantasized* was going to happen, and from a realistic perspective of what *did* happen. Cuirette returns, and the two lovers come to terms with their identities and their relationship, as Claude stands naked before Raymond and declares, "Chus t'un homme, Raymond! Chus t'un homme!" (Tremblay 1984:69).[4]

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[2] In accordance with the playtext (and the dominant preference of drag queens in general), I will be referring to the character as "she" when the Hosanna persona is at the fore, and "he" with Claude.

[3] Here I take drag to mean any form of stylized performance which foregrounds the constructed nature of gender, and is thus not restricted to men impersonating women, although the widespread meaning of the term more closely corresponds to Claude's version.

[4] While the play was originally published in 1973, I have cited page numbers from the easier-to-obtain 1984 edition of the play. All French citations are from this text, and all English citations are from Tremblay 1974.

In addition to Hosanna's crisis of identity, Cuirette faces a crisis of his own: Montreal's authorities have installed illumination throughout the Parc Lafontaine, apparently a popular gay cruising ground, in order to discourage public sex. Early in the play, on his way home from the Halloween party, Cuirette ends up there by accident, and is distraught by this change in what seemed to be a stable world: "Toute allumé. J'te dis, y doit même pus rester un p'tit coin pour se faire sucer... Les coins ont changé" (15). However, by the end of the play, after returning to the park, Cuirette has come to a decision: rather than simply be upset by this invasion of gay space by the morality squad, he issues a challenge: "Vous avez peur qui reste des coins noirs, hein, vous mettez des lumières partout! Ben, sacrement, on va vous faire ça dans'face!" (62).

Hosanna was translated into English by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco and published in 1974. That same year, it was performed at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. Koustas writes that it was "a resounding success when it first opened at the Tarragon" (129). From Toronto, it went on to be produced at the Bijou theatre in New York City in November 1974, which, Boulanger writes, is a rare honour for a Québécois playwright (2001:67). However, it was less well received there than in Toronto, with the room never more than half full (67). Tremblay explains this by saying, "À Broadway, ce sont les touristes qui remplissent les salles. Ils vont à New York pour voir des stars américaines" (68). In any event it was pulled after a relatively short run of thirty performances and a deficit of $60,000 (67). From a critical perspective, then, *Hosanna* was generally well received in both French and English, though in the latter case, more so in Toronto than New York. Additionally, *Hosanna* has provided a great deal of fodder for academic

analysis; it has been the subject of numerous articles in both English and French and may well be the most-theorized play of Tremblay's after *Les Belles-Soeurs*.

My analysis for this section consists of a side-by-side reading of the source and target texts with the expectation of finding a network of micro-textual changes that would have rendered the gay content of the text stronger in English than in French. In so doing, I am picking up on the argument advanced by Dickinson and Schwartzwald that *Hosanna* was perceived in English Canada almost exclusively as a gay play, while in French Canada its predominant reading was as a nationalist metaphor, as I discussed in section 1.2. Moreover, if there is evidence that the English translation of this text deploys gay identity more strongly than the French, this could help account for the ease with which gay academics like Dickinson and Schwartzwald themselves recruit Tremblay's work to their cause of exploring gay identity. The source text I am referring to here is the 1984 edition of *Hosanna* (which is identical to the 1973 edition, but easier to obtain) and the target text is the 1974 edition of John Van Burek and Bill Glassco's translation. In addition, I will be briefly looking at some of the differences between the 1974 and the 1991 editions of the translated text.

As I mentioned above in section 1.3, intertextuality is an important byword in looking at gay texts: often, the gay value of a text is reliant on references to other texts that have already been appropriated by the gay community. In the source text of *Hosanna*, there is one overriding intertextual reference, around which the rest of the play revolves: Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra*. Naturally, this reference, as a macro-textual element, could not be removed from the text without fundamentally altering the nature of the story. Were a target-oriented, and especially a gay-interventionist, approach being

used, however, it would have been entirely possible to change the reference to a different actress in a different movie, as long as the actress chosen provides the same possibility for drag fantasy and glamour as Elizabeth Taylor. More to the point, an actress who is a more obvious gay icon (for example, Judy Garland) could have been chosen, and this would help account for the journalistic reception discrepancy and academic appropriation noted in section 1.2. In the event, however, such a technique was not employed by Van Burek and Glassco, so any difference in this aspect of the intertextuality could be attributable to a difference in the cultural value of Elizabeth Taylor between French and English Canada.

Another approach the translators could have used to give the play more cultural currency in the target-language gay culture would be by inserting additional "gay" references into the text, where there simply were none in the French. Again the translators have opted not to use this approach. However, this is not because they balk at inserting cultural references into the English text; they simply have not inserted explicitly *gay* cultural references. Take the following three examples:

> **ST:** Hosanna: Aie, as-tu déjà pensé à ça, « l'artiste »? (32).
> **TT:** Hosanna: Hey, Picasso, did you ever think of that? (44).

> **ST:** Hosanna: Quand on sort de chez eux, après ses partys, la maison a toujours l'air d'une macédoine! (35).
> **TT:** Hosanna: They're worse than a goddamn Fellini movie, for Chrissake! (49).

> **ST:** Hosanna: [...] une ancienne imitation de gars de bicycle! (38).
> **TT:** Hosanna: [...] some worn out motorcycle freak whose greatest disappointment in life was that he never got to be Marlon Brando's understudy! (54).

This willingness to insert cultural references into the target text, but the absence of gay cultural references among these, implies that Van Burek and Glassco were not

seeking to gay the translation, or at the very least that they were not willing to explicitly intervene in the text in this regard in order to do so. If the text of Hosanna has been gayed in translation, then it was done on a different level, not through this kind of intertextual reference.

Of course, the kind of cultural intertextuality I have been referring to here is not the only possible form intertextuality can take. It could also appear on a more subtle semiotic level, either through formal linguistic references, or, because *Hosanna* is a play, through set design, staging, lighting, even makeup. Naturally, because of the ephemeral nature of performance, it is impossible to tell whether these other sign systems had an effect on the reception of the gay value of the play, unless they have been recorded explicitly in reviews or in academic work.[5] Because it is impossible to have access to the visual components of the performances in question, it is impossible to examine any visual intertextuality, and my analysis here is necessarily restricted by this. Moreover, because each performance of a play is different, such non-linguistic interventions would have to have been implemented explicitly and consistently in order to have had more than a fleeting effect on interpretation, and this would make them more susceptible to being commented on.

In addition to intertextuality, gayness can be marked in a text by lexical choice. This fact is reflected in the existence of gay "vocabularies" such as *Gay Talk: A Dictionary of Slang* (Rodgers) and *Homolexis* (Dynes) in English, and *Vocabulaire de l'homosexualité masculine* in (Franco-)French (Courouve). Lexical choice is also the basis of a thesis written by Matthew Ball, entitled *Dictionaries and Ideology: The*

Treatment of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals in Lexicographic Works (1998). Ball points out that there are different types of gay lexical items: those that are used exclusively in the lesbigay[6] community (e.g., "Princeton rub"); those that are used almost exclusively in the straight community, but are gaining acceptance in the lesbigay community (e.g., "spouse" and "marriage"); those that are used only in certain geographic areas (e.g., "moumoune" as a French-Canadianism); those that apply generically to relationships and sex, but whose dictionary definitions may specifically include same-sex couples (e.g., "sexual intercourse," if taken to mean "sexual relations between a man and a woman"); and finally, those that are used by both straight and gay communities but apply exclusively to lesbigay realities (e.g., "gay," "lesbian," "homophobia"; 47-49). Ball treats words in only the last two categories. The words in *Hosanna* cross all of these categories; however, I will be excluding from this discussion words that deal with sexual behaviour, since I will be treating these separately.

Much of the gay vocabulary in the play is translated in a fairly straightforward manner, although there is not always an exact one-to-one correspondence: "tapette" is translated variously as "fag" or "queer," "lesbienne" as "lesbian," and "folle" is usually rendered as "queen" (which gives rise to the comical formulation of "queen of the queens" [87] for "la reine … des folles" [59]). There are also some instances where a word of gay English is borrowed into the French, and left as-is in the translation, with all the issues raised in section 2.2.1 about English words in the *joual* text; for example, Cuirette at one point says, "T'as pas eu le temps de la déguiser en appartement straight"

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[5] For example, Schwartzwald writes about the 1991 remounting of *Hosanna*, and centres much of his argument around the fact that, rather than taking her dress off over the course of the play, the dress begins the play already in the closet (501).

[6] Ball uses the term "lesbigay" to succinctly refer to the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities.

(39), and this is rendered in English as "You didn't have time to turn your stinkbox here into a 'straight' apartment" (57).

What is especially interesting, though, is the places where the translation is not so straightforward. One such item is the expression "de même," a circumlocution that means "gay" and could reasonably be translated as "like that" or "one of those." However, despite its repeated appearance in the text, Van Burek and Glassco do not seem to have had a consistent approach to translating it. Compare:

> **ST:** Cuirette: T'sais que même là à se trouverait des raisons pour pas voir que t'es de même (30).
> **TT:** Cuirette: You know, even for this I bet she'd have an explanation (41).
>
> **ST:** Hosanna: Ma mère, à le sait pas que chus de même, pis… (38).
> **TT:** Hosanna: My mother doesn't know I'm the way I am, and… (54).
>
> **ST:** Hosanna: Tu sais c'qu'à m'a dit, ma mère, quand à l'a appris que j'étais de même..? (41).
> **TT:** Hosanna: You want to know what she said when she found out I was gay? (59).

In the first instance, the phrase is translated so opaquely that it would be impossible to tell that Claude's sexuality is being discussed without the surrounding context. The second example takes a more straightforward approach and conveys the right level of circumlocution, while still leaving it clear what is being discussed. The third example does away with talking around the problem at all, and simply states it baldly. This example seems to imply that Van Burek and Glassco did not have a *skopos* of highlighting the gay content in the play, and calls into question whether they even had a systematic approach to *addressing* it.

Another interesting area of lexical usage in *Hosanna* stems from the undermining of gender inherent in being a drag queen. Throughout the French version of the play,

Hosanna constantly refers to herself in the feminine, all adjectives are made to agree with the feminine grammatical gender when they apply to Hosanna (even if there is no pronunciation difference), and even the stage directions say "elle." This grammatical gender play, although usually transparent, is commented upon at one or two moments in the play by the characters. However, it presents a challenge for the English translation, since English does not have grammatical gender; of course, the pronouns still stay in the feminine, but adjectives are more difficult. To compensate for this problem, at least for certain adjectives, Van Burek and Glassco tend to choose equivalents that would normally be associated with women: thus, "maudite putain sale" (19) becomes "you dried up cunt" (18), "maudite niaiseuse" (36) becomes "you stupid twat" (50), and "maudite kétaine," (13) in the opening moments of the play, becomes "stupid bitch" (10). Indeed, "bitch" becomes a common refrain throughout the play (often with some modifier attached), standing in variously for "maudite kétaine" and "maudite vache," and once even for "bitch" in the French text. This has a double value here in terms of gender play, since not only is "bitch" as an epithet usually reserved for women, but "bitchiness" is also a highly prized (and common) characteristic in drag queens.

Of course, the translation of scenes where this gender play is explicitly discussed is slightly more difficult, since the French text has a tendency to talk about Hosanna referring to herself "au féminin." This is usually solved by the translators simply intervening in the text to say that Hosanna calls herself "a woman." The same is true of Cuirette; at one point Hosanna says, to no one in particular, "Maudite vache!" Cuirette, misinterpreting, replies, "Aie, bebé, j't'ai déjà dit de pas me parler au féminin" (18). These lines are rendered as "Fat bitch!" and "Listen, baby, I've already told you. I'm not

one of the girls" (17). Overall, these explicit discussions do not seem to have posed much of a problem for the translators, although they required some creative solutions.

This use of female-associated words, however, has an additional effect: at times, they are conspicuous by their absence. When Cuirette calls Hosanna a "cocksucker" (53) for "Câlice de p'tite chienne" (37), it comes across as much more forceful than the French, because the lexical choice resonates much more strongly as a homophobic epithet than a misogynistic one. This type of interlinguistic gender inversion seems to be the exception rather than the rule, but it is very striking where it does appear. Generally, though, the use of female-associated words serves to underscore the gender issues present throughout the play in a way that is somewhat more heavy-handed than the French text, yet it does not really make the text any more gay than it already is; this is simply a method of conveying information that is already present in the source text.

Having looked at the translation of gay terms and gender issues, I would like to turn once again to the question of intervention through addition: if Van Burek and Glassco have gayed the text, then we should expect to see gay terms inserted where there are none in the French text. Indeed, this has happened, but the number of instances is quite small. For example, when discussing her escape from her hometown of Saint-Eustache, Hosanna says, "j'ai sacré mon camp à Montréal avec le premier bum venu" (42); Van Burek and Glassco give, "I was on my way to Montréal with the first trick I could lay my hands on" (61). The choice here of the word "trick," which is common gay slang for a one-night-stand, implies a certain level of willingness to insert overtly gay terms; however, these types of intervention are again the exception rather than the rule.

The last area I would like to examine is the portrayal of gay sexuality in the play. Since homosexuality is, after all, a sexuality, it seems reasonable to think that depictions of gay sexuality would represent gay content. Tremblay is quite progressive and unapologetic in his portrayal of gay sex, and, in a source-oriented translation as much as a target-oriented one whose purpose is to promote gay identity, this situation should obtain in the target text as well. However, Usmiani has noted that, in general, the English versions of Tremblay's plays tend to dilute the sexual expressions (28). Is this the case with *Hosanna*? If so, it would run counter to my assertion that the translated text is somehow "gayer" than the original.

Central to the expression of sexuality is sexual vocabulary, and *Hosanna* exhibits no small amount of this. As with the general gay vocabulary, some of the sexual vocabulary is translated in a fairly straightforward fashion, with "se faire sucer" (15) rendered as "to get a ... blow job" (12), "plotte" (34) as "snatch" (48), "coureux de toilettes" (44) as "washroom cowboy" (64), and "se crosser" (53) as "jerk off" (79). Also as with the general gay lexicon, there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between the French and English terms; thus, pogner is translated variously as "grab 'em" (64), "get your hooks into" (66), "make tricks" (77).

However, there are instances where this inconsistency starts to create divergences from the source text that *weaken* the text's gay identity-reinforcing nature, because they sound inauthentic. One such case is with the word "fourrer," which appears rather frequently, and is translated as "get any action" (12), "get laid" (49), "fuck" (65 and 68), and "make love" (65). Some of these equivalents do seem to support Usmiani's hypothesis that the sexual vocabulary is weakened in English: "fourrer" is, by no means,

"making love," but Van Burek and Glassco seem hesitant to repeat the word "fuck" throughout. The text also suffers somewhat from the fact that the word "enculer," perhaps one of the strongest words used in the text, is translated simply as "fuck," which does not convey the same active/passive relationship in the sexual act as the French. When Hosanna screams, "Moé aussi j'arais envie de t'enculer" (48), what she is saying is that, despite Cuirette's intimations that she is always the passive partner in sex ("Tu fourres comme une femme" [48]), this is not necessarily by her choice. The English equivalent given, "Sometimes I'd really like to fuck you" (69), does not mean the same thing, since "to fuck someone" does not necessarily imply who is the active and who the passive partner; the meaning has to be interpolated by spectators on the basis of Cuirette's line "you fuck like a woman" (68). Moreover, because the word "fuck" is used throughout the English text, and "enculer" is used only once in the French, the graphic and shocking nature of the French word is not conveyed in the English equivalent.

The issue of the word "fuck" is further complicated by the fact that this English word is also used to render religious-derived profanities in the French (such as "Cibole!" [53] being rendered as "Fuck me!" [79]). Thus, it seems at least plausible that the translators wanted to avoid having the text sound overly repetitive, and opted to vary the sexual language, rather than exhausting the shorter list of English profanities.

In addition to translational inconsistencies, there are occasional omissions of sexual terms in the English text, but most of these seem to be the result of Van Burek and Glassco not wanting to sound repetitive. Thus, "guidounes," (15) which appears twice (alongside "putain") in the French text, is dropped once in the English, and translated as "whore" (12), the same rendering used for "putain," in the other. Similarly, there are at

least two instances where sexual terms are dropped because the speech in which they appear has been entirely rewritten, or entire sections have been dropped: in this way, "couches" is dropped in the sentence "Quand tu couches avec moé avec qui tu couches si tu sais pas c'que chus!" (46), where a whole section of a speech is reduced to "If you don't know what I am, who is it you go to bed with every night, the man or the woman?" (66). Similarly, "cul" is dropped from a speech on page 47 because a section of this speech was excised on page 68 of the translation.

Tremblay also uses sexuality in *Hosanna* through sexual puns, which are plentiful in the text. Since puns are another aspect of Tremblay's writing that Usmiani says suffers in translation, in addition to the sexual content, one would expect this to hold particularly true of sexual puns. Interestingly, in these cases, Van Burek and Glassco *have* intervened in the text and sacrificed the denotative content of the puns in favour of their humour value, suggesting that Usmiani's position ("puns are by their very nature untranslatable" [28]) falters here. For example, relatively early in the play, Hosanna suggests that Cuirette might be mistaken for a lesbian, and Cuirette asks if Hosanna would like to see the proof that he is not one. Hosanna replies, "J'en ai déjà voulu, mais là, j'en ai plein le cul!" (18). In translation, this is rendered as "No thanks. I've swallowed enough for one night!" (18). So we can see that Van Burek and Glassco, rather than prioritizing the propositional content of the line, prioritize the sexual reference and the humour value. This holds true for other puns as well, though it is easier in some cases than in others. For example:

> **ST:** Hosanna: J'ai toujours toute faite tu-seule, dans la vie, mon p'tit gars!
> Cuirette: Toute? (24).
>
> **TT:** Hosanna: No way, Sonny. I've always done things by myself.

Cuirette: Everything? (28).

In fact, the only sexual pun that seems to have been inadequately translated is the frequent refrain of "Ose, Anna, Ose," (14, 67) which has been documented in the existing commentary on Hosanna. For example, Schwartzwald says that it is:

> A play on words which picks up on the homonymy between the first syllable of Hosanna's name and the imperative form of *oser*, "to dare," as in "We dare you, Hosanna!" The chant is lewd, the kind an audience would repeat to urge on a stripper. In their English translation, John Van Burek and Bill Glassco replicate its raucous rhythm with "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, Ho!" (508n2)

The implication here is that the rhythm is the only aspect of this sexually suggestive paronomasia that is adequately reproduced in English. This does seem to be the case, even though "ho" has come to mean "whore" since the time this translation was written.

An interesting aspect of the sexual puns that we have seen is that they seem to be only one facet of a larger trend in Hosanna and Cuirette's sexual talk: for these two characters, sex is a weapon to be deployed against each other and against the world. When the fighting is between themselves, sexual inability is implied. Hosanna, having just been assaulted by Cuirette, says, "T'as la poigne solide juste quand c'est pour casser le bras du monde… pas quand c'est le temps," to which Cuirette replies, "C'est pas c'que Sandra dit." Hosanna fires back with "Sandra, t'as jamais couché avec" (26). Indeed, Cuirette's extra-relational affairs form much of the weaponry in this sexual arsenal: he threatens to leave Hosanna for a new love interest, Reynald (34), and when he vaunts his ability to obtain sexual partners despite growing fat, Hosanna points out that most of these sexual partners are obtained in "meat-racks," "coins noirs" and "toilettes, par en-dessous des cabines" (44).

Not all of these attacks are directed at each other, however. Cuirette, for example, when issuing his challenge in response to the city for their illumination of his cruising grounds at the Parc Lafontaine, is threatening to use sex as a weapon against the general public, saying that if they will not let gay people have sex in private, "on va vous faire ça dans'face!" (62).

One thing, however, that characterizes these sexual attacks is that they tend not to use explicit sexual language: instead, they are quite oblique, from Hosanna's elliptical, "Quand c'est le temps" to Cuirette's indefinite "faire ça." This makes it unnecessary for Van Burek and Glassco to dilute it, since there is no shocking language to dilute. Quite the contrary, it opens the door for them to introduce specific sexual terms into the translation, to queer the text. Once again, however, the translators do not intervene in this way: "Pas quand c'est le temps" is rendered as "But that's all" (32), "meat-racks" remain "meat-racks" and "toilettes," "toilet stalls" (64). Most importantly, "on vas vous faire ça" is left as a non-specific "we'll do it" (91).

So once again we can see that Van Burek and Glassco have not intervened in the text to advance a gay political agenda, tending instead to favour a semantically source-oriented approach in the translation of the gay content in this play. Indeed, the text seems to indicate that, at least in the areas of sexual language, sexual puns, and the use of sex as a weapon, the two translators have not watered down the sexuality of the source text, *pace* Usmiani. Indeed, in at least one instance, sexual vocabulary is *added* to the text, where the French is simply suggestive: "quand tu veux m'avoir" (45) is translated as "when you're horny" (66). Overall, though, the translation of the sexuality in *Hosanna* does not obviously "gay" the text any more than the other aspects, as instances of

intervention are too diffuse to give the target text any more identity-reinforcing value than the source.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Hosanna* is that multiple translations exist. In 1991, Talonbooks published a revised edition of Van Burek and Glassco's translation of *Hosanna*. This provides a unique insight into decisions made by the translators, since a revised edition gives them an opportunity to amend their work with the benefit of hindsight. In this case, however, the emendations were minimal and highly restricted. Specifically, Koustas notes that there were a number of gallicisms (both lexical and syntactic) present in the 1974 published text, but absent from the prompt script used in performance, where Richard Monette, who played Hosanna in the English premiere, affected a French-Canadian accent to compensate for this loss (134). These gallicisms, with one or two exceptions that could be mere oversight, have been systematically removed in the 1991 published text, which has the side effect of introducing the most changes into lines spoken by Hosanna. In fact, the examples Koustas gives from the prompt script all correspond exactly to the 1991 translation with the following exception:

> **ST:** Hosanna: Ah! pis j'ai pas le coeur à ça, à soir... Les pauses voluptueuses et provocantes, ça s'ra pour une autre fois. Aie... (24).
>
> **TT (1974):** Me, I'm not up to it tonight. 'Les pauses voluptueuses et provocantes' will have to wait.... Aie... (1974:29).
>
> **Prompt script:** Oh no, tonight I'm just not up to it. The voluptuous, provocative pauses will have to wait. Hey... (qtd. in Koustas 135).
>
> **TT (1991):** Oh, no, tonight I'm just not up to it. The voluptuous, provocative poses will have to wait.... Hey... (1991:26).

In addition to the removal of the gallicisms, a handful of minor spelling and punctuation corrections were made in the 1991 publication, such as changing

"You're [*sic*] prince has come, Hosanna" (1974:10) to "Your prince has come, Hosanna" (1991:10) or "I'm suppose [*sic*] to be living alone" (1974:54) to "I'm supposed to be living alone" (1991:48). A few other generic minor corrections were included as well, such as changing "I'll bet your customers really lap it up when you talk like that" (1974:18) to "I'll bet your customers lap it right up when you talk like that" (1991:17). It seems at least possible that these may have been changed in rehearsal to enhance performability, in the sense of making the line easier for the actor to speak. However, there are a number of blatant mistranslations and incomprehensible passages that appear in the 1974 text and persist in the 1991 text. For example, Hosanna at one point says, "pendant que tu fais un fugue" (37), and it is translated as "while you're out dancing a fugue" (1974:52). However, a quick check for the word "fugue" in the *Nouveau Petit Robert* reveals the following definition: "Action de s'enfuir momentanément du lieu où l'on vit habituellement." This mistranslation is not corrected in the 1991 translation.

Thus, the overall purpose of the revised edition of the text seems to be to bring the published text more in line with the text as it was performed, perhaps with an eye to making the printed text more performable for future theatres. It was not, however, to try to correct any misunderstandings in the text, whether of minor (if blatant) mistranslations, or systemic gaying of the text. Moreover, given the era-bound nature of all language, and especially gay language, one suspects that the translators did not want to interfere too heavily in 1991 with the text as they wrote it in 1974, for fear of updating it unacceptably and making it lose its period authenticity.[7]

[7] Of course, it is also possible that the translators did not supervise the revision process at all, and that it was done by the publishing house based on the prompt scripts, in which case it explains why no attempts were made to introduce further corrections.

My hypothesis when beginning this section was that the translators of *Hosanna*, John Van Burek and Bill Glassco, had taken an approach similar to that advocated by Mira, adopting a *skopos* of intervening in the text of the play and activating gay references in order to advance a gay political agenda. Such an act would be in keeping with the time period in which the translation was carried out, since the early 1970s, as I indicated in section 2.1.2, were an important history in the gay liberation movement. However, as we have seen, the types of changes introduced by the translators, at least on a micro-textual level, were inconsistent, weak and scattered, thus invalidating my hypothesis, at least for this play. This is not to say that they have not intervened in the text in other ways, or that they have necessarily used an initial norm, in Toury's terms, that privileges the source text over the target. It is possible that the translators simply had a *skopos* that privileged intervention in other ways (notably in terms of rendering the character of the *joual*), or perhaps took a "functional equivalence" approach, in Nida's terms. To draw any sound conclusions regarding the approach that was used would require a more thorough analysis of *all* of the text, not just the gay aspects.

Another thing that this reading has shown is that the source text has a much more extensive isotopy of homosexuality than the nationalist reading would imply, from macro-structural elements of character and plot right down through the micro-structural elements of lexicon and style. So a question remains: what accounts for the difference in readings observed by Dickinson and Schwartzwald? Why were French audiences so much more willing than English ones to see a nationalist allegory in a play that, on its surface, is so clearly about homosexuality? Certainly, as Koustas argues (136), part of the answer lies in the dilution of *joual*, which was rife with overtones of nationalism,

whether it was viewed as the language of the revolution or as a capitulation to oppression. Another part of the answer seems to lie in the Québécois horizon of expectations: Koustas notes that part of the appeal of Tremblay's plays in Toronto was the result of his exoticism, its portrayals of the Montreal underworld and homosexuality (136-37). However, Rocheleau points out that homosexuality has been a common theme in Quebec drama since the late 1960s, culminating with 27 plays on gay themes being published between 1980 and 1990 (115), and Québécois audiences would certainly be more familiar with the Montreal milieu. So the prurience factor that Koustas identifies may not have been as strong. Certainly part of the answer lies in, as Dickinson observes, the "author's own widely disseminated and oft-quoted interpretations of" the play (108). However, Dickinson also points out that "both sets of readings fail to take into account [...] the ultimately unfinalizable quality of Tremblay's text, its undecidability as a vehicle 'pour exprimer un problème d'identité,' either nationally or sexually" (112).

A final note on *Hosanna*: the play has been produced a great number of times over the years, with multiple productions in Montreal, Toronto and France. It has been translated into English, German, Japanese and Scots (CEAD). At the present moment, the "allegory" interpretation of the French text seems to have been abandoned somewhat, even by the author. For example, Tremblay remarks:

> J'ai commis une grave erreur en parlant du côté « politique » de la pièce au journaliste du *New York Times*. Je lui avais expliqué qu'Hosanna représentait le Québec et son chum, Cuirette, le Canada. Or le sujet de la pièce est d'abord l'identité sexuelle et non la politique. J'ai donc mis les gens sur une fausse piste (Boulanger 2001:69).

He also notes, elsewhere in that interview, "Ce qui vieillit le plus vite dans une pièce, c'est son message" (62). Perhaps this is the case with *Hosanna*; perhaps Usmiani

was right when she wrote in 1982, "*Hosanna* will doubtless survive its political uses because its psychological and philosophical themes have universal implications" (96).

3.1.2 "Les p'tits couples de tapettes straight": Les anciennes odeurs

Much like *Hosanna*, *Les anciennes odeurs* is a two-man play, but in one act. It takes place in the basement study of a 38-year-old French teacher, Jean-Marc, who happens to be homosexual. At the beginning of the play, Jean-Marc's former lover, Luc, enters, with the news that his father is dying and wants to see Jean-Marc one last time. The play consists of the ensuing conversation, where Luc and Jean-Marc rehash all the old patterns of their relationship, both good and bad, and discuss the current state of their lives, before Jean-Marc finally agrees to visit Luc's father in the hospital. Tremblay calls the play a "pièce chuchotée" (Boulanger 2001:102).

Odeurs is a relatively minor play in the Tremblay opus. It was the second play he wrote after he had announced the conclusion of the "Saga des Belles-Soeurs," and although the characters fit into the saga indirectly, the preoccupations of this play are not at all the same as those of the earlier plays. In fact, Tremblay considers *Odeurs* to be not his best work, and it was not terribly well received by the critics (Boulanger 2001:104). One of the things that makes this play stand out in the oeuvre is that it draws on events from Tremblay's adult life. While all of the plays in the "Saga des Belles-Soeurs" draw on people and events from his childhood, *Odeurs* was inspired by Tremblay's separation from his boyfriend (Boulanger 2001:102-03). In the world of *Les Belles-Soeurs*, Jean-Marc represents Tremblay himself, as the "spectateur de sa famille ; l'espion [qu'il était] dans la rue Fabre" (Boulanger 2001:105). Jean-Marc also crosses the boundaries between drama and novel; in addition to being present in *Odeurs* and *La maison*

suspendue, Jean-Marc is the child implied in the title of the first novel of the *Chroniques du plateau Mont-Royal*, *La grosse femme d'à côté est enceinte*. He is also the central figure in the novels *Le Coeur découvert* and its sequel *Le Coeur éclaté*. (Luc also appears in both of these novels, although *Odeurs* marks his sole dramatic appearance.)

Another thing that makes the play distinct is its translator: John Van Burek and Bill Glassco are responsible for the translation of large swaths of Tremblay's dramatic work (sixteen of nineteen plays translated by 1998 were translated by Van Burek or Glassco or both [CEAD], although some were later retranslated by others, and one of these is itself a retranslation). Ten of these translations premiered in Toronto. *Odeurs*, however, was translated by John Stowe (under the title *Remember Me*; more on that later) and premiered in 1984 at the Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg. This play is Stowe's only contribution to the English-language Tremblay opus. Presumably, part of the reason for *Odeurs* being translated by a new translator is its positioning outside of the Belles-Soeurs cycle (Van Burek and Glassco's traditional domain). However, the translation of the first extra-Belles-Soeurs play, *L'impromptu d'Outremont*, was done by Van Burek, so there may have been other reasons for a different translator being commissioned for *Odeurs*, such as its relative lack of popularity with directors and audiences alike.

As a result of its uniqueness in the context of the Tremblay opus, *Odeurs* suffers from a relative dearth of academic treatment. Indeed, there seems to be no academic work on the play published in English, and very few articles in French (one of which serves as the introduction to the published play text). There is one dominant theme in these articles and Tremblay's discussion of the play, however: the "banal" nature of the homosexuality of the play's characters. In his interview with Tremblay on *Odeurs*,

Boulanger observes that, "Comparés à vos personnages flamboyants et marginaux [e.g., Hosanna, Sandra, La Duchesse de Langeais], Luc et Jean-Marc sont deux hommes très ordinaires. Presque insipides," and Tremblay stresses that he was aiming for that very effect (2001:105). In Guy Ménard's introductory essay to the published text, he writes, "Mais, cette homosexualité, ils [Jean-Marc et Luc] ne la portent ni comme une malédiction, ni comme une bannière, ni, surtout, comme un alibi" (16). Laurent Mailhot's essay on the play ignores the question of homosexuality as much as possible.

This approach to sexuality is extremely important in considering Tremblay's claims that his texts are not about gayness. As I argued above, this claim could have a variety of meanings, but texts like *Odeurs* provide evidence of one particular interpretation: that Tremblay is advancing a conception of homosexuality that is not unlike the so-called "French model," where sexuality is not central to identity. In other words, Tremblay tries to depict gays as "just like everybody else." Indeed, *Odeurs* is, in some ways, a debate between the two models, as the analysis below will demonstrate.

What does this mean for the translation of the play? If, as Harvey suggests (1998:310), it is inevitable that translators will translate gay texts in accordance with target-culture norms of sexual identity, then presumably Stowe will have transformed *Odeurs* from a text that presents banalized sexuality into one that presents the community-based, or "separatist," gay identity prevalent in English Canada at the time. Because the separatist identity in question is the one that Mira favours, this type of transformation would be very much in line with the intervention approach he advocates, where the translator would shift Tremblay's portrayals of gay identity. It is these shifts that I will be seeking out.

Before I go into the analysis of the gay content in *Odeurs*, I would like to make a brief general note about the translation of the language in *Odeurs*: this play represents a break from tradition in that it is not written in the heavy *joual* of the Belles-Soeurs cycle, although it is hardly written in formal, classical French.[8] Jean-Marc, being a French teacher, has access to a much wider vocabulary and more formal modes of expression than the characters in the Belles-Soeurs cycle; it would simply be untrue to the character for Tremblay to give him a voice that spoke heavy *joual*, and authenticity is Tremblay's key in choosing the language in which his characters will speak (Gauvin 337). Nonetheless, the language of the English translation is still at a higher register than the French. This is especially true for Luc; for example, Stowe gives "an injection" (16) instead of "a shot" for "une piqûre" (44) and translates "les niaiseries qu'on a à dire" (80) as "the asinine things we have to say" (49) and, for Jean-Marc, "l'école que j'haïssais tant pis de ma famille que j'trouvais ennuyante" (73) as "school, which I loathed, and from my family, who were stifling" (42). All of these show a lexical variety greater than the register of the French implies. This register change extends to syntax, as well, with "qu'i' a toujours haïe" (44) being translated as "whom he always hated" (16), despite the fact that few people use "whom" in spoken language anymore and that it is certainly not in keeping with Luc's character in French. Luc, though far from inarticulate, is very plain-spoken.

As with my analysis of *Hosanna*, I would like to examine the treatment of gay intertextuality, lexis and sexuality in the translation of *Odeurs* to determine if there has been any kind of systematic gaying of the text; I will not be discussing any general

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[8] *L'impromptu d'Outremont*, on the other hand, *was* written in classical French, and was intended as a response to the bourgeois morals of his new neighbourhood, the tony Outremont (Boulanger 2001:97). It

translation issues, *faute d'espace*, beyond the few general comments made above. The texts used here are the 1981 publication of *Odeurs* and the 1985 publication of *Remember Me*.

Compared to *Hosanna*, which contains a strong gay cultural reference in the form of drag, *Odeurs* is very mainstream. Most of the intertextual references in it are to geographic locations in Montreal: the Théâtre de Quat'Sous (Tremblay 1981:40), the Prison de Bordeaux, Notre-Dame-de-la-Merci hospital (44), street names and so on.[9] There are also a small number of references to the theatre circles in which Luc moves; for example, the reference to (and quotations from) Alfred de Musset's play *Le chandelier* and the one to the École nationale (40). While these references suffer from their own difficulties in translation (see, for example, Brisset 113-19), none of them are gay in French, and it is not obvious how they could be transformed in translation to advance a separatist gay identity.

The closest thing to a gay cultural reference contained in the text is when Luc talks about the early days of his promiscuity, and says he felt "comme un boy-scout qui découvre grâce à ses petits camarades que son pénis sert pas juste à faire pipi" (68). In this case, Stowe is downright *homophobic* in his rendering: by giving "I felt like a boy scout who thanks to his *group leader* has just discovered his penis is for more than just having a pee" (38; my emphasis), he plays into homophobic conceptions of so-called "gay pedophilia" and sexual interference. Where the French text describes power-neutral sex-play, sexual activity among equals, which is generally considered normal among children, the English text warps this into a sexual experience predicated on a differential

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was misunderstood by those it was trying to criticize, who replied, "Enfin, Tremblay écrit en français" (99).

power dynamic, and in a context which is the source of much controversy to this day.[10] This is an absolutely shocking move in an otherwise nominally positive target text. One can only hope that it was simply the result of a misreading of the source text, and that Stowe wrote this sentence with some misgiving.

However, unlike Van Burek and Glassco, Stowe does show evidence of inserting at least one stereotypically gay cultural reference where there is none in the French text. Specifically, this appears in discussion of the speech impediment from which Luc's weekly TV character suffers. On its own, a speech impediment is not an intertextual reference; however, Stowe's translation renders it a gay cultural reference. Thus, "un épais qui zozote" (79) becomes "a nutcase with a lisp" (48), and lisping is usually associated with effeminacy and therefore homosexuality. This is not to say that Stowe made a conscious decision to gay the text with this reference; indeed, his choice of speech impediment in English (there being no direct equivalent for "zozotement") allows him to render the example given in the text in a way that maintains its semantic meaning: "Zautadis de zautadis que les femmes zont donc pas zimples" (80) is rendered as "For heaven'th thake, for heaven'th thake, women are jutht impothible!" (49). So the fact that this introduces a gay cultural reference into the text may simply be an unintentional side-effect.

Because of the generally more standard language in the play, the gay lexical items that are English loanwords in this play do not suffer from the same identification problem as in *Hosanna* (where an important issue is whether they are there because of the *joual* or

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[9] In a similar vein, Koustas points out that in the translation of *Hosanna*, "geographical references ... were neither changed nor explained" (136).

because of their gay value). Indeed, the majority of the few English words present in the play are gay terms: "straight" (always in the sexual sense of "heterosexual") and "poppers" which are a drug widely used in the gay community. Both remain unchanged in the English text, but neither could be confused with *joual*, since the words in question are gay terms even in English.

As with *Hosanna*, most of the gay lexical items in *Odeurs* are translated in a fairly straightforward manner: "faggot" or "queer" for "tapette"; "homosexual" for "homosexuel" and "gay" for "gai,"although the translation is not always entirely consistent (sometimes "hétérosexuel" is translated as "heterosexual" and sometimes as "straight"). However, the interesting cases are, again, those where the translation is not so straightforward. One such case is the translation of "chum" and "amant." Tremblay uses both terms in reference to gay couples, but Stowe has a tendency to collapse them into a single entity: "lovers." In fact, only in one instance throughout the entire play does he use the word "boyfriend," (on page 53), despite the relative frequency of "chum" in French. This undeniably gays the text: as Harvey notes, "The straight [male] denial of the term ['lover'] is particularly strong" in describing their relationships, because straight men view the term as overly highlighting the sexual nature of the relationship, or as implying a clandestine relationship (1997:78-79). Gay men, on the other hand, are split on the usage of this term to describe their relationships, with some hesitant in the face of what they see as the term's overemphasis on the sexual dimension of the relationship (Harvey 1997:79). However, Stowe's reliance on this single term erases a distinction between levels of commitment to a relationship that might otherwise be present: as with

[10] In 2000, the American Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America are within their legal rights to ban openly gay boys and men from being members, and leaders, of the organization. See "Scouts

the straight community, the gay community sees "boyfriend" to be somewhat transient, while "lover" is more "significant and permanent" (79). Although these observations may only be true of his sample, or only of British men, anecdotal evidence implies that it obtains in North America as well. In this case, Stowe's choice of terms *does* seem to prioritize a separatist gay identity: since "boyfriend" is a term used to describe straight relationships at least as much as gay ones, its use could be seen as a banalizing force. Stowe's preference for the term "lovers," which Harvey suggests is more predominant in separatist gay communities than straight ones. Nonetheless, this is only one element among many, and is not in itself sufficient evidence that Stowe has taken a consistent approach to advancing a separatist gay identity.

Odeurs also contains some gender play, although not as much nor in as overt a form as *Hosanna* does. Mostly it appears in the form of Luc's frequent references to Jean-Marc's new lover as "Natasha." In addition, the lover's real name has been changed in translation. Stowe has opted not to let him remain "Yves": "comment c'qu'i' s'appelle, déjà? Guy? Paul? Yves!" (35) becomes "what did you say his name was? Guy? Paul?" (8), and while this terminal question mark is neither affirmed nor denied explicitly by Jean-Marc, both characters call him Paul throughout the play. While it is difficult to determine Stowe's reasons for making this change, it is equally difficult not to notice that "Yves" in English is a homophone of "Eve," which is a female name. If "Yves" were kept, audience members, watching a performance and without the benefit of a written text, may be unsure as to which name they are hearing.[11] Thus it seems reasonable to

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Divided."

[11] This problem could, of course, be resolved through framing devices, such as a program that includes the character's name; such was the case with the 2003 production of *Whale Riding Weather* at Ottawa's Great

suggest that Stowe was trying to avoid a situation where Luc's attempts to undermine Yves/Paul's gender, by referring to him with a female name, are inadvertently reinforced in the minds of the audience, who could be led to believe that the character's *real* name is a female name. Worse still would be the implication that Jean-Marc had "gone straight" after Luc left him, and is now living with a woman. This seems unlikely, however, since the masculine pronoun is used. Indeed, an attentive spectator would be able to understand the text even if the female-sounding "Yves" were kept, but not everyone is attentive at all times while watching a play.

Beyond just name-calling, however, Luc also plays off of housewife stereotypes to attribute certain behaviour to Yves/Paul: he says he cannot imagine him having a job and he is surprised that he is not waiting "tendrement avec la popote prête" for Jean-Marc (Tremblay 1981:48). And Yves/Paul, in return, plays into this teasing by wearing an apron – for Luc's benefit – when Luc comes to call (37). None of this leads to translation difficulties, however, since it is all on the content level, and exhibits none of the lexical effect discussed with *Hosanna*: both Jean-Marc and Luc use the masculine pronoun for Yves/Paul, and all adjectives are inflected to agree with this. Also, the stereotypes in use obtain in both English and French Canada, so intervention on the content level is not required to make the text understood, and Stowe does not intervene to advance a separatist gay agenda in this regard.

When it comes to sexuality in *Odeurs*, the play is somewhat less overt than *Hosanna*, and substantially less vicious. Jean-Marc and Luc do not use sex as a weapon against each other in the same way that Hosanna and Cuirette do; indeed, discussion of

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Canadian Theatre Company, where the character "Auto," as named in the program, was mistaken in reviews for "Otto." See Lewandowski.

sex *between* the two characters is largely glossed over in favour of discussion of Jean-Marc's sex life with Yves/Paul and Luc's sex life with whomever he meets on the street and in the clubs.

On a lexical level, there seem to be fewer sexual terms in *Odeurs* than in *Hosanna*. To some extent, it is easy to be conservative in the translation when the original is also generally conservative. However, if the translator were trying to transform the text to advance a separatist gay identity, he could try to be more explicit with sexual language, underscoring the fact that gay sex is different from straight sex, and highlighting that fact that the two men present have, in fact, had sex with each other. Nonetheless, this does not seem to have occurred here. Unlike the generic gay terminology, much of the sexual language suffers from circumlocution, or even watering-down: "pogner" (50) is rendered as "scoring" (23), but "histoires de cul" (64) is rendered as "screwing around" (35), "des photos cochonnes" (80) as "porno shots" (48), and "i' se le fourront dans le cul" (86), which is admittedly only indirectly sexual, as "they can shove it!" (54). Some of the terminology dealing with sex is translated quite creatively, but still in a way that downplays its sexual aspect: "Chus foncièrement monogame" (52) becomes, "Deep down I'm basically the faithful type" (24); "tes trips de cul" (85) is rendered as "your sexual capers" (53). In some places, this also has the effect of rendering the target text somewhat awkward, such as when "un corps … que je sais comment faire jouir" (56) is rendered as "a body I know how to make come" (28). In addition to being inherently awkward in its formulation, it also limits the translator's options later in the speech, where he translates "trente secondes après avoir éjaculé" (56) as "thirty seconds after they've ejaculated" (28). I would like to suggest that a more

authentic translation would read "a body I know how to bring to orgasm" and "thirty seconds after they've come."

One especially interesting lexical case is the term "baiser," a term which did not appear in *Hosanna*, but is used much the same way as "fourrer" was in the earlier play. As with "fourrer," "baiser" appears fairly frequently in the French text, and there seems to be little consistency in Stowe's choice of equivalent: it is rendered variously as "screwing," "screwing around," "fucking," and "making love." Of course, this added variety only rings false in the one instance where it is translated as "making love." However, this phrase is put into Jean-Marc's mouth, and the reason for this seems to be a character differentiation: Jean-Marc's monogamous nature implies that he would put more weight on "making love" within a monogamous couple than he would on "screwing" within an anonymous couple. By the same token, all other instances are put into Luc's mouth, and the choice of "fucking," especially, seems to help distinguish a character whose philosophy on "sexual capers" is summarized as, "Tu donnes un plaisir violent, tu prends un plaisir violent pis après tu passes aux choses sérieuses" (58).

The attribution of these terms is very much in keeping with the sexual dichotomy between "banalizing" and "separatist" sexuality present in this play. The implication throughout seems to be that Luc is a sexual separatist. He is the stereotypical promiscuous gay man, who looks for tricks anywhere he can get his hands on them: "J'me promène dans la rue avec la tête dans le dos ; j'guette, j'scrute" (59). He also has the urge to wear his separatism on his sleeve; he does not like to be closeted, hiding his sexuality from his fans. He is largely incredulous regarding homophobia: he says he does not want to be a "porte bannière" (81) and that, "Le monde, là, i' le sauront, pis si i' sont

pas contents, i' se le fourront dans le cul" (86). Luc simply refuses to engage homophobia at all. Jean-Marc, on the other hand, is sexually banal. He is "foncièrement monogame," preferring to have "juste un chum à la fois"(52). Moreover, he only likes to have sex within a relationship: "J'aime mieux concentrer mes énergies sur un corps que je connais par coeur ... pis dont j'aime les odeurs" (56). He criticizes Luc's desire to come out to his fans, saying that it is for the wrong reasons. He is afraid that Luc would risk losing his job, his fans and his friends, because they would view his sexuality with suspicion.

Moreover, Tremblay himself seems to valorize Jean-Marc's approach and demonize Luc's: when Luc remarks, regarding his father's death, "Quand j'me penche sur son lit j'ai l'impression de me pencher sur mon propre avenir pis j'ai tellement peur," his words are prophetic: in the later book *Le Coeur éclaté* (Tremblay 1989), Luc's promiscuity costs him his life when he dies of AIDS. It is also important to remember that Jean-Marc *represents* Tremblay in his works, and while it would be unwise to assume that he presents an exact replica of Tremblay's beliefs, it would be equally unwise to assume that Tremblay would ascribe beliefs to the character that were anathema to his own. Of course, while it is easy to read *Odeurs*, and especially Luc's fate in *Le Coeur éclaté*, as authorial criticism of his behaviour and to assume that Tremblay approves of what Luc calls "les p'tits couples de tapettes straight" (85), this is not necessarily a justified reading. As we will see in the discussion of the next play, *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été*, Tremblay does not always pass judgment on the promiscuous, separatist form of sexuality – not all of his coupled characters are immune to criticism, and not all of his characters with HIV/AIDS regret the actions that

led to them contracting the virus. Nonetheless, the apparent preference Tremblay gives to Jean-Marc's views is in keeping with his claims that his books are not about gayness – and it is important to remember that Tremblay makes this claim in specific reference to *Le Coeur éclaté* (Rosello 248), which is closely tied to *Odeurs*.

Of course, it is important not to present the gay community in English Canada as a monolith. It is clear that the debate between banal and separatist gay identities is strong even today, as Tremblay points out when he discusses the English gay community's criticism of him for not being militant enough in his denunciation of homophobia (Boulanger 2001:103). This can be seen especially with one issue current in the media at the writing of this thesis: gay marriage. While the heterosexual community is divided on the issue for understandable reasons, the gay community is equally divided. Many in the community do not believe that we need marriage, because they view the institution as capitulating to the heterosexual model of relationships, and they are often quick to point out that those models have not worked very well for straights, either; witness the soaring divorce rate in most Western nations. One anti-marriage proponent, Eleanor Brown, who is a former editor of the major Toronto gay newspaper *Xtra!*, comments on this issue in the *Globe & Mail*: "I would prefer that gay men and lesbians not get married because it is a heterosexual institution. We have our own culture, and we need to keep it strong and healthy in this day of increasing assimilation" (Brown). In "our own culture," Brown includes Pride Day celebrations, coming-out stories, and bathhouses. In other words, she sees all gay culture to be inherently separatist.

In the end, if Stowe affects Tremblay's message of banalization in any way in translating this text, it seems only to be by heightening the differences between Jean-

Marc and Luc, through decisions like the lexical choices noted above in rendering "baiser." He has certainly not adopted Mira's advocated position of intervening in the text to prioritize a separatist gay message; he lets both men carry the messages given them by Tremblay into the English camp This also suggests that Harvey's comment on the inevitability of translated texts representing the mode of sexual identity that prevails in the target culture is not as easy as he would claim.

Before concluding this section, I would like to briefly discuss the translation of the title of the play. Van Burek and Glassco's titles are often left in the original French, or else translated very literally (Ladouceur 139-41).[12] *Remember Me* is an unusually creative translation for the title, and certainly *Old Odours* would not do justice to the French.[13] However, just as *Odeurs* shows Tremblay's preoccupation with the olfactory, Stowe's title *Remember Me* shows its own preoccupations. In fact, the titles can each be traced to specific sections of the text. For the French title, the question of smell runs through the entire text, but the title itself appears right at the end, where Luc says, "J'me nourris de mes anciennes odeurs pis de mes anciennes passions" (91). The speech in which he delivers this line, the last long monologue in the play, deals with Luc's lingering feelings for Jean-Marc, and how he sometimes wants to visit Jean-Marc and ask him to take him back. It is a very tender, intimate speech, enough to bring a tear to one's eye. Its position in the play, combined with its concurrence with the title, implies that this is the message Tremblay wants to leave the audience with. This is corroborated by his comments on the play being inspired by his breakup with his boyfriend at the time.

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[12] It is worth noting that the titles of Findlay and Bowman's Scots translations tend to be somewhat more creative: *La maison suspendue* becomes *The House Among the Stars*. They also point out the problems with translating literally: when it came to *Le vrai monde?* they write, that it "posed more of a problem as

The English title implies on first reading that it derives from the same preoccupations: the two lovers get back together for an evening to reminisce over their relationship. The title becomes a question: remember me? On closer reading, however, it seems the title may derive from a pair of speeches earlier in the play. Specifically, Jean-Marc, who has just written a novel, is talking about how boring it is, how he has no talent, and how he will only live on through his "disciples," which in this case means his lovers, not his students. In the midst of this speech, he says, "You see, I'd like to be leaving some trace, some stamp, some mark behind me, too. I'd like to leave some indelible mark on the world, whereas in fact nobody will remember me" (42). The "too" here refers back to an even earlier speech made by Luc, where he talks about his promiscuity as being his way of leaving a mark on the world: "I want them all, Jean-Marc! All! While I still can. ... It's how I leave my mark, my imprint!" (30-31). So the English title is outward looking, deriving from preoccupations with how the world will remember these two characters, while the French title is inward looking, concerned with their relationship with each other.

3.1.3 "Penses-tu qu'y font ça?": Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été

One of Tremblay's most recent plays, written in 1995 and published and performed the following year, *Messe solennelle pour une pleine lune d'été* is also one of his most experimental. It is structured around a Catholic mass, a requiem in fourteen parts: instead of acts and scenes, it begins with an *Introit*, moves on through, among others, a *Dies Irae*, a *Lux Aeterna*, and a *Libera Me*, and ends with an *Ite Missa Est.* Part

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the French 'monde' has the double meaning of both world and people which is lost in the translation" (qtd. in Fouchereaux 91).

[13] Perhaps *Remembrance of Scents Past*?

of the reason for this structure, says Tremblay, is that he had been told many times that his characters "sont sur le bord de chanter leurs répliques," and so he decided to see how far he could take this lyricism (Boulanger 2001:159). Indeed, even Usmiani remarks on the "sung" nature of Tremblay's earlier work: "The element of musical structure, evident in most of Tremblay's plays, is apparent in *Hosanna* especially in the highly elaborate alternation between monologue and dialogue" (91).

There are a number of other ways in which *Messe* is different from the previous two plays mentioned: compared to *Hosanna* and *Odeurs'* two-man casts, *Messe* contains eleven characters in all, and they are a mix of men and women (five and six of each, respectively), young and old (ranging from early 20s to early 60s), gay and straight (five and six). *Messe* is also the first play in which Tremblay treats the issue of HIV/AIDS: Gérard, an older gay man, is HIV positive.[14] The relative recentness of this play also means that, even compared to *Odeurs*, there is little academic criticism on it. One of the major recent collections of academic writing on Tremblay, *Le Monde de Michel Tremblay*, was published in 1993, three years before *Messe* was performed. However, the play received a great deal of journalistic coverage, partly because Tremblay's status in the literary establishment had been so cemented by 1996, and partly because it was so disliked by critics.

Despite the highly formal structure of *Messe,* the play does have a plot of sorts. In fact, it is mostly a series of vignettes, insights into the lives of the characters. It focuses on the role that love and sex play in people's lives, both positive and negative. Tremblay says that the play "représente un peuple qui a fait le ménage extérieur, en négligeant de faire le ménage intérieur. ... C'est un requiem. Et sûrement la pièce la plus

noire que j'aie jamais écrite – et même vue – dans ma vie" (Boulanger 2001:158). The cast consists of Yannick and Isabelle, a young couple who spend most of the play talking about having sex or actually having it (off stage); Jeannine and Louise, a lesbian couple whose relationship is ending because Jeanine no longer loves Louise; Rose, a mother who tries to comfort her son Mathieu as he grieves the ending of his first gay relationship; Gaston, a disabled father whose daughter, Mireille, spends her life taking care of him and resenting the fact that she has to; Yvon, a gay man whose partner, Gérard, contracted HIV through infidelity; and the Widow, an unnamed woman who is grieving the death of her husband. On the night of the August full moon, these characters all try to find peace with themselves and with whatever higher power may exist, represented by the moon.

When *Messe* premiered at the Théâtre Jean-Duceppe in Montreal on Valentine's Day 1996 and was remounted that August at the Théâtre du Trident in Quebec City, critical reception was harsh: *Le Devoir* calls it an "échec lamentable … qui n'a rien de solennel et s'apparente à la messe par ses longeurs" and, in a bold headline, asks the question, "Le tandem Tremblay-Brassard a-t-il fait son temps?" (Lévesque). *La Presse* calls it "la plus éprouvante, la plus dure, la moins supportable de pièces de Tremblay" (Beaunoyer). *Voir* simply states, "*Messe* … déçoit" and "le texte n'est pas sans intérêt. Mais la mise en scène, lourde et sans imagination, d'André Brassard enlève le souffle poético-dramatique qu'on aurait pu y retrouver" (Boulanger 1996). Moreover, the language was criticized as a "compromis" that gives "une désagréable impression de français du mi-Atlantique" (Charest).

Tremblay says that in the year leading up to the play, there was an enormous hype, and in two preview shows the audience was "en délire," but when the premiere

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[14] Note that HIV/AIDS was earlier addressed in the 1986 novel *Le coeur découvert*.

came, "on pouvait entendre une mouche voler pendant deux heures" (Boulanger 2001:157). Tremblay blames himself in part, saying that the set he had in mind for the play was technically impossible on a stage, and that after 30 years in theatre, he should have known the technical constraints of the theatre better. The set, as indicated in the published text, calls for a three-storey building façade on stage, with two balconies on each storey, where the characters would appear. This being impossible ("Les comédiens juchés en haut...seraient trop loin du public"), a "scénographie allégorique" was used in performance (Boulanger 2001:159).[15] Nonetheless, he says, the criticism hurt him; not because people did not like the play, but because he had the impression that no one was bothering to listen to what he had to say (158). The only constructive criticism, he says, was that of Rémy Charest in *Le Devoir* who, covering the Quebec City performance, wrote, "le principal dramaturge québécois [a] encore l'impulsion de pousser ses ressources au maximum et d'explorer de nouveaux terrains d'écriture" (Charest).

The translation of *Messe* is also an interesting issue: it was translated by John Van Burek in 1995 under the title *Solemn Mass for a Full Summer Moon*, but this translation has not been published, and appears not to have enjoyed a major production. This is not the first of Van Burek's translations to have suffered from this: none of the three plays *Trois petits tours*, *La Duchesse de Langeais*, or *Marcel Pursued by the Hounds* have been produced in English, nor was Van Burek's retranslation of *En pièces détachées*. However, *Messe* has been produced in English – in translation done by Findlay and Bowman, and published under the title *Solemn Mass for a Full Moon in Summer*. This Scots version of *Messe* premiered at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, a fact which one

[15] My suspicion, however, is that the original set would work quite well for a filmed version of the play, and some of Tremblay's work, such as *Albertine en cinq temps*, has appeared on television in the past.

Globe & Mail journalist points out "may surprise some Canadians, [but] will raise few Scottish eyebrows" (Pautz R1), given the success Findlay and Bowman have seen in that country (see section 2.2.1). However, for the analysis here, I am using the Van Burek translation. This is in part in order to have a basis of comparison with the translation of *Hosanna*, and in part because it would be very difficult for a non-Scots-speaker to analyze a Scots text.

The use of an unpublished, possibly unperformed, text may limit my argument somewhat, since it is difficult to know whether the academics discussed in section 1.2 have read the text, and how much such a text could influence their construction of Tremblay. As a result, this section will necessarily be speculative. If Harvey's suggestion about translators inscribing into their translations the view of gay identity that prevails in their target culture is true, then surely we will find evidence of this in the text. If not, then the conclusion reached with *Odeurs* will be reinforced and there will be evidence that Stowe's choice *not* to intervene in the text to strengthen or valorize its depiction of community-based gay identity was not a purely idiosyncratic one. Certainly, the fact that this play has not received major treatment in English Canada implies that I need not worry about semiotic systems other than the text itself having contributed to English conceptions of Tremblay.

In terms of the language itself, Van Burek does not seem to have had as much trouble rendering it here as he did in *Hosanna*, no doubt mostly because it is not written in the heavy *joual* of *Hosanna*. This is not to say that the text is devoid of the *joual* markers with which we are now familiar, such as the insertion of English expressions (Gérard: "Si j'les prenais toutes en même temps, ça ferait le bon effet all right!" [25]) or

the use of specifically French-Canadian slang (Jeannine: "J'haïs ça quand tu fais la smatte comme ça!" [30]). However, Van Burek seems to have had the most difficulty in rendering the lyrical nature of Tremblay's text. For example, the play contains a good deal of assonance, and, as is often the case in translation, its semantic content is given precedence over its sound. Thus, during the *Exultate Jubilate*, when Yannick and Isabelle are discussing the various positions they want to engage in, while the French text contains a good deal of rhyme, it is lost in the translation. Thus, "J'te veux par en avant, par en arrière! / J'te veux au ciel pis en enfer!" (43) becomes simply "I want you from the front, from behind! / I want you in Heaven and in Hell!" (10). Even the simple, repetitive responsorial between Yannick and Isabelle, "On le fait-tu? / T'es fou!" (23-24) displays an assonance in French that is utterly lacking in its English incarnation of "Do we do it now? / You're crazy!" (4).

Special difficulty in rendering the poetry of Tremblay's language seems to come with repetition and echo, which both play a tremendous role in this play. Examples can be found as early as the *Kyrie*, but continue throughout the play:

> **ST:** Mathieu: Fuir dans le sommeil pour tout enterrer, pour tout enterrer… (21).
> **TT:** Mathieu: To hide in sleep and to bury everything, bury it all… (4).

> **ST:** Les neuf personnages: J'te regarde en face!
> […]
> Mathieu: J'te regarde en face! (49).
> **TT:** The Nine Characters: I'm looking you in the eye!
> […]
> Mathieu: I'm looking you in the face! (11).

While such variations may seem minor when viewed one by one, in a play so heavily dependent on repetition that the *Gazette* reviewer observes, "nothing is said but it is repeated five times" (Donnelly), the individual variations combine to interfere with the

structure Tremblay has so painstakingly built, introducing dissonance into the target text where harmony prevailed in the source.

As with the other plays, my analysis consists of a side-by-side reading of the source text (the 1996 published text of *Messe*) and the target text (the unpublished manuscript of Van Burek's translation), with an eye to intertextual reference, gay language and portrayals of sexuality. I will not be examining the plays from a perspective of general translation criticism, beyond the observations already made.

The major intertextual theme in this play is, obviously, religion. Unlike the other two plays, where formal intertextuality seems to play a minor role if any, formal intertextuality is predominant in this case. Religion, of course, has a special resonance with a Québécois audience, since it was such an important part of Quebec daily life for so long. As I mentioned in section 2.2.1, Bosley points out that the loss of religious vocabulary is one of the major problems in translating *joual*, because it fails to indicate the power of the church over the daily lives of the Québécois (143). However, gays also have a special relationship with the church, especially the Catholic Church, which consistently preaches that our "behaviour" is sinful. *Messe* thus contains a strong tension, where the presence of gay characters highlights the missal form, and the missal form highlights the presence of gay characters. This fact did not go unnoticed by reviewers: Pat Donnelly of the Montreal *Gazette* writes, in reference to the original French production, "In the gospel according to Tremblay … all that is sexual is to be celebrated. … If this be blasphemy, it's decidedly soft-core. Hell, it doesn't even rate pagan." In response to this, the anonymous reviewer for Montreal's *Mirror* writes:

> Perhaps that's because the play is neither blasphemous nor pagan. It is only dinosaurs like Mel Gibson who deny gays and the celebration of

> sexuality a place in the Christian liturgy. This was self-evident, so I wasn't waiting for Tremblay to urinate on the altar. … I, harking back to a closeted gay childhood spent in the fire and brimstone of many Catholic high masses, also felt a special resonance. ("Let us spray")

Of course, Van Burek renders the religiosity of the text by maintaining the missal form: the divisions of the play are the same in English and French. While an English audience's relationship to Catholicism is not identical to a French audience's, the relationship of the gay community to religion in general, and Catholicism in particular, certainly obtains as much in English as it does in French, as evidenced by the Vatican's pronouncements, recent at the time of this writing, condemning any government that legalizes gay marriage (see, for example, Lunman).

As for intertextuality that can be specifically described as "gay," the closest to this there seems to be is in the issue of AIDS. While AIDS is most emphatically not a "gay disease," it does have special resonance for the gay community. Moreover, in this case, the victim in question is a gay man. Interestingly, Tremblay's approach to the issue of AIDS in this play is to not name it at all. His reason for this? He says, "Pour moi, une bonne pièce sur le sida, c'est une pièce dans laquelle la maladie n'est pas nommée. Car il faut éviter de figer une pièce dans le temps. … La maladie ne sera jamais un thème dramatique" (Boulanger 2001:161). Indeed, by having the HIV-positive character be among the older characters in the play, it is not immediately clear at the beginning what disease it is; it is revealed gradually: in the *Dies Irae*, Yvon makes the first reference to the fact that he and Gérard are lovers, that "comment tu l'as attrapée, c'te maladie-là" is "une preuve de ton infidélité" (57), so we quickly establish that it is a sexually transmitted disease, and since it is apparently fatal, the easy assumption is that it is AIDS. However, it is not until the third-last page of the play text that it is unequivocally

established, when Yvon tells Gérard that he has missed his schedule for his AZT, a well-known AIDS drug (117).

In translation, none of the treatment of AIDS changes. The disease is still never named, it is still gradually revealed, and the reference to AZT remains. Certainly the relationship between the gay community and AIDS is the same in English as in French Canada, so the references here would not be considered any *less* gay, but it seems equally unlikely that they would make it more so. As with *Hosanna*, Van Burek again seems hesitant to intervene in the text even with existing gay references, and certainly does not add any.

When it comes to identifiably gay language, *Messe* is downright devoid of this. Never once are the words "homosexuel" or "lesbienne" used in the play. On one occasion, Yvon uses the word "chum" (57), which Van Burek translates as "lover" (13), but Jeannine and Louise never use the word "blonde." The closest either of them comes is when Jeannine simply says, "L'amour de ma vie! Ma grande passion!" (67), which Van Burek translates (questionably) as "The love of my life! My only passion!" (15). Even Rose, explaining her incomprehension of her son's pain, says, "J'pensais avoir tout compris ... qu'y vire aux hommes après avoir été marié parce qu'en fin de compte y'avait peut-être toujours été comme ça" (84). Van Burek gives, "I thought I'd understood it all ... that he'd turn to men after having been married because in fact, maybe he'd always been that way" (17-18).

The difference in quantities of gay language between *Hosanna*, *Odeurs* and *Messe* shows an interesting arc, and casts some insight into Tremblay's claim that he does not write "about gayness." It seems that, as Tremblay advanced in his career, he used less

and less gay language: there is less in *Odeurs* than in *Hosanna*, and less in *Messe* than in *Odeurs*.[16] If we accept that gay language is often opaque to straight readers (and uninitiated gay ones; Leap 125ff.), and that its use is therefore a way for the author to cause gay readers to identify with him, then Tremblay's decision to move gradually away from using gay language, even in plays that contain gay characters, implies that he is not interested in having gay readers identify with his work at the expense of losing (literally or figuratively) straight readers. In other words, he tries to make his gay characters as much like his straight characters as possible, by making them talk like the straight characters. Once again, this is evidence that his favoured approach is the banalization of sexuality.

From a translation perspective, it would appear that Van Burek (and Stowe, for that matter) is not particularly interested in countering this trend to ascribe more Anglo-American gay speech patterns to the gay characters present in the play; he tends to use gay language in the target text only in the few instances where it appears in the source text.

Compared to the dearth of identifiably gay language in *Messe*, gay sexuality – indeed, sexuality on the whole – is ubiquitous. From Mathieu and the Widow's remembered nights with their respective partners, now departed, to Yannick and Isabelle's conspicuous absence from the stage between the *Exultate Jubilate* and the *Sanctus*, *Messe* is a smorgasbord of sexuality. From a vocabulary perspective, *Messe* tends to be more conservative than *Hosanna*, and more even than *Odeurs*. Indeed, much of the discussion of sex is done euphemistically here, such as Yannick's question "On le

[16] This seems analogous to his approach to *joual*: as literary *joual* gained more and more acceptance, Tremblay seems to rely on it less and less; hence the criticism of the "mid-Atlantic" French here.

fait-tu?" (23) or Jeannine and Louise's references to "ces choses-là" (22), and Van Burek translates these references equally euphemistically. There are also a number of references that, while not euphemistic, are not explicit, either: Louise refers to "ses levres qui forment les mots autant que le plaisir" and "s'accroupissant entre mes cuisses" (72). Again, Van Burek aims to match the level of circumlocution here, rendering these segments as "her lips forming words as much as pleasure" (15) and "as she crouched between my thighs" (16).

Not that explicit sexual vocabulary is entirely absent from the play: both Mathieu and the Widow refer to "le sperme frais" (96), which is translated equally scientifically as "fresh sperm" (19). Yvon suggests that, when you want sexual release, "on se crosse" (104), which Van Burek translates as "you jerk off" (21); certainly you do not "aller te faire enculer" (105) (Van Burek writes, "run off ... and get fucked" [21].) Gérard states that he felt "cochon" (107), and Van Burek writes "so horny" (22). There is the occasional modulation: Isabelle's line "quand t'as envie de ça" (21) is rendered more explicitly as "when you get horny!" (4) while the Widow's comment about her husband's body, "qui m'a fait jouir" (97) is downplayed to "that thrilled me" (19). It seems that Van Burek had the most difficulty with the word "baiser," much as Stowe did in *Odeurs*. When Mathieu uses it (97), Van Burek gives "fucked" (20); similarly, when Gérard says "baisant" (107), Van Burek writes "fucking" (22). However, when Isabelle and Yannick say "une petite baise," he gives, "a little screw" for Isabelle, and, to make the joke explicit, as "Who says it's going to be little?" for Yannick (8). While it is tempting to argue that there is a trend towards "fuck" when dealing with gay characters and "screw"

with straight ones, we have already seen that "baiser" can be difficult to render, and the difference between "fuck" and "screw" is more one of register than intimacy or identity.

More interesting than the sexual vocabulary used, however, is the message Tremblay conveys on a "content" level. In terms of specifically gay sexuality, there are three sets of characters that bear discussion: Mathieu; Jeannine and Louise; Gérard and Yvon. Mathieu is a single gay man in his late thirties. With no partner in the play, his sexuality is somewhat downplayed, but it is nonetheless discussed. Specifically, in the *Lacrymosa*, he discusses his remembered sexual encounters with the partner he has just broken up with (whom we suspect to be Jean-Marc). The terms he uses to describe these encounters are very idealized: "...les nuits passées à rire après avoir presque pleuré en baisant! Après avoir pleuré en baisant parce qu'y m'arrivait de pleurer en baisant!" (97). What makes this section particularly interesting, however, is the way that Mathieu is paired with the Widow. They have both recently lost their partner; one to separation, one to death. The result is that Tremblay has set up a parallel between the two characters, banalizing Mathieu's sexuality by making it "just like" the Widow's. Both characters recall their relations, both romantic and sexual, with their lost lover in the same terms: sometimes by speaking in unison, sometimes by echoing each other with or without variations. For example:

> Mathieu: J'aimerais mieux qu'y soit mort que de penser qu'y jouit dans les bras de quelqu'un d'autre!
> La Veuve: J'aimerais mieux qu'y soit en train de jouir dans les bras de quelqu'un d'autre que d'accepter de pus jamais le voir! (99)

The effect of this parallelism is to draw a clear comparison between the two characters, and to show that Mathieu's love is equal to the Widow's. While this comparative approach could have the effect of underlining the *difference* between

Mathieu's sexuality and the Widow's, Tremblay avoids this through Mathieu's mother, Rose. The fact that Rose cannot understand Mathieu crying over another man establishes a further point of comparison, creating a tension between Rose's preconceptions about homosexuality and the facts of the situation as they lie before her: Mathieu, her son, who has been married to a woman before, is just as upset by his separation from his partner as the Widow is by hers.

A similar approach is used with the lesbian couple in the play, Jeannine and Louise, except that here, instead of parallel, Tremblay sets it up as counterpoint. Jeannine and Louise's sexuality is characterized by its absence. Their story in the play is one of the loss of passion. Having been with Louise for so long, Jeannine is tired of their relationship: "Juste de penser qu'elle pourrait s'approcher de moi dans le lit tout à l'heure me fait frissonner!" (67). This is very effectively set off against Yannick's constant chorus of "On le fait-tu?" (23) and Isabelle's coy replies of "T'es fou!" followed by her eventual concession (23). Where the lesbian couple is experiencing a total absence of passion, Yannick and Isabelle are experiencing a surfeit. Moreover, the young couple draws attention to this comparison; Isabelle asks, "Penses-tu qu'y font ça encore aussi souvent, eux autres?" (75). By contrasting the two relationships in this way, it inscribes them into the same tradition, thus functioning again as a banalizing commentary on Louise and Jeannine's lesbianism.

However, from a certain perspective, Jeannine and Louise's relationship might be considered a gay cultural reference, in the form of what is known as "lesbian bed death." Where the prevailing stereotype of gay men is that they are indiscriminately promiscuous, the opposite tends to apply to lesbians. Lesbian bed death is a term that

was coined to apply to the supposed lack of sex within lesbian relationships, although there is much debate as to whether lesbian couples truly do have less sex than other types of couples. Nonetheless, the veracity of such concepts is not relevant here; the point is that the situation between Jeannine and Louise, as represented, could be read into this stereotype. Tremblay, however, does his best to undermine this reading (and Van Burek maintains this approach) by having Jeannine specifically say that what she feels is not simply a loss of desire: "Plus loin, plus épouvantable que le manque de désir, l'horreur de ne pus aimer!" (68). Nonetheless, the lesbian bed death reading is still possible, and would contribute to a gay separatist reading of the play.

By far the most interesting case of gay sexuality in the play, however, is that of Gérard and Yvon. Gérard is HIV positive, having contracted the virus from an anonymous sexual encounter. Here we have something of an echo of Luc in *Le Coeur éclaté*. What makes it interesting, however, is that Gérard refuses to regret the sexual encounter that led to him contracting the virus. He describes it in these terms: "Malgré les conséquences épouvantable de cette nuit-là ... j'arrive pas à regretter c'que j'ai fait, à me sentir coupable! Parce que c'était trop bon!" (107-08). This is, presumably, what Tremblay was talking about in his frequent references in the press to the play being "politically incorrect." Indeed, he reiterates this in interview with Boulanger: "Pour lui [Gérard], les dix minutes de jouissance procurée par une furtive aventure valaient bien la souffrance de sa maladie. ... Ce ne sont pas des choses qu'on entend souvent. On préfère parler de *safe sex*, d'abstinence, de santé, de fidélité" (2001:162). This position is very different from the one taken vis-à-vis Luc from *Odeurs*. Both are "punished" by the author for their promiscuity and infidelity, but where Luc simply suffers under the

disease, and eventually dies of it, Gérard refuses to be repentant, thus rendering Tremblay's underlying opinion of such promiscuity ambiguous. A writer seen to be advocating such risky behaviour, suggesting that having the virus is worth one night of pleasure, is certainly not taking a position that sex counselors and public health officials would appreciate, even if individuals in the gay community agree with him, both in discussion and in practice.

Again, we see the role of parallelism in this text as Yvon and Gérard are paired with Gaston and Mireille. The pairing, and parallelism, take place through the alignment of Yvon and Mireille. In the *Dies Irae*, these two characters both complain that they have had their fill of taking care of their respective charges, Gérard and Gaston. Yvon expresses his frustration at having to constantly clean up after Gérard and disinfect everything so that Gérard does not get sick, with no end in sight unless Gérard dies, which is the worst end of all. Mireille is tired of taking care of her father, who cannot take care of himself because of his industrial accident. She, too, sees no way out of her duties except death – in this case, her own. This section also contains a surprising revelation: she says that sometimes she wants to tell the neighbours about her situation, and adds, "J'ai envie de leur crier : oui, c'est vrai, j'fais tout ça, j'fais tout ça pour lui, pis j'en fais peut-être plus que vous pensez parce que mon père est un homme avec des besoins d'homme!" (58). So the parallelism between these two pairs is established as a sort of *chassé-croisé*: Yvon pairs with Mireille as caretaker and Gérard with Gaston as cared-for, but Mireille also pairs with Gérard on the basis of their defective sexualities, incest and infidelity.

Because of the macrostructural nature of the parallel relationships between these characters in *Messe*, it would be extremely difficult for the translator to change them without fundamentally changing the content of the play. For example, Mathieu is paired with the widow on the basis that they have both lost their partners, and there is no way to change this pairing without changing this fact; by the same token, Mireille and Yvon both take care of their respective charges. However, much of the parallelism also functions on a structural level, where the characters repeat or echo each other's lines, or speak in unison. If Van Burek had been aiming to advance a separatist gay politics, he could have changed the lines in question in an effort to "de-couple" the characters from each other, and use the pairings to highlight how their respective loves are different, rather than similar. Whether this would have the desired effect, given the content side of the parallelism, is unclear; it would certainly be a difficult process. In the event, however, he did not engage in such an attempt. Thus, in the translation, the pairings remain, and have the same value in English as they do in French, a banalizing one, which calls into question Harvey's assertion about the inevitability of gay translation.

Indeed, these pairings of gay and straight characters throughout *Messe* form the chief "gay value" of the play. Certainly, this value does not derive from gay cultural references and gay language, as we have seen that there is a dearth of these. In all respects, *Messe* seems to represent another step on Tremblay's path of banalization of sexuality noted above: with few gay intertextual references and little gay language, there is little to tie the play in with the English gay community's conceptions of identity. Moreover, the gay characters in the play are set up in conjunction with the straight characters in order to convey that their love is equivalent: in other words, "gays are just

like straights." This is the central tenet of a banalizing approach. In the case of Mathieu, his grief at losing his male partner is equal to the Widow's grief at losing hers; for Gérard and Yvon, their relationship of love and dependence is equal to Gaston and Mireille's; and for Jeannine and Louise, they have lost the passion that ignites Yannick and Isabelle, but they did once have it. In translation, none of these features have been changed: Van Burek has not intervened in the text to advance a more separatist gay politics. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, it is difficult to understand how this play would be received by the English gay community, since information on any performances of the translation is lacking. However, it seems fair to assume that, just as the gay community can appropriate ancient texts and long-dead authors to their cause, *Messe* could also find a place among the gay canon.

3.2 Are the plays gay?

When I began this analysis, I was working with the hypothesis that the translators of these three Tremblay plays had intervened in the texts to activate gay meaning, in keeping with Mira's suggestion to be overtly political when translating gay texts. In the case of *Hosanna*, this intervention would account for the difference in reception by English and French audiences, as well as the ability of gay academics to appropriate the play to their causes; in the case of *Odeurs* and *Messe*, it would be accounted *for* by the fact that Tremblay seems to have written these plays with a banalized conception of gay identity in mind, which does not generally obtain in English Canada, thus necessitating a shift to make the texts reflect the predominant conception of gay identity in that culture. Drawing on the idea that gay content is often conveyed through the additional means of gay-specific intertextual references (Mira 114), lexicon (Ball), and sexuality, I examined

these three aspects of the texts, with the expectation that they would be more overtly gay, or advance a more separatist notion of gay identity, in English than in French.

As it turns out, my hypothesis about the translators "gaying" the texts is not supported by the evidence; the changes in gay language introduced by the translators are too diffuse and inconsistent to be the result of gay political intervention. There are not consistently more gay intertextual references, gay lexical items or gay sexual terms or situations in the English versions of the play than in the French; in short, the English versions are no more inherently gay than the French. Hosanna may still be a drag queen in English, but Jean-Marc is also still a monogamist, and the characters in *Messe* are still paired such that their similarities are emphasized. The translators here – John Van Burek, Bill Glassco and John Stowe – do not appear to have translated using the political approach advocated by Mira, either to produce for the predominantly gay reading of *Hosanna* observed in English Canada, or to explicitly disrupt Tremblay's portrayal of banal sexual identity and bring it in line with the separatist gay identity which tended to predominate in the English gay community.

As I mentioned in section 1.4.1 above, the privileging of semantic fidelity is indisputably a choice, whether expressed as a particular *skopos* or an initial norm that aims for adequacy rather than acceptability. Nonetheless, it is not necessarily a conscious choice: as Mira says, "if we believe they [the homosexual elements] can be there, it is easy to bring them out in production" (112). The same is true of translation, and Tremblay's plays certainly have the potential to advance gay politics. The translators, however, have not intervened in the texts, and not activated these meanings. I would like to emphasize the role played by norms in this decision: as mentioned in section 1.4.1,

there are norms that govern which translation practices are considered acceptable, and which ones are not. It seems reasonable to speculate (although it would need to be borne out in further research) that the dominant norm in effect during the translation of the texts in question was one that discouraged (or possibly even disallowed) this sort of political intervention, so the only way that the translators *could* have done this was by being transgressive. Of all people, gays should understand how difficult it can be to ignore society's messages and blaze one's own trail. Thus, my insistence on the fact that the translators of these three plays have, by choice, not emphasized the gay value of the plays should by no means be taken as a criticism of their behaviour. They, like the rest of us, operate under societal pressures, and they likely had other concerns (especially the difficulty of translating *joual*) that they viewed as more important to concentrate on.

Ultimately, while there is plentiful material in Tremblay's writing in which to intervene in order to advance gay identity, it seems to have been unnecessary for the plays in question: even though the translators have not intervened in these cases, this has not prevented segments of the gay community from appropriating Tremblay's work to their cause.

Conclusion

I began this thesis by wondering whether the dramatic work of Michel Tremblay was gayed in translation. Had his translators followed Mira's injunction to intervene in texts, adopting a particular *skopos* in order to advance gay politics? Certainly it seemed to be the case with *Hosanna* that English audiences interpreted it as a gay story, while French audiences interpreted it as an allegory about Quebec's identity. Certainly it is the case that Tremblay has denied that he writes about gayness, and the evidence in *Odeurs* and *Messe* suggests that this denial means that he favours a conception of gay identity that is closer to a "banalizing" model than the separatist one that predominates in English Canada. It seemed logical to think that his translators were in a position to have changed this message, since Tremblay was not responsible for whether or not *they* chose to write about gayness, and such a choice could have produced material on which the academics who have appropriated Tremblay as a gay author could base their work. Moreover, it would have been in line with Harvey's comment that translation of gay texts results in portrayals of gay identity that correspond to the model privileged in the target culture.

In order to discover if this was the case, I had to define my parameters by selecting certain aspects of gay language to examine in the translation. This would help me determine a number of things: how gay the texts were in the source language; what happened to that gay language in translation; how gay the texts were in the target language; whether any additional gay language was added. The aspects I chose to privilege were intertextual references, lexical items, and depictions (both lexical and propositional) of gay sexuality.

As I read the source and target texts side-by-side, it gradually became apparent that the translators had not, in fact, intervened in these texts to gay them, at least not in any consistent fashion. Few, if any, gay references and lexical items were added; gay sexuality was no more explicit. Overall, the source-text messages about gay identity seemed to remain largely intact in translation. In the case of *Hosanna*, an extensive isotopy of homosexuality was already present in the French text, and this was simply carried over to the English text. What this observation finally points to, then, is this: the interesting question behind the difference between English and French Canadian reception of *Hosanna* is not why English Canada perceived it as a gay play, which is a reading that is very much in keeping with the isotopy present in the play, but why French Canada perceived it as a nationalist metaphor. There are a variety of reasons for this, ranging from Koustas's emphasis on the role of *joual* (136) through to Schwartzwald's argument that it simply *made sense* for the tropes of homosexuality and nationalism to converge (502-03).

As for *Odeurs* and *Messe*, Tremblay's preoccupations here are clearly different, in that these plays function as a critique of separatist gay identity, offering instead a banalizing conception of it, which seems to account for Tremblay's assertion that his writings "are not about gayness" (Rosello 249). In this sense, the answer to my earlier question of whether Tremblay is a gay author is dependent on whether one accepts his argument on gay identity or not. In this regard, the gay community tends to read its own conception of gay identity into works whose authors never intended them to be read that way in order to "foster a communal identity in order to resist forms of oppression and to forge a sense of history and a distinct set of socio-cultural values" (Harvey 2000:138). It

would seem that, despite Tremblay's professed intentions and his translators' tendency to carry the techniques Tremblay mobilizes in support of these intentions into the English text, there is enough "gay content" in the plays to allow the gay community to appropriate these texts in particular, and make them *fit* its ongoing identity project. Indeed, the community seems not to even be aware that the elaboration of a separate cultural identity is not Tremblay's intention, and thus criticize him for not being militant enough in his defense of gay rights (Boulanger 2001:103).

Of course, there are always limitations to this kind of research: here, the biggest ones probably lie in my conception and use of "gay language." Certainly, there are more aspects to gay language and textuality than just intertextuality, lexicon, and sex. Notably absent are camp language and broader, more discourse-based analyses. However, there seems to be little available material examining the role of camp language – and other forms of gay language – in Québécois French, making such an examination too cumbersome for a project of this scope.

Other limitations also exist: in such a small space, only a small number of texts can ever be examined, and other texts may provide more evidence to support one interpretation or another. Moreover, much more work on gay identity in Quebec could stand to be done; gay history and politics in this province are growing fields, but there is less work done on literature. A fuller study of the role of portrayals of gay identity in Québécois literature could help to confirm my conclusions.

Nonetheless, one message that is reiterated by this project is that translation is not an exercise that takes place in a vacuum, and answers cannot always be found within the texts themselves. As Lefevere and Bassnett write, "There is always a context in which

the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed" (11). What seems equally clear is that the work of Michel Tremblay endures, and is always ready to provide different answers depending on the questions put to it.

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