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Regionalizing NAFTA: Theaters of Translation in Mexico City and Quebec

By

Martha Herrera Lasso González

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Shannon Steen, Co-Chair
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Abstract

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by

Martha Herrera-Lasso González

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Professor Shannon Steen, Co-Chair
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This dissertation is a study of theater networks between Mexico City and Quebec during the NAFTA years (1994-2018) and their role in regionalizing North America. It examines the regional imaginaries enacted through theater collaborations, considering both the material and imagined dimensions of these networks, exposing the role of theater and its translations in the politics of international and intercultural exchange. It explores the dis/connections between the political agendas that draft continental projects and the everyday practices enacted across these geographic and cultural spaces. Conceptually, the intercultural is theorized in the project as the reassembly of the networks that enable these intercultural performances, and not through principles of hybridity. In this process, translation is foregrounded in order to reveal the implications of paraphrasing and referencing meaning in another context, as well as the new configurations of knowledge and aesthetic languages produced by this contact.

The dissertation extends the hemispheric conceit of what the North is to Mexico and of Canada's broader South, re-thinking the region from a perspective less centered on Anglophone meditations or on the discourses of official leadership. It begins with the theories of translation, regionalism and interculturalism that guide it, followed by a reassembly of theater networks between Mexico City and Quebec established primarily via the activation of *latinité* as an imaginative tool. The last two chapters are close readings of case studies representative of these networks: a co-production – *La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien* – created by a Mexican and a Quebecois company, and a Quebecois text – *La divine illusion* by Michel Marc Bouchard – in production in Mexico City. These last two chapters rely heavily on translation for their analysis, and test the limits of the intercultural in our understanding of global cultural production. The project thus expands its cultural analysis by introducing hypercultural as an analytical frame, one that accounts for the rhizomatic accumulation of shifting meaning and aesthetics beyond the premises of national or cultural essence. I argue that these theater networks – while enabled by political agendas and economic regulations – perform the superabundance of culture that results from contact in global times, and evidence the complex work of mis/translation that makes it possible for us to imagine and inhabit regions.

A mi mamá, Gualu.

Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgments	iii
2. Preface	v
3. Chapter 1: Framing Regional Becomings	1
4. Chapter 2: Stagings of a Latin North America	20
5. Chapter 3: Co-Producing Digestible Imaginaries in <i>La vida no vale nada</i>	53
6. Chapter 4: <i>La Divina Ilusión</i> in Translations	93
7. Coda	125
8. Works Cited	128

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PREFACE

Maps aren't just guides to the world as we know it; they can also be projections of the way we desire or fear it to be.

Rachel Adams 1

In her introduction to *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America*, Rachel Adams addresses the importance of reading cultural dis/connections across political regions. She argues that while continental systems are arbitrary, they determine economic and political alignments as well as the possibility of transit for goods and bodies (9). I argue these arbitrary regional and continental demarcations determine how power is distributed amongst nation-states, and how this distribution is justified and sustained domestically and internationally. I argue also that the arts provide a powerful tool in evidencing these power dynamics and the failures of global order in the imagined and material realms. Reading the cultural dimensions of a continental system visiblizes the dis/connections between the political agendas that draft continental projects and the everyday practices enacted across these geographic and cultural spaces.

Regional imaginings are often constructed by connecting a series of national imaginings, ideas of cultural and often essentializing traits through which imagined national communities meet. This dissertation examines how connections are imagined through discourse and enacted via material networks in the cultural relationship between Mexico City and Quebec, primarily through the activation of *latinité* as an imaginative tool. Thus, the focus of the project is specifically on non-Anglophone imaginaries of North America and how they produce global connections – Mexico City imagined as the door to the Americas, while Quebec as an island amidst an ocean of Anglophones, one that connects North America to Europe via its francophonie. It considers the culturalisms – multi, intra, inter and hyper – of North America as a constructed continental system by focusing on how theater products and producers have traveled the region, an in doing so, unsettled regional alignments and their power distributions.

The reasons to focus this regional study on the Mexico-City – Quebec theater networks are twofold. First, theater networks highlight the cultural dimension of a continental system by stressing how language and contexts circulate a region, an aspect often overlooked by political actors and scholars. And second, because the Mexico City - Quebec connection represents a less common route of circulation, one through which the region is rarely read since it is not mediated by the United States and so unfolds beyond Anglophone imaginaries. This relationship, based primarily on the circulation of cultural products and framings of *latinité*, allows us to examine how mis/translation and language have been used to trace parallel demarcations of a region, employing culture as an effective tool in producing political and economic capital domestically and abroad. The dissertation poses the question of how these processes of deep translation across the region contest notions of nation-hood and North-Americanness put forth by conceptions of the region such as NAFTA, and provide instead dialogic and practice-based spaces of intercultural connecting.

*

Perhaps the most identifiable idea of the region was created with the implementation of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA/TCLAN/ALENA), signed in 1993 and brought into effect in 1994. This trade agreement was first and foremost a trade agreement with limited, trade-oriented goals, and yet it represented a historical turning point in as much as it connected the three countries where all previous contact had been bilateral. It produced the idea of a tri-national block connected beyond its geography, an attempt to be a tri-lateral community of neighbors. As will be shown in the first chapter, the treaty failed to contain the complexities and contradictions suggested by the *idea* of North America, and other historical circumstances (especially the 9/11 attacks) produced its failure in various ways. And yet NAFTA as an idea (along with its failures) succeeded in becoming central in our imaginings of North America as something more than geography – albeit as a failed or impossible project. And yet something like the vast presence of Quebec theatre in Mexico City, amongst other forms of cultural exchange between the two places, seems to be completely absent in our imaginings of the region. Unlike NAFTA, these forms of collaboration and exchange are less about imagining a region so that it can then be materially regulated, and more about re-imagining as a result of cultural dialogues, and from these, producing new forms of regional belonging through transit, movement and translation.

One of the central objectives of this project is to examine connections across the region in the ideas of the imaginative and in its material networks, both in how the two converge and in how they diverge. One of the initial impulses for the dissertation came from a perceived divergence between a material network and a local imaginaire – why, when there is so much Quebecois theater in Mexico City, is there a general perception that Canadian culture is “invisible” in Mexico? Theater exchange between Mexico City and Quebec is vast, and as the project explores, Quebecois plays have had a significant impact on Mexico City’s theater culture since the mid-1990s. One of the most prominent examples of this is Hugo Arrevillaga’s production of Lebanese-Quebecois Wajdi Mouawad’s *Incendies*¹, of which theatre critic Lucía Leonor Enríquez wrote in 2014:

El fenómeno de este autor en la escena Mexicana es digno de analizarse. (...) resultados sorprendentes: temporadas sucesivas con llenos totales, gente formada desde el mediodía para conseguir boletos, otros que han visto la obra más de tres veces... [The phenomenon produced by this author on Mexican stages is worthy of analysis. (...) remarkable results: sold-out successive runs, people cueing for tickets since noon, others who have seen it more than three times...]

This is one example amongst many of successful productions of Quebecois texts in Mexico City, and the reception described by Enríquez brings forth the question of what makes Quebecois theater so prosperous in Mexico City. When studying this production history it is

¹ Mouawad’s play recurred on Mexico City stages for five different and very successful runs (with two distinct productions) between 2009 and 2014.

clear that the two places are connected via a material network of theater products and producers.

Despite the success of these plays, during my undergraduate training in Mexico City and my work and life there since and before then, it did not seem to me that Canada or Quebec were part of the cultural imaginary in a way that accounted for this ample presence of Quebecois theater. And yet, in practice, Quebecois theater is certainly an important part of Mexico City's cultural imaginary, and even when we might not identify it as such, my instinct suggests that the fact that it is all coming from Quebec is significant. Not only as a result of cultural and aesthetic affinities between the two places, but in as much as these cultural products are efficient carriers of economic and/or diplomatic agendas within the region. Graciela Martínez-Zalce, who has written extensively about the relationship between Quebecois and Mexican culture, argues in the article "Es (In)visible la cultura Canadiense en México?" that there is little awareness of Canadian culture in Mexico, with only intermittent and disconnected interest from Mexican publics in 'Canadian Content' as such (Martínez-Zalce). If what Martínez-Zalce says is true, how do we account for the success of Quebecois authors on Mexican stages, with growing visibility in the last twenty years? How does this trend fit within our conception of Canada or Quebec in the Mexican imaginary? If the *ideas* of a region don't, in this case, seem to align with its material networks, what does the relationship between the two tell us about the role of cultural production in the political and economic operations of a region?

*

How, then, is North America imagined, embodied and enacted? How do intercultural exchanges push against homogenizing imaginings of a region? And how is cultural collaboration a producer of domestic and international political capital? This dissertation aims to address these questions by focusing on Mexico City-Quebec theater collaborations, a partnership that has grown significantly since the establishment of the Grupo de Trabajo Quebec-México (1982) and the first Festival de Théâtre des Amériques/Festival of the Americas (FTA) in 1985, that intensified considerably post-NAFTA years, and that today amounts to a series of annual collaborations through festivals, translations, new work development workshops and a significant presence of Quebecois texts on the stages of Mexico City. The collaboration networks studied in this dissertation continue to shift as I write about them, and I don't intend in any way (as I would surely fail) to fix them in time or place as single or stable stories of exchange. The goal is to offer an alternative narrative of the region to the ones that I've encountered having transited my own belonging in what we most often refer to as the three nation-states of North America – Mexico, Canada and the United States. I aim to show how different actors have produced complex forms of contact and exchange, and how these prolific flows are the embodiment of imaginative practices enacted through regional crossings.

Thus, this study aims to extend the hemispheric conceit of what the North is to Mexico and of Canada's broader South, re-thinking the region from a perspective less centered on Anglophone mediations or on the discourses produced by official leadership. By focusing on the relationship between these two provinces, I aim to understand what has made this relationship such a productive space for collaboration, how a linguistic and cultural closeness situates itself within the broader, regional material conditions of

international relations, and what models of equivalence and exchange have been produced through this relationship. At the same time, I consider how the specific histories and contrasting positionalities of these two provinces within their countries – Mexico City as the axis of a structurally centralized country and Quebec’s separatist history within Canada – determine their forms of collaboration across borders. In this respect, we will find that the concept of *latinité* as an imaginative tool has been used to establish an alliance between the two places that pushes against the perceived regional domination of Anglo-Saxon protestant culture. Conceptually, the intercultural is theorized in the project through the reassembly of the networks that enable these intercultural performances. In this process, translation is foregrounded in order to reveal the implications of paraphrasing and referencing meaning in another context, as well as the new configurations of knowledge and aesthetic languages produced by this contact. In short, the project asks – how have we collaborated, what regional imaginaries have been enacted through these collaborations, and what does theater and its translations reveal about the politics of international and intercultural exchange?

Chapter Breakdown

In the first chapter I lay out the breadth of the dissertation and the theories that guide it. I address the ambiguities of geographic demarcations as well as the imaginative practices that produce a place as city, nation or region. I briefly trace how Latin America was imagined into being in the 19th century, as the necessary background to understanding the role of NAFTA during the nineties in producing imaginings of North America as a region, as well as the limitations of the treaty and the expectations it generated of our regional practices. I lay out the methodologies of analysis that will be used in the project, based on the theories of interculturalism and translation. On the issue of culturalism, I outline a framework in which the intercultural is understood not on a principle of hybridity but instead through the networks that enable them, as theorized by Ric Knowles and Leo Cabranes-Grant. I then connect these theories of interculturalism to translation theories that allow us to account for the specificity and localization of intercultural contact. By foregrounding translation in the reading of intercultural performance, we can more readily access the configurations of knowledge produced through contact and that in turn activate alternative regional imaginaries. Read in this way, the region is reassembled as a network that is produced into being through the constant movement of languages, bodies, texts and performances across a vast range of imagined and material boundaries and bridges.

The second chapter reassembles the networks of cultural exchange between Mexico City and Quebec specifically involving theater products (that is, the circulation of theatre texts, artists, productions or translations) starting with the first initiatives in the eighties, but focused primarily on the post-NAFTA years. In the chapter I map out the central players in these collaborations – artists, institutions, texts and productions – in an analysis of how they have engaged *latinité* as an imaginative tool both in how communities are imagined as cultural allies and at the level of the networks that materially connect them. I read these shifting flows by mapping official government visits, translation workshops, Quebec’s presence in Mexico City’s Festival del Centro Histórico and Mexico City’s presence in Quebec’s Festival TransAmeriques, translations and productions of Quebecois plays in Mexico City and vice versa, the financial structures that support these productions, and the

official discourses of government institutions and artists around these collaborations. In doing so, the chapter puts forth an analysis of the translator as node in the study French-Mexican translator Boris Schoemann and his role in embodying *latinité* while he established himself as a node in the network.

The last two chapters are close readings of case studies representative of this network, and rely heavily on translation theories for their analysis. Chapter three studies a co-production between a Mexico City and a Quebecois company – that is, a theatre project that was financed, created and performed in and by both places. This chapter analyzes *La Vida no vale nada / La vie ne vaut rien* (1999-2003), co-produced by Ensemble Sauvage Public (Quebec) and Teatro de Arena (Mexico City) during the period when the collaborative relationship between the two provinces was most significantly established. The play tells the story of Quebecois immigrants to Mexico, portraying Mexico City as a site of North to South migration and bringing attention to a less obvious route of circulation within the region. In this chapter I explore how the three languages used (French, English and Spanish) were negotiated at the different levels of production (planning meetings, rehearsals, on-stage, and publicity), and how the different relationships to theater training, aesthetics and production process operated in the production of this piece. In addition, the chapter explores the role of the production in generating what Nestor García Canclini calls digestible globalizations through complex processes of negotiation through mis/translation.

The final chapter focuses on the most prolific form of exchange, that is, the translation of Quebecois texts in production in the Mexican capital. It offers an analysis of a play by Marc Michel Bouchard, translated and directed by Boris Schoemann in 2017 with a second and third run in 2018, and a fourth run in 2019. As chapter two will show, both Bouchard and Schoemann have been important actants in this collaboration network, and this recent production of *La Divina Ilusión* is certainly representative of their roles in establishing these flows. Schoemann's production has so far had four runs in Mexico City and has been very well received, nominated for best play at the 2018 Metros (Mexico's annual theatre awards). The play, written originally for the Shaw Festival in 2015 in a process of circulating translation between French and English, tells the story of Sarah Bernhardt's visit to Quebec City in 1905. It deals with themes that today are often found in Mexican headlines: the relationship of the Church to the arts, labor exploitation at maquiladoras, and sexual abuse by members of the Catholic Church. A close reading of the translation of this play and its production in Mexico City allows a nuanced understanding of the ways in which cultural affinities have been used to frame this cultural relationship, making use of *latinité* while obscuring the complex dialogism inherent in the production. As the concluding chapter, it tests the limits of the intercultural as an analytical frame, introducing Byung Chul Han's notion of the hypercultural in search of a framework that accounts for the rhizomatic accumulation of shifting meanings and aesthetics beyond the premises of national or cultural essence. While *latinité* is used to implement nationalism projects that reproduce colonial logics, the hypercultural – existing in the space of translation – does away with ideas of land or blood that ground the political capital that both Mexico City and Quebec hope to gain from the circulations of cultural products.

Today, as the symbolic and material borders across the region are closing and nationalist narratives are on the rise, a deep understanding of North America as a continental system is fundamental. This dissertation considers how cultural products are

used to generate the narratives that justify the opening of some doors and the closing of others, often intended to sustain specific distributions of power. Yet cultural products themselves – a dimension of international relations often overlooked by political scientists – operate under different logics to those of political demarcations or economic regulations. As much as they are determined by those regulations, cultural products – in this case, theater in translation – unfold beyond the binaries of a transaction or a fixed border. Instead, they perform the superabundance of culture that results from cultural contact in global times, and evidence the complex work of mis/translation that makes it possible for us to imagine and inhabit regions.

CHAPTER 1. Framing Regional Becomings

Intercultural meetings – voluntary or not – facilitate moments of *becoming-otherwise* in which foreign and domestic lines are blurred and even erased, thus confirming the fundamental hybridity of all manners of existence.

Leo Cabranes-Grant 5

Translation also appears today as the categorical imperative of an ethics of recognition of the other, a task it fulfills much more effectively than merely registering otherness. It may very well constitute the central figure of the modernity of the twenty-first century, a founding myth that would replace the myth of progress.

Nicolas Bourriaud 104

This chapter assembles the theoretical frames of the dissertation, one that, as the two epigraphs suggest, explores how a region – specifically, North America – becomes through intercultural encounters woven in endless processes of translation. It addresses how North America specifically has been constructed as an idea, first in relation to and in tension with the premises of *latinité*. This is followed by the methodologies of analysis that will be used to read theater exchanges between Mexico City and Quebec, relying on an understanding of the intercultural as networks, and on translation – the endless negotiation – as the central analytical tool. The chapter goes on to address how nation and region operate in the *imaginaire* both at the level of ideas and in the material realm, and considers the implications of space and travel when reading intercultural scenarios. Finally, it introduces the creation of the North America Free Trade Agreement in the mid-1990s, setting the scene for the three case-study chapters.

Designating Region

In Mexico, if you get in a car and drive from any part of the country and into its capital, the road signs you need to follow read MEXICO – to mean, Mexico City. The city and the country collapse into one – by name, Mexico City is a city, but by name it is also the country itself. The name is taken from the nahuatl Mexico-Tenochtitlan, used by the Mexica to designate the territory that is today Mexico City. And yet officially, it is a province. As of January 2016, Mexico City (no longer Distrito Federal and now Ciudad de México) is considered a province, holding the same political status as the other 31 states of the country, while still acting as the federal capital. By 2015 Mexico City had a greater population of 22 million (metro population of 8.9 million) contained in 1,485 sq. km. By that same year, Quebec had a population of 8.2 million in a territory of 1,542,056 sq. km, officially one of ten provinces and three territories of the nation-state constituted as Canada. The confusing semantics also operate in Quebec, as its provincial capital, Quebec City (metro population of 500,000), shares the name of the province, but its urban center is represented not by this capital, but by the city of Montreal (metro population of 2 million). Quebec as a province within Canada

has been built on the unceded ancestral territories of – and continues to co-exists with – the Abenaki, Anishinaabe, Attikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Innu, Inuit, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq Mohawk and Naskapi nations. Quebec's status in relation to the rest of the provinces is unique, since it is the only province that thinks of itself as a nation without a state after being colonized by the British in 1760, while it is much less willing to think of itself as colonizer first. Although I refer to them both as provinces, it is clear that when operating in the *imaginaire*, Mexico City and Quebec are rarely contained within demarcated legal or semantic borders. Throughout the dissertation it will be essential that spatial scale be made explicit in the different moments of the comparative analysis between Mexico City and Quebec, the two central geographic demarcations of the project, as in both cases, ambivalence is powerful and rampant.

A similar ambivalence operates when we speak of continental divisions. The United Nations and most Latin American countries use a five-continent model – where the hemisphere is understood to be one continent – America. South America, Central America or North America when used, are used as sub-categories or sub-continent, but the word America designates the entire hemisphere. In Mexico, the term *norteamericana/o/x* is usually used to reference something or someone North of the Mexican border – the Global North of the continent, most commonly the United States. Mexicans don't usually refer to themselves as *nortemaricano/a/xs*² but since NAFTA, will more readily conceive of themselves as part of North America, specifically *América del Norte*. In the U.S. and in Canada the official continental division model used is different, so that North and South America are considered to be two different continents. Leaving Central America and the Caribbean in a gray area, as North America often (as with NAFTA) is used to mean Mexico, the United States and Canada, and South America begins south of Panama. And yet the term North American in the U.S. and (especially) in Canada is often used to refer only to those two countries – to the Global North of the hemisphere – even when they continue to use the seven-continent model that includes Mexico as part of North America. The word America, of course, is also used in the United States to refer to itself, a practice that has been intermittently adopted worldwide, both in English and in translation. In this project, the United States will be referred to as the United States, and America (or Americas) will be used to refer to the hemisphere. Thinking of the hemisphere as one continent also allows us to be more flexible in the ways we imagine flows and forms of connectedness across territories and cultures.

Simultaneously, many first peoples refer to large parts of the region (much of what is now called Canada and the United States), as Turtle Island. This designation (as well as other pre-colonial designations of territories of the area) continues to be used by first peoples and have been taken on by some sectors of civil society, although they are not used in any official capacity by governments. Acknowledging such designations undoes any sense of fixed or de-politized nomenclature of place, as it reminds us that official

² The term use of the *-x* I employ to designate non-binary individuals, taken from the term Latinx, which emerges in the mid-2000s in left-leaning, queer communities as a gender-neutral label for Latino/a and Latin@, “an inclusive term that recognizes the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype” (Salinas and Lozano 9). It is rooted in Indigenous gender systems (such as the Zapoteco and the Mexica) that allow for more flexible models of sexual identity.

designations – Canada, Quebec, North America, etc. – are the result of long colonial histories, where colonial power has worked hard to obscure any other territorial designations of these same lands. Let us not forget that *not* seeing those territorial designations and not recognizing the rightful stewards of these lands is indispensable labor in our imaginings of continent, nation-state, province and city in the westernized sense. Significantly, the ambivalences around designating the region and its components are indispensable to the imaginings of any one regional project. In order to avoid naturalizing white Quebecois culture as indigenous to the land, throughout the dissertation I employ decolonial scholar Julie Burrelle's term *Quebecois de souche* when referring to white, Quebecois culture, what is often referred to as *pure laine*. In her book, *Encounters on Contested Lands*, Burrelle defines the term Quebecois de souche as one that refers to "the White descendants of early settlers from France, who still speak French and understand themselves (...) as settlers no more, colonized by the British first and, later, by the Anglo Canadians, and rightfully belonging to the territory of Québec." (6)

One of the issues this dissertation is concerned with is how, in the postcolonial moments of the Americas in the 19th century, a series of imaginative tools – specifically *latinité* – were set into play in order to continue this invisibilizing work. As expressed by Walter Mignolo, "'Latin' America was the name adopted to identify the restoration of European Meridional, Catholic, and Latin "civilization" in South America and, simultaneously, to reproduce absences (Indians and Afros) that had already begun during the early colonial period" (57). Reading the region is a good way of seeing these obscured maps, where it becomes evident that cultural demarcations are very different to political ones, as is the case, for example, of the diverse Maya groups that populate a large part of Mexico's South East as well as parts of the nation-states of Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. The ethnic and linguistic affinities amongst the different Maya groups are not represented by these political borders, and indigenous groups of the area continue to resist these impositions five centuries after contact.

These cases evidence how the national, provincial and city borders imposed by different levels of government cut through areas that under different social orders are practiced differently. Geographers Dallas Hunt (Cree Wapsewsipi) and Shaun Stevenson have studied indigenous counter-mapping practices in areas of Turtle Island that articulate different ways of presence on and right to the land, pushing against the colonial map's ideological configurations aimed to insinuate "that the land *itself* speaks as an articulation of imperial power and as a single unified state" (my emphasis, 375). So although this dissertation works primarily with the terminology employed by governments (nation-state, province, city, Mexico, Quebec, etc.), I urge us throughout to work against the mirage of the colonial map, only to remember that other layered forms of mapping, designating and practicing space continue to operate across the region. The different nationalisms that have derived from official political demarcations have shaped our contact across borders, as well as the content of our dialogue, but they are also constantly destabilized by the same complexity they attempt to efface. The present study aims to evidence how these political impositions on geography continue to regulate our relationship to each other and to the land, and yet how the ambiguity of these same spatial units becomes a powerful tool in our imaginative practices of the region.

The Latin and the North America

In order to understand how North America is being imagined in the 21st century, it is essential to understand how the Americas have been imagined from the Westernized perspective, particularly after independence in the 18th and 19th centuries. A further analysis of *latinité* as an imaginative tool makes up the best part of chapter two of this study, and yet I stop a moment here to introduce how “Latin” America as an idea has predisposed certain imaginings and enactments of North America. A few things about the history of that idea are central to the framing of the dissertation. First, that the configuration of the Western Hemisphere that divided the Americas into a North and a Latin America was a projection of Europe’s own divisions, as well as an assertion of the Americas as inferior. Second, that the notion of “Latin” in Latin America was adopted as an identity-building project by and for the Creole-Mestizo elites of Spanish and Portuguese ex-colonies in contrast to the Anglo creoles, which allowed for the power shift that would come to position the U.S. as the imperial core in the 20th century.

On the first point, we find that in Europe *latinité* was used to produce a uniting identity amongst countries that considered themselves descendants of the Roman Empire and of the Latin language, in opposition to Germanic cultures of the north. These same divides were then mapped onto the Americas, imagined as cultural differences and organized in a similar North to South relation. And yet, the divisions were more than anything a reflection of imperial histories and of the power relations being negotiated in Europe and projected onto the Americas. As this project will show, these same ambiguous yet powerful divides have continued to shape both the ideas and the material systems that produce regional dynamics across the hemisphere.

On the second point, Walter Mignolo advances the argument that the idea of Latin America was developed in a process of transformation from what he calls the Creole Baroque ethos into the postcolonial Creole Latin ethos, where “Spain receded and France and England gained ground in the minds and the pockets of postcolonial Creoles.” (65) These elites looked away from Spain and Portugal – and consequently, their own colonial pasts – and turned their gaze towards France. This was a moment of important contrast between the Anglo Creoles and Latin Creoles, not only in how Europe was positioning the Americas in relation to itself, but also in how these young nation-states positioned themselves subjectively in connection to Europe, at a time when the U.S. established an identity as firmly distinct from Europe. This allowed for the imperial shift that eventually positioned the United States as the imperial core, argued here by Mignolo:

The supposed South of “America” was correlated in the nineteenth century with the inferior South of Europe, which was “tainted” by Catholicism and the infusion of Moorish blood, thus further degrading the South of America. The bottom line is that the North has been constructed as the leader of the South and the “natural” location of economic, political, military, and epistemic power (158)

This brief overview reveals why it is challenging to conceive regionally of North America, since although it is geographically and politically divided as three nation-states, it destabilizes the dichotomies – not geographical nor political, but cultural and colonial – through which the hemisphere has been imagined for centuries. As the following chapter

will explore in detail, reclaiming that dichotomy by activating *latinité* as an imaginative tool is precisely how Mexico and Quebec have framed their relationship, and how they have looked to gain political capital in the region, in many ways, continuing the cultural (and invisibilizing) project of the postcolonial Creole elites. As a study framed through the lens of cultural production, this dissertation provides a much-needed reading of regional networks precisely because these exchanges are not framed as political alliances, but as cultural connections. Thus, providing fertile ground to explore the question of how *latinité* continues to be activated as a way to regulate the political and the economical through the lens of cultural affinity. Although as Mignolo and other historians of the idea of Latin America have shown, – including Marucio Tenorio-Tello whose work is foregrounded in chapter two – ‘Latin’ America as an idea “masked the colonial power differential that was translated from its construction in Europe and imposed on the Americas” (Mignolo 80), the role of Quebec in relation to this imagined region is sorely overlooked. By focusing on the Mexico City-Quebec relationship, this project then engages with colonial histories and global presents that both resist and rely on *latinité* and its dichotomies and they perform themselves as regional actors.

The Intercultural as Network

In order to read how *latinité* has been activated regionally as an imaginative tool, this dissertation considers both the international and the intercultural dimensions that make up a region. At the level of the international, it considers the political and economic implications of transit and exchange, and at the level of the intercultural it accounts for the cultural dimension of contact and communication, often insufficiently framed through premises of *latintié*. The project relies heavily on the configuration of nation-states and the relationship between them, material and imagined, and while it recognizes cultural intersections within the nation-state, what Bharucha calls the *intracultural* – the intercultural read as in-between and the intracultural as within – its focus is on cultural dynamics framed as international and regional. As we will see in chapter three, the Quebecois company Ensamble Sauvage Public is itself highly intracultural, but what interests us primarily in this project is how that group collaborated with a Mexican company not only interculturally, but also internationally.

In making a distinction between the inter- and the intra-cultural, it is important to distinguish between a Latinx ethnoscape in Canada³ and international structures of exchange and collaboration. Although there is a much lesser Latinx, and specifically Mexican presence in Quebec than there is in other parts of Canada or the United States, what is particular about the Mexico-Quebec relationship is that without relying on a community of Mexican or Mexican-Canadian artists based in Quebec or Quebecois artists based in Mexico City, international exchange of theater products has been highly prolific. We will find that the infrastructures for intracultural diversity in municipalities, cities, provinces or nation-states are not intended to account for the specific needs of international collaborations. Even when there might be cultural affinities between a Mexican company based in Mexico and a Latinx company based in the U.S. or in Canada, the

³ For more on Latinx-Canadian theater and performance, see Hazelton (2007), Álvarez (2013), Herrera-Lasso (2019).

material infrastructures necessary to produce collaboration and exchange are very different when working intraculturally than when working internationally. This is not to say that both types of collaborations cannot take place simultaneously – one need only look at the transnational networks that have been established by intracultural companies in Toronto such as Aluna Theatre or Native Earth Performing Arts (Knowles 2017) – but the distinct conditions necessary for intracultural and international collaborations to take place need to be distinguished in order to be met. By analyzing the material structures that produce the conditions for these international collaborations to take place and at times, proliferate, we can more easily nuance diverse forms of cultural contact taking place within the same region.

In what follows, I briefly distinguish between different modes of culturalism so as to arrive at the conception of interculturalism that will be used in this study. The different modes fall under two sets of culturalism – those of national policy aimed at managing immigration and diversity, and those developed by academic scholars in the arts. Throughout the dissertation it will become apparent how these two constantly interact, both in the production of infrastructures that enable cultural exchange and in the deeper narratives that shape these cultural products.

I begin with Multiculturalism. In their 2002 essay "Toward a topography of cross-cultural theatre praxis," Australian theatre scholar Helen Gilbert and cultural theorist Jacqueline Lo distinguish between the lower-case *multicultural* and the upper-case *Multicultural*. According to them, *multicultural* theatre refers to work that does not draw attention to cultural differences, usually derived from grassroots experiences of cultural pluralism; *Multicultural*, on the other hand, refers to work that promotes cultural diversity in line with national narratives and official policies (36). In Canada, the weight of the *Multicultural* is heavily felt. After the *revolution tranquille* in Quebec during the 1960s, Pierre Trudeau's government implemented official *Multiculturalism* policies intended to manage Canada's cultural diversity. This *Multiculturalism* script has served to contain the independence movement in Quebec, to "both exploit and manage" diversity (especially after the Immigration Act of 1967 that considerably opened Canadian borders) and as a way to assert a national identity after the 1967 centenary (Knowles 2017:25). In performing this assertion, official *Multiculturalism* policies of 1971 and 1988 explicitly exclude First Nations peoples, and claim English and French as the only two official cultures of Canada.

Beyond what symbolizes in terms of how Canada imagines itself and is imagined elsewhere, the narratives and policies of Canadian *Multiculturalism* have been used to shape cultural policies and funding structures. As argued by Canadian performance scholar Ric Knowles, "Multiculturalism as performed through arts funding practices kept othered cultures in their static, nostalgic, and dehistoricized ethnic place, allowing dominant cultural expression to flourish within an established European tradition" (Knowles 2017:28). As will be explored further in the following chapter, Quebec responded to these policies by implementing what they called *Interculturalisme* – a way for Quebec to regulate diversity and integration into the province so as to preserve white, francophone Quebecois culture – what Julie Burelle calls Quebecois de souche culture. Before we delve deeper into theories of the intercultural, I make a note of this so that we may keep in mind that the term *interculturalisme* has a very specific history in Quebec associated to cultural

management policies, that is in many ways closer to the *Multicultural* than it is to the *intercultural*, as these terms have been theorized in Performance Studies.

Although the genealogy of the term *intercultural* as it has circulated in theater and performance studies has been carefully drafted elsewhere (Knowles 2010; *Theatre Journal* 2011), I broadly organize the evolution of the term into three waves. The first, a response to the Intercultural Theater of the 1980s, later called Transcultural theater by Lo and Gilbert (2002) or Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre by Daphne Lei (2011), primarily consisted in the appropriation of non-western performance forms by white, male directors in search of an ahistoric, universalist, utopic essence with which to fill the 'empty space' of the stage. During these earlier decades, and as the field of Performance Studies came into being, conversations on the Intercultural Theater of Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook or Ariane Mnouchkine, were primarily led by Western theorists such as Patrice Pavis, Richard Schechner or Erika Fischer-Lichte. The discourse was framed through an 'our culture/their culture' binary, and the unevenness of the playing field upon which these cultural exchanges were taking place was not contemplated in the theory.

The second wave was a response to these practices and theories in the work of scholars positioned elsewhere, who theorized intercultural performance in conversation with critical race theory, feminist theory and post-colonial theory. This was the case of Rustom Bharucha, Helen Gilbert, Joanne Tompkins, Jacqueline Lo and Christopher Balme in the late 90s early 2000s. Bharucha, Gilbert, Lo and Tompkins offer approaches with a stronger focus on ideology and on the strategies employed by post-colonial artists in reworking colonialism and neo-imperialism, while Balme (and later Knowles in *How Theatre Means*, 2014), are more concerned with a semiotic approach to intercultural performances, or what Balme calls, *syncretic* theatre. In the 2011 *Theatre Journal* Special Issue on interculturalism we find that many of these feminist and post-colonial theories were advanced and broadened by other scholars in the field. The Special Issue shows an interest in historiography that is often times absent in Performance Studies, it highlights the role of technology in intercultural encounters, and shows an interest in in South-South intercultural exchanges that don't think of the intercultural only when the West/North/European is predominant.

Most of these theories continued to center their analysis on the study of intercultural *representations*, as the first wave artists and theorists had done. That is, they focus more on "unpacking the reception and the ideological impact of our performances than in reconstructing the relational webs of labor and maintenance that keep those occasions going" (Cabranes-Grant 5). A more recent approach to the intercultural in Performance Studies – what I'm calling the third wave – is not only concerned with reading these representations, but is instead thinking through what Ric Knowles calls intercultural performance ecologies, that is "the complex ecosystem that is constituted by a city's shifting networks of "actors" – performers, performances, institutions, artists, administrators, and audiences – organized variously into companies, caucuses, committees, and communities. I use it, that is, as a metaphor" (Knowles 2017:5-6). The idea of ecologies allows us to think of systems instead of binaries or isolated events. It helps us move away from the notion that the intercultural is the result of two cultures interacting to produce a hybrid, as if before contact they existed in a pure, non-hybrid state. In his most recent book, *Performing the Intercultural City*, Knowles theorizes these intercultural performance ecologies relying on both Actor-Network-Theory and on indigenous theories of

relationality, where the term ecology is not used simply as a metaphor. He cites Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson, who explains that “the shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is *relationality* (relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality). The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is *accountability to relationships*” (Wilson qtd. in Knowles 2017:12).

Also thinking relationally, Cabranes-Grant relies on Bruno Latrouer’s Actor-Network-Theory to develop a theory of intercultural performance where the focus is less on the aesthetic, semiotic or even political dimension of intercultural *representation*, and more on the networks that sustain the becomings of intercultural scenarios. That is, to “see both the specific event we are studying and the vast network of relations that made it possible (...) (to) catch an emergent identity while it is still taking shape” (xi). Specifically, he thinks of intercultural scenarios, expanding Diana Taylor’s conception of scenarios as “a morphological template that reproduces the structural features of a foundational event” and invites us to deepen the potential of the intercultural scenario by retracing “the uncertainties and labor investments that enable it” (44). By retracing the networks that allow for its becoming, the work of Knowles and Cabranes-Grant – this third wave, if you will – resists a tendency to conceive of the intercultural in terms of hybridity or of an in-betweenness.

A network approach invites us to position ourselves less in an in-between space, and more within the complex webs that constitute becoming, so we are then able to read how “elements from different cultures re-encode their relations and redirect their meanings” (Cabranes-Grant 12). This shows how different cultures are in themselves heterogeneous becomings, instead of thinking of them as presumably homogenous non-hybrid states that produce a closed hybrid through contact. According to Cabranes-Grant’s theory of the intercultural, what contact does is intensify interculturality, not produce it, since “every culture is already a plurality of anaphoric movements and modes of existence before the so-called Other arrives” (141). Hybridity also has the problem of using a biosocial category as an analogy to explain cultural contact at other levels. As we will see in some of the following chapters, terms like *mestizaje* and *métissage* are sometimes used by artists, critics or cultural institutions as analogies to describe the productions resulting from intercultural contact – biosocial categories used to express aesthetic qualities. But these terms also have very specific histories that are not always analogical, and that have operated as social or legal categories with very specific implications in both Quebec and Mexico City. Analogies of the hybrid are therefore tied to social discourses that are too contextual to be used as the theoretical basis of a larger analysis in this project.

Intercultural scenarios conceived in this way are never static. They are constantly being re-encoded as they pass through the different actants that reproduce their becoming. “A network is not something we can grasp while at rest; networks have to be caught in the act, and most of their features can be relayed, taken over, and replicated by other means” (Cabranes-Grant 21). In this dissertation I consider the networks that produce and result from the circulation of intercultural (theater) performances between Mexico City and Quebec – as they pass through and are re-encoded by domestic and foreign policies, funding structures, creative genealogies, texts, translations, bodies moving in space, bodies staying in place, visa requirements, theater buildings, promotional materials, spoken and non-spoken languages. The idea is to catch some of these networks amidst their becoming and reassemble them in an attempt to understand them better. If, as Cabranes-Grant

argues, cultural contact produces a pressure that makes objects and people move much faster, and much of this movement is epistemic, then it would make sense to follow these moving trajectories through the circulation of meaning. Enter translation.

Translation: The Endless Negotiation

An important objective of this dissertation is to bring closer together interculturalism theories and translation theories as developed in Performance Studies. Most interculturalism scholars in our field engage with translation, and most translation scholars engage with interculturalism, but the two conversations often appear strangely distant from each other. The fact that as a discipline Performance Studies is profoundly Anglo-centric makes it pressing to shed light on the multiplicity of languages that operate in all sites, even when these are not explicitly addressed. This multiplicity often carries complex histories of colonialism and immigration that are too easily invisibilized when we aspire towards the lingua franca model. This is one of the reasons why I find Quebec to be such a rich site, as it never allows one to forget its multilingualism, the challenges of translation, and the cultural, political and historical weight of language. Language and the politics of translation are key in the construction and affirmation of Quebec's nationalist project, and this dissertation will explore the extent to which the translation of its cultural production – specifically into Mexican Spanish – has enabled Quebec's exportation and consequent assertion as a (settler) nation. The dissertation explores how language – especially the connection that colonial languages such as Spanish and French have to *latinité* – serves as a powerful weapon in the cultural wars fought across the region in the name of political and economic projects.

To the interculturalism work done by the scholars mentioned in the previous section, I wish to forefront the question of translation by highlight throughout how the networks that enable intercultural performance are constituted in translation. In this way, one of the directions the project is headed – as will become clear in chapter four – is what translation may show us about the limits of the intercultural. The epistemic movement provided by translation, even when it does not even the playing field, can help reveal its unevenness and make visible the constant labor done by those who translate in order for the English as the lingua franca model to operate. In her work on hemispheric re-mappings, Diana Taylor (2007) suggests we adopt the role of translators at the *Long Table*, and put ourselves in a position of having to work through the struggles of communicating across languages, and thus sharing in this labor. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Maria Paula Meneses and Joao Arriscado Nunes take this a step further. In *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, the authors think through the potential of translation as a knowledge-generating exercise. Similarly to what Taylor argues, the implication is that one cannot begin to have a conversation on any kind of equal terms with the predominance of a single language, and so as we establish horizontal conversations amongst a constellation of knowledges, translation becomes the method by which we communicate (or consciously fail to) across difference. As Santos, Meneses and Nunes state:

The theory of translation allows common ground to be identified in an indigenous struggle, a feminist struggle, an ecological struggle, etc., without erasing the

autonomy and difference of each of them. Translation is also fundamental to the articulation between the diverse and specific intellectual and cognitive resources that are expressed through the various modes of producing knowledge about counter-hegemonic initiatives and experiences, aimed at redistribution and recognition and the construction of new configurations of knowledge anchored in local, situated forms of experience and struggle (xxvi).

The goal then is to pay attention to how translation is operating in the networks that enable intercultural performance, and to how these dialogic processes gestate new configurations of knowledge that produce many of the regional imaginaries explored in this project.

Most importantly, these dialogic processes are continuous. Translation requires a practice of uprooting from origin and a consequent and constant displacement that makes it impossible for us to read these transactions as either binary or closed. Posing the question of how art can inhabit globalized culture in the face of the standardization presupposed by globalization, Nicolas Bourriaud develops the notion of *radicant* art, “*radicant* being a term designating an organism that grows its roots and adds new ones as it advances” (22). In doing so, he relies heavily on translation as the way to understand art in the global era, where the journey of the *radicant* is produced through a series of translations that avoid capture, fixity or essentialization. Bourriaud explains:

Translation, which collectivizes the meaning of a discourse and sets in motion an object of thought by inserting it into a chain, thus diluting its origin in multiplicity, constitutes a mode of resistance against the generalized imposition of formats and a kind of formal guerilla warfare. The basic principle of guerilla warfare is to keep one’s fighting forces in constant motion; that way, they avoid detection and retain their ability to act. In the cultural field, such warfare is defined by the passage of signs through heterogeneous territories, and by the refusal to allow artistic practice to be assigned to a specific, identifiable, and definitive field (131).

So while we will find that identifiable categorizations are often activated in the constitution of the cultural networks studied here, especially in the use of *latinité* as a maker of cultural affinity and as the go-to explanation for much more complex interactions, a focus on translation throughout (and its warfare against over-simplification and fixity) aims to make this heterogeneity visible where it has often been obscured. And theater, as an object already always in motion, changing from one performance to the next, proves a rich site for the reassembly of these chains.

So what do I mean by translation and how exactly will it be present in this dissertation? As a way to distinguish translation from other kinds of interpretation or reproduction (a translation scholar is constantly asking themselves – is this translation?), William Hanks argues that “translation both *refers to* and *paraphrases* its source text” (my emphasis, 2014:18). Under this definition, a translation-oriented approach will allow us to understand how diverse layers of intercultural exchange reveal the politics of paraphrasing and referencing meaning in another context. It is key here that translation is not understood as a linear, binary process (rendering meaning from L1 to L2), but as the circulation of meaning, where this work of paraphrasing and referencing implies shifting

back and forth, as meaning is transported and constituted through different actants. Cabranes-Grant explains this using Bruno Latour's distinction,

(...) between translations (the transfers that make the circulations of meaning possible) and purifications (a tendency to introduce sharp separations between things, persons, and animals). Purifications prefer binary constructions – like human/nonhuman and object/subject – while translations tend to expand and proliferate as they “shuttle back and forth” through their networks (19-20).

The circulation of meaning in a translation process is also highlighted by Hanks, who argues that cross-linguistic translation is “a metalinguist process that takes place in a space of asymmetric difference and produces change in either or both of the languages. The direction, scope, and depth of change are historically variable” (2014:19). Translation therefore constantly produces change, and the conditions of this change often reveal the asymmetric differences amongst the cultures involved. Translation as an incommensurable space is an extremely productive site for art and theory-making as it is never neutral; it always carries an ideology and in its action, it reveals as it obscures. As translation theorist Lawrence Venuti states, “the identity-formation power of translation always threatens to embarrass cultural and political institutions because it reveals the shaky foundations of their social authority” (1998:68). In its search for a common denominator that will produce commensuration between “incommensurable cultural worlds” or at the very least, “bring them into alignment” (Hanks, 2014:30), translation makes visible the choice of certain meanings over others, and the politics of this choice. The project then carries the questions: If translation both reveals and obscures, what is being obscured? How are the artists situating these choices, and how does the obscured continue to affect the network as a less visible actant? Or could it be that what is obscured from one angle, will quickly shift into visibility from a different perspective, if only for a moment?

In relation to the circulation of meaning in translation, being specific about the type of movement taking place will be important throughout the project. For example, in the study of a production that will travel to both Mexico City and Quebec audiences, the *translocation* of language will be a key operation. Translocation is defined by Geert Thyssen and Karin Priem as “any kind of movement of texts, images, objects, etc., separately or together, from space to space and time to time and to the changes of meaning that can go along with that movement” (741). This implies transportation, constant movement, and invites us to attend to the geochronicity of these circulations, and we will find throughout the dissertation – especially in chapter three – that there are moments in which the translocation of language does not work as well. Whereas in chapter four, where a Quebecois text is translated into Mexican Spanish and produced in Mexico City, the type of movement taking place is closer to dialogism, that is, when the movement is occurring *within* the text itself. Dialogism is what happens to speech or text or a play when it speaks more than one voice. So that when you have a French text in a Spanish translation, the text is dialogized because even though it is in one or the other language, the language that it is not in is always present as a shadow. Thus, there is a shadow language and a visible language, so that the text shimmers with the dual ambivalence and ambiguity of being simultaneously say in Mexican Spanish and in Quebecois French. This is part of a text's ability to give rise to multiple interpretations, part of its dynamism and part of the way it

crosses boundaries. Because translation, as much as it creates bridges between languages, also creates boundaries. That is, if you tell me something in English and I render it in Spanish, I am creating the difference between the English and the Spanish in my attempt to produce equivalence. What dialogism allows the text to do is to go beyond that boundary, since one and the same text shimmers in the two (or more) languages. This logic follows Cabranes-Grant argument that boundaries, in the context of colonial Mexico “were not only crossed or passed through, but *carried along* and inhabited” (117). By bodies, yes, but also by objects. In this case, dramatic text.

Beyond conventional expectations of translation as a practice that is limited to linguistic and primarily text-based forms, I believe theater collaborations as sites account for the multiplicity of translation forms constantly operating within intra- as well as intercultural spaces. And in all cases, keeping in mind Bourriaud’s observation that “no speech bears the seal of any sort of “authenticity.”” (44) In this project linguistic translation is understood as one of many forms of cultural translation, and I will begin at natural language in order to move towards other dimensions of translation. Intercultural artistic collaboration represents a communal form of translation where intercultural systems of meaning production (spoken languages, gesture, artistic training, aesthetic culture, cultures of funding and support) are negotiated in an in-person setting, and are constantly paraphrased and referenced in shifting contexts. In the reassembly of the networks that enable intercultural and international theater collaborations, the diverse social, historical and cultural dimensions of these relationships are rendered visible. Beyond the representations themselves, an analysis of the different infrastructures through which much of this translation takes place reveals the complex ideologies that motivate and regulate the conditions of contact.

Let me provide an example of what I mean by going beyond the analysis of the intercultural representation and paying attention to other forms of translation that enable or render impossible the production of these representations in the first place. It is common in multilingual plays for us to find the opacity of translation as a central theme, as is the case of *La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien* (Chapter 3). As we will see in that chapter, the trilingual show follows many of the tropes of the multilingual play, and we find that mistranslation is what moves the action forward in the fiction of the play. Yet once we go beyond the study of the representation itself, we find that in order for a co-production to be possible, transparency, and not opacity, becomes the goal. We find that the two companies underwent a complicated process of cultural translation in search of the transparency necessary to produce the exchange, and that it was not always successful enough to materially sustain the production. So although opacity between cultures as a theme is recurrent in intercultural representations, transparency in the production process is indispensable, especially when dealing with money. Intercultural collaboration necessitates certain levels of trust to be established through complex – and often frustrating – forms of cultural translation. Furthermore, establishing trust in these conditions requires time, which requires more money, and rarely do funding structures account for these needs in their support of international work. Thus, the dissertation explores how these translation processes are constantly taking place in the context of natural languages and aesthetic languages on stage, but also in the context of work culture, funding policies and of the cultural industries of the two places.

As we move into the specifics of the Mexico City-Quebec theater exchanges of the last three decades, we do so with the understanding that in those interactions, significant imaginative and translation work is being undertaken. In the readings of these networks I bring forth an awareness of how ambivalences around the designations of space and time have produced regional maps and fixed ideas of nation that are both oppressive and insufficient. And yet, these same ambivalences give flexibility to the *imaginaire* – understood as the ways in which we apprehend reality – in the process of producing ideas of region that in turn, regulate interactions in the material realm.

Nation and Imaginaire

Finally, it is essential to expand on what is understood here by *imaginaire* (French), *imaginario* (Spanish), imaginary. In his study of Spanish colonization in Mexico, *La colonización del imaginario*, French historian Serge Gruzinski examines how European contact changed indigenous perceptions of the real and the imagined. In this study, he understands *imaginaire* as the “modos de aprehender la realidad [modes of grasping reality],” to include the ways in which time and space unfold, as well as the ideas of society, person, the divine and the supernatural that sustain systems of representation and systems of power. These modes are expressed in how societies “representaban, memorizaban y comunicaban lo que concebían como la realidad o mejor dicho *su* realidad [represented, memorized and communicated what they conceived as reality, or better said, *their* reality]” (269). According to Gruzinski, the Jesuit pedagogy through which the *imaginaire* was colonized in what is today Mexico, operated not only through spoken language or pictorial images, but in the construction of embodied, subjective experiences that appealed to fear and fascination, specifically through religious rituals. The westernization of indigenous imaginaries in Mexico operated as much through affect and embodied rituals as it did through other means, as it:

...anima procesos más profundos y más determinantes: la evolución de la representación de la persona y de las relaciones entre los seres, la transformación de los códigos figurativos y gráficos, de los medios de expresión y de transmisión del saber, la mutación de la temporalidad y de la creencia, en fin, la redefinición de lo imaginario y de lo real.

[...animates more profound and determinant processes: the evolution of the representation of person and of the relationships between people, the transformation of figurative and graphic codes, of the modes of expression and of the transmission of knowledge, the mutation of temporality and of belief, in short, the redefinition of the imaginary and of the real] (407).

As has become clear, this dissertation is concerned with how a region is imagined through the contact produced primarily by theater experiences. If we take Gruzinski’s conception of the imagined, theater and its affective and even cathartic potential plays an important role in the implementation of culturally structured subjective experiences that shape imaginaries. Imaginaries, with their own, fluctuating geographies, determine the ways in which we apprehend reality – they influence how we consume, work, vote, travel,

relocate, how we interact with those who travel or relocate to where we are, and how and who we communicate with. In his reading of global scapes in the late twentieth century, Indian cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai also relies heavily on the notion of imagination, arguing that “the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (31). Taking this lead, throughout the dissertation I explore how this imaginative labor operates both at the level of the intangible – ideas – and at the level of material systems.

Appadurai outlined a methodology for the study of cultural objects in a globalized era that looked beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and observed instead a series of global flows through five different dimensions: *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *mediascapes*, and *ideoscapes*. In this approach, he foregrounds media and migration as the two major constituents of a modern subjectivity effected from the work of the imagination (3). Yet unlike other media, theater requires people and not only objects to cross borders, and this fact alone produces important tensions when thinking of globalization in relation to Appadurai’s *mediascape*, as it becomes impossible to deny the direct impact of the nation-state in the global circulation of theater as a cultural product. The nation-state must be considered in how it shapes and filters exchange through regulations, and in the nationalist and internationalist narratives that influence the production of localized imaginaries. So as much as this study relies on the notion of global scapes, it does not share the Appadurian premise that the nation-state is at the end of its days and will soon be dissolved. In his book on the politics of cultural production, Indian performance scholar Rustom Bharucha argues that “unlike Schechner’s rather cavalier distinction between ‘nations’ (which are ‘official’) and ‘cultures’ (which are assumedly ‘free’), I have no such illusion that intercultural interactions can be entirely free from the mediations of the nation-state” (4). I too hold the hypothesis that nation-states, their borders, their policies and the imaginative labor that enables them, have direct implications on cultural forms of collaboration. Especially when reading Quebec as a nation without a state and its relationship to Canada, it becomes essential to consider the implications of the nation-state in the constitution of these flows. If anything, the project shows how cultural markers such as *latinité* are framed as being freer or more mobile than other markers in order to ground specific national and regional projects.

Gruzinski’s work is useful as it evidences the power of the *imaginaire* in establishing a material reality, and Appadurai’s line of reasoning reveals the possibilities of agency provided by the labor of imagining. In the networks and cases studied here we won’t find an *imaginaire*-building apparatus as extensive and as intrusive as the one operated by the Spanish missionaries during the colony, which shifted the imaginative practices of entire communities, nor will the imaginative labor be explored outside of the –scapes of the nation-state, as is intended by Appadurai. In this study, the imaginative labor performed in the production and reception of theater experiences is activated primarily by theater artists and their publics, as well as by diplomats and public servants at diverse cultural institutions structured under conceptions of the national. In many of these cases we will see an inherited imaginative apparatus that was projected onto the Americas in the 19th Century in the form of the Latin/Anglo dichotomy that is deeply engrained in the regional imaginative practices of the 21st Century.

Nation-states as conceived from a westernized perspective must be imagined in order for them to be practiced. Irish political historian Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (4), so that nationality, nation-ness or nationalism – these “cultural artifacts” – are imagined by its members into being. These individuals will never meet all other members of that community, but are able to imagine these anonymous others as being contained within the same boundaries of a specific nation, one that is free and sovereign in relation to all others. In addition to affect and experience as outlined by Gruzinski, I rely on Anderson to consider how imagining these bounded, spatial geographies takes place through other means; from print-capitalism that provided the technical means for these imaginings to be reproduced and distributed – especially through the novel and the newspaper – to other classificatory technologies that provided the means for the organization and the delimitation of the imagined, bounded concept of nation. Specifically, census, map and museum.

According to Anderson, both the census and the map provided the technology for a totalizing classification that operated under constant surveillance of geography and people. The map represented what was there at the same time that it became a model of what it purported to represent – that is, it concretized a projection. And then, “by a sort of demographic triangulation, the census filled in politically the formal topography of the map” (174). Both in the case of Nouvelle-France, Canada and Mexico, colonial maps have served as “an instrument of certainty through which the nation-state and ensuing settlers achieve a sense of political, legal and even sentimental entitlement to the land” (Hunt and Stevenson 375). The construction of this affective bond produced by the map was then constantly solidified by official narratives through other technologies. Museums, and the political act of producing what Anderson calls “the museumizing imagination,” grounded this totalizing classificatory grid into narrative. One of the things dissertation will examine is how alternative ways of imagining geographies position this political museumizing in constant struggle with a diversity of narratives that expose both the violence and the limited character of its totalizing grid. For, as French philosopher Michel de Certeau argues, “the dispersion of stories points to the dispersion of the memorable as well. And in fact memory is a sort of anti-museum: it is not localizable” (108). These three institutions importantly shaped nationalist imaginaries both in Mexico (city and country), and in Quebec (city and province). In both cases, the way that colonial powers imagined and classified the populations (census), the geography (maps) and the historical narratives (museums), determine the ways in which these communities imagine themselves today, and thus, the conditions under which North America may be imagined (and thus, practiced) from these two perspectives.

In order to imagine a region, nations must first be imagined, even when they are imagined outside the classificatory grid of the nation-state – as is the case of Quebec as a nation without a state, and of Mexico City, the centralized core of a nation-state that extends its geographical reach beyond its limits. Once the boundaries of these nations are imagined, the possibilities of their porousness, the forms of contact with other nations to produce new, bounded regional geographies, can begin to be imagined. In the case of this dissertation we find that contact between Mexico City and Quebec is not geographical – we are separated by a cultural, linguistic, economic and physical giant that is materially and, in our imaginations, almost impossible to ignore and from which in many instances, we must

protect ourselves. Mexico City and Quebec are the nodes where contact is being imagined and enacted, bounded by a larger region within which both are imagined as marginal to different extents. Geographic regions, just as nations, require of this labor in order to be experienced as real. Contact, before it can be material, must be articulated through ideas that determine the way in which we apprehend the world, and this work of imagination will then produce (many times through force) the material conditions that make it possible.

Enter NAFTA

In order to deepen our reading of how contact and exchange operate within these geographic demarcations, space must be understood not only as material, but also as an occupied, constant site of struggle for ways of imagining. French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu invites us to think in terms of both physical space and social space – the former referring to where an agent or thing may be located, and the latter referring to the position that they hold within a given social order. Here, a distinction between place and space is necessary. De Certeau describes space as a practiced place – “in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken” (117). So while place indicates the configuration of positions, space requires mobile elements that intervene – practice – that place. Mobility and the body become essential in producing space, specifically, social space: “The progressive inscription into bodies of the structures of the social order is perhaps accomplished, for the most part, *via moves and movements of the body, via the bodily poses and postures*” (Bourdieu 15). In a specific spatiality, these practices will produce or maintain a certain social order through mobility in physical place. What we will see in this dissertation is how mobility that expands into another spatiality will inscribe new meaning into different places, so that the region *becomes* a social space with its own symbolic positions via movement across place. This movement happens as much through physical bodies traversing physical geographies, as it does in the production, translation and circulation of narratives that transform place into space and space into place. These stories delimitate borders of all kinds, they fix as they describe the limits of contact, thus setting social practices in place.

There is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers. In this organization, the story plays a decisive role. It “describes,” to be sure. But “every description is more than a fixation,” it is “a culturally creative act.” It even has distributive power and performative force (it does what it says) when an ensemble of circumstances is brought together. Then it founds spaces. (de Certeau 123)

Many of the narratives studied in this dissertation – from official national discourses and funding policies, to the artists’ performances that resist or simply overlook these discourses – evidence the work of founding space through story. The important thing here is to never lose sight of the fact that in this same region, diverse relationships between time, space and travel are simultaneously operating.

Since the signing of NAFTA in 1994, notions of North America have primarily been tied to trade. Although perhaps in the imagination of many the signing of the treaty suggested a move towards integration at different levels (economic, cultural and perhaps even political), the truth is that the treaty itself was both specific and narrow. According to NAFTA specialist Robert Pastor, “if one judges NAFTA by the specific goals written in the

agreement, it was successful. NAFTA aimed to dismantle trade and investment barriers, and it accomplished that. As a result, trade tripled, and foreign direct investment increased by six times in North America since 1994.” (8) The growth that Pastor describes can be seen primarily from 1994 to 2001, before the 9/11 attacks. It was only after 2001 that borders began to close and integration at all levels became stagnant. The treaty aimed, unlike the European Union, to affirm sovereignties in keeping the three countries separate, yet working together under the understanding that the only way to solve the problems of the region (drugs, immigration, labor, financial crises, etc.) was to think of them as regional problems instead of either domestic or foreign.

In his cited study and his last publication on the subject, *The North America Idea*, Pastor argues that in order for this “idea” to succeed, its leaders need to implant it into the minds of their peoples as a *good* idea – what I’m calling here, trickle-down imagining. According to him, North America as a regional project could only succeed if people were convinced it was the best (and perhaps the only) way to solve many domestic problems. One of Pastor’s greatest frustrations is that leaders of the region never took this task seriously, with the exception of Mexican president Vicente Fox Quesada (2000-2006). Although I acknowledge that Pastor is representative of those in the United States elite who are “friends of Mexico” who champion dialogue and cooperation amongst the three countries, his vision behind the creation of NAFTA is a limited one. This vision thinks first, from the perspective of its leaders, second, from the perspective of the United States as the main actor of the region, and third, from the perspective of trade. In this approach there is no attention to how this “idea” operates at other levels – that is, socially and culturally. In the shaping of the North American Idea as conceived by Pastor, the intercultural challenges of the endeavor are readily overlooked. Echoing Rustom Bharucha’s observation made in the context of India, “I continue to be struck by how the intercultural continues to be invoked more readily by artists than by political thinkers, or by philosophers, or for that matter, by politicians (who have become increasingly more eloquent on the virtues of multiculturalism)” (3). From the perspective of Performance Studies, the absence of interculturalism in the political discourse around regional becomings is apparent and alarming. As was previously discussed, studies of North America need recognize the dichotomies based on cultural narratives that ground the region in imagined space and that have regulated it materially.

The monolithic idea of North America as a fixed, regulated, tri-National geographical demarcation has failed both in our imaginings and in the material practices that derive from these, as is proved by Pastor’s own frustration with the course NAFTA had taken until his death in 2014. Yet at the same time, he was unwilling to listen to those who exposed the limitations of this multilateral project from the beginning, and was quick to dismiss the role played by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in questioning the possibilities of the treaty during the time that it came into effect. The Zapatistas are a left-wing libertarian-socialist militant group created in 1994, made up mostly of indigenous peoples (primarily Maya) of the Southern state of Chiapas, who on January 1st 1994 (the day NAFTA came into effect) declared war on the Mexican government and against the rise of neoliberalism. The resistance posed by the EZLN against NAFTA made visible Mexico’s deep intraculturalism, and exposed the elitist interests that were behind the treaty. It also made apparent the monolithic conception of the region under which the treaty was created, and the lack of attention paid to the intracultural challenges it presented. It is

surprising that someone as invested in NAFTA's success as Robert Pastor would be so unwilling to address these complexities.

The artists, theater publics, and the cultural agencies involved in the networks and cases studied here are dealing head-on with these intercultural challenges and doing the imaginative labor necessary to materialize relationships across the region, but it is not a one-size fits all, single idea of North America, the way it is conceived by Pastor. Instead, the project reveals how it is primarily through the Latin/Anglo dichotomy that many of these collaborations are framed, packaged and circulated, and yet at a close glance, this dichotomy proves itself to be similarly insufficient. The dissertation explores how constant contact, exchange, trade and other forms of interdependence are taking place in these collaboration, where strong, trust-based relationships are being across the region – beyond trade as conceived by NAFTA, beyond the United States, beyond the countries' official leadership (even when these are always present and active), and beyond a Latin/Anglo dichotomy. The project argues that the work done by artists, theater publics and cultural agencies invested in theatre exchanges between Mexico City and Quebec, is not only the work of re-imagining North America as a region, but the work of re-creating it through diverse flows in continuous processes of translation. They are not re-imagining the region as a political region, so much as they are creating relationships that require us to imagine this geographical space through the complexities of the cultural. Only in a few moments do we find explicit attempts to re-imagine North America as the block of three nation-states, and it is usually tied to diplomatic encounters. That is to say, the trickle-down imaginative labor that Pastor describes is not the kind of imaginative labor that we will find is being taken on by the cultural actors studied in this dissertation, nor is it the most productive. If anything, the *latinité* framing being activated in many of these exchanges is asking us to imagine North America in opposition to itself, or at least always dictated by the tensions of the binary.

What makes these case studies particularly complex – and hence, interesting – is that there is no clear separation between the official and the non-official (as there is, for example, between the leadership that signed NAFTA and the EZLN). Here, national discourse and policy put forth by governments is being enacted by the same actors who are doing parallel forms of imaginative labor – the deeper forms that contend with the challenges of the intercultural, and not only the international. According to Anderson, “the effect of the grid was always to be able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it *belonged* here, not there” (my emphasis, 184). As we will see throughout the dissertation, cultural government actors of the two provinces make use of the totalizing power provided by the technologies of the classificatory grid at the level of *nation*, in order to assert their regional belonging through contact with another bounded, imagined community. In the use of these technologies, much becomes obscured – as we will find in Quebec's *de souche* cultural policies and in Mexico's institutional invisibilization of race. But we also find actors who make use of these same infrastructures to produce much more complex forms of contact and exchange that nuance these regional imaginaries in significant ways.

I urge us to think beyond *imaginaire* as monolithic – operating in the same way for all subjective experiences of all subjects in a community. That is certainly how Anderson works with the term, and even how Gruzinski explores the indigenous *imaginarie* of the very diverse populations of what would be constituted as Mexico. But as soon as we begin to think inter-culturally, we realize that this is never the case. This study provides a

counter-imaginary to a blockage, represented so explicitly by the U.S. today, that both obstructs travel and monopolizes regional imaginaries in which Mexico City and Quebec rarely belong, albeit only marginally. To begin with, it is not centered on the U.S. or on Anglo-exchanges. We will also see in the second chapter how most of the initiatives and labor that generate, activate and keep networks active come not from the “leaders” of the region, but from artists (especially translators) and from a handful of cultural institutions that motivate diverse forms of contact and exchange. These don’t represent an “Idea of North America,” but are instead “ideas across North America” – that imagine and enact crosses that consolidate forms of regional belonging through particular, dialogic scenarios. The flows, networks and exchanges that this dissertation traces provide an alternate reading of that region, one that reads these sites not as places, but as becomings. The project explores the premise that what is being reimagined, then, is not so much a region in which a consensus of a new geographic, political or even cultural demarcation is reached and imposed, but instead, it is belonging, a being in and of a place in relation to others, a place that is itself always in transit and that is being reimagined through mistranslation.

In the work of imagining nation and region across North America, I have foregrounded the inherited dichotomy that divides the Latin from the Anglo in the form of *latinité*. This imaginative tool has historically been used as a project of the Creole elites, at the same time that it has grounded a configuration, imagined as cultural but grounded in the political and economical, in which the North has been conceived of as the ‘natural’ leader of the south. As the following chapter will explore in detail, this imaginative tool has in turn been used to explain the Mexico-Quebec relationship based on a premise of cultural affinities while primarily intended to garner political power across the region. Thus, a reading of North America, particularly after NAFTA, necessitates deep consideration to the cultural dimension of these dynamics if we are to understand the political and economic implications of imagining and regulating the region.

In order to do so, I put forth an understanding of the intercultural as a series of moving webs and networks that allow us to account as much for the infrastructures as it does for the nuances of the aesthetics that enable and produce these intercultural encounters. Under the premise that contact intensifies more than it produces interculturality, reading the region through these intercultural scenarios complicates *latinité* and shows it to be insufficient – albeit necessary – in explaining the complex process of re-signification that is provoked by contact. For this reason, the project relies on translation – a process of constant re-encoding and negotiation – to reassemble the scenarios through which the region continues its becoming.

Chapter 2. Stagings of a Latin North America

About Latin America, it seems, we can say what Bernard Williams said of religion:
“It will be hard to give it up even if it is an illusion.”

Mauricio Tenorio-Tello 32

Introduction

The idea of Latin America is central to understanding regional imaginings of North America, especially those produced by the exchanges discussed in this project. Specifically, the concept of *latinité* is often used to activate a discourse of cultural affinity through which the Mexico-Quebec relationship is explained. This chapter explores how the Mexico City-Quebec theatre-based relationship of the last three decades has engaged *latinité* as an imaginative tool, and reveals instances where the narratives that imagine the region through this lens enable cultural policies that, once implemented, often contradict these very narratives. *Latinité* operates both at the level of the imaginary – how certain communities are imagined as cultural allies – and at the level of the networks that materially connect these communities. That is to say, in order for the network to succeed, cultural affinity must be a guiding principle in the narratives it stages, but simultaneously, in order for the network to succeed, it requires resources and infrastructures that are determined by other economic and political interests that often contradict the imaginative work generated through *latinité*. These interests often have little to do with cultural affinities per se, and much more to do with diverse domestic and multilateral agendas at any given time.

The chapter attempts to catch these networks in motion as they are re-encoded by the diverse actants that constitute them, while tracing the narratives through which they are re-imagined as part of the region. It begins with a genealogy of *latinité* and the dichotomies it stages, first as an imaginative tool, and then in how these ideas are manifested and supported materially. It considers how this imaginative tool was put to work during the post-WWII period in a series of alliances between nationalist Catholic groups of Mexico and Quebec, the only significant precedent of a cultural relationship between the two places. It then considers how ideas of the public and its associations to a collective good have shaped public arts and culture institutions in both Mexico City and Quebec, and how institutional and funding design, albeit public in both places, differs so to produce important asymmetries in the relationship.

The next sections reassemble the networks of cultural exchange in the last three decades, starting with the signing of NAFTA in the 1990s. Their purpose is two-fold – first, offer a detailed retelling of some of the most significant nodes of the network, as to date there exists no clear map of these exchanges or of the general trends of their circulation. Second, offer a reading of how the concept of *latinité* has been activated in the processes of imagining a cultural alliance, and simultaneously, of establishing these imaginings as a network. The chapter traces how imaginings of North America as a region prompted directed investment in the Mexico – Quebec relationship in art and culture, first as stagings of cultural diplomatic encounters, and consequently in a series of exchange programs. The final sections explore how *latinité* was activated in different forms of exchange, starting

with festivals such as the Festival des théâtre des amériques, where the geographical reach of the term was activated in an imagining of a Latin North America, but also embodied through travelling artists and theater products. Similarly, the chapter looks at children's theater and the co-production model of exchange, as well as the translation network generated in the first decade of the 21st Century. Finally, it considers the figure of the translator as a node, focusing on the role of Boris Schoemann, whose own positionality as a French-Mexican artists suggest a specific type of *latinité* that has allowed him to become the primary node of this complex network.

***Latinité* as an Imaginative Tool**

The origins of the idea of Latin America can be traced to the mid-1850s, and the term has since been re-shaped and adapted into very different projects. Yet in almost all its iterations, the connotation of Latin America as a cultural place is recurrent – and it is the *latine* in *l'Amérique latine* what produces a cultural place for which there exists no tangible geographical or historical reality. This intangibility alludes to an immaterial space of cultural affinity that grants the term the ability to include a range of histories and geographies in vague and flexible ways, thus providing ample imaginative possibilities. As Mauricio Tenorio-Tello argues in his history of the idea of Latin America, “the power of the term lies precisely in its ability to be taken for granted – serving less the supposition of a place, a culture, and a people, and more the need of the other America for a mirror.” (2)

It is no surprise then, that *latinité* would be used in the 20th Century and into the new millennium as an imaginative tool in the creation of North America as a region. The dichotomy that grounds the concept of *latinité* – one that opposes the Anglo-Saxon Protestant to the Romance Catholic – provides an obvious division of the region that imagines Mexico and Quebec as situated on the same side of this cultural divide. The strategy of appealing to a shared *latinité* across the hemisphere is part of a colonial history in which Quebec's *latinité* has played a key role. In its positionality as English-Canada's periphery, invoking this strategy has allowed Quebec to connect through a shared complicity with Latin America as they resist a growing Anglo-Saxon empire in the Americas. Simultaneously, Mexico has relied on *latinité* and both the idea and material realities of Latin America to position itself as a central actor in relation to Central and South America. As North America began to be discursively imagined and materially regulated as a region in the 1990s, Mexico would find in Quebec a *latine* ally to the North. As the chapter explores, this imaginative tool continues to boost Mexico City and Quebec as regional actors both through discourse and as it sustains the material networks that ground this cultural alliance.

The first articulation of *latinité* was intended to imagine Northern France and Southern France as culturally distinct – the North representing entrepreneurial and rational ways of being, and the South as the place where Romance vernaculars were still spoken and bullfighting took place. There was a geographical component to this concept, but it was delimited more in the imagined terms of North/South, than in any material border. Politically, *latinité* represented a resistance to the centralization of power in Paris, and called for cultural alliances between Southern France and its Mediterranean neighbors. In this way, *latinité* has meant both French regionalism, and *méditerranéité* (a unification of Latin cultures of Southern Europe), thus initially sustaining a project of Franco-Spanish or

Italian commercial and military alignment based on ideas of cultural affinity. Most importantly, *latinité* was used to imagine distinct communities as unified through a cultural closeness and, significantly, *in opposition to* a stronger, regional political power with whom this cultural affinity was not shared. That is, military and/or commercial projects sustained through an imaginative tool – *latinité* – that provides a narrative of cultural closeness.

Once *latinité* as an imaginative tool was projected onto the Americas, *l’Amérique latine* was first imagined. “Indeed the opposition of Anglo vs. Latin in the Americas was a peculiar recasting of lasting European dichotomies” (Tenorio-Tello 4). Articulated in Paris by Chilean Francisco Bilbao, in what is known as the Bilbao Law, Latin America initially referred to South America – with the exception of Brazil and Paraguay, and excluding Mexico. This geographical ambiguity continues to operate in the use of the term, and is what has made it possible to conceive Quebec as part of *l’Amérique latine* through quick, discursive gestures. In his conception of this imagined region (since no clear geography was strictly demarcated), Bilbao states that Latins,

have not lost the tradition of human destiny’s spirituality. We believe in, and love, everything that unites; we prefer the social over the individual, beauty over wealth, justice over power, art over commerce, poetry over industry, philosophy over texts, absolute spirit over calculations, duty over interest (qtd. in Tenorio-Tello, 6).

In this description, the constituent elements of *latinité* are expressed as generally broad values – unity, justice, duty – as well as intangible ethos – spirituality, love, beliefs – and specific cultural practices – art, poetry, philosophy. It is also clear in this description that *latinité* and its various iterations as Latin America, *América Latina* or *l’amérique latine* (each of these conveying different meanings depending on context), have historically represented a resistance, a negativity, an opposition, as much as they attempt to express a “real” reality, a deep sense of something deeper. When it once signified an opposition to Northern France, it has since, and at different times, embodied an alternative ontology, a resistance to U.S. imperialism, to individualism and materialism, to the Protestant world, to modernization, assimilation and imitation. As the Bilbao Law expresses, *latinité* activates a series of dichotomies that privilege the spiritual, aesthetic, collective and affective – beauty/wealth, justice/power, art/commerce, poetry/industry, absolute spirit/calculations, philosophy/texts – as well as an American-Catholic / Saxon-Yankee Protestant cultural opposition. As an imaginative tool, then, *latinité* prompts us to imagine communities bound by shared values and practices, and through an imagined cultural negativity. In the material realm, the term has produced narratives of cultural closeness and resistance as a way to justify certain behaviors, alliances and political actions. As this chapter will show, an analysis of the networks themselves reveals how the idea and the practices prompted by *latinité* often oppose each other.

In looking at the origins of the term, it does not come as a surprise that the Mexico-Quebec relationship is often explained through this imaginative tool – since *latinité* readily encapsulates two of the things that make these places *not* be Protestant Anglo-Saxon, that is, Catholicism and Romance languages. It invokes an idea of cultural closeness through these differentiating markers, one activated since mid-19th century in the service of varying military and commercial projects. Not long after its first iterations, *latinité* as an imaginative tool served an important purpose in justifying the French Second Empire

(1852-1870), and the invention of the term Latin America is for this reason often attributed to Napoleon III of France (Rouiqué). Although this was not so, the French monarch certainly put the term to work at producing an idea of the Americas – a Latin America – that united Latin-Roman Catholic cultures in order to prevent U.S. expansion and successfully install an extension of the French monarchy in Mexico. By creating a cultural identity that excluded countries of British heritage, and implied a cultural kinship with France, Napoleon III hoped to strengthen his colonial project in the Americas. In this way, the region was imagined through notions of *latinité* that opposed U.S. expansionism, and using this same marker, the network was established as a commercial and political project of the French empire.

This shows once again how the term has historically been used to amalgamate different cultures in the name of diverse imperial interests, relying on common markers or cultural affinities to produce an *idea* of region that brings together different communities. The networks analyzed here rely heavily on the imaginative possibilities of *latinité*, and as the chapter will show, this imaginative tool more often than not works to overshadow material realities that fall outside of the spatial confines demarcated by *latinité*, specifically as the term relies on contemporary political demarcations of nation-states. This implies considerable obscuring of other sovereignties, particularly those of First Nations or other Indigenous groups whose artists have collaborated across the continent and yet are downright absent from the majority of the networks analyzed in this chapter.⁴ If anything, *latinité* as an imaginative tool supports itself through the activation of an accepted mestizaje/métissage narrative that has been taken up historically by Latin American voices in dire need of an acceptable form of mestizaje. Yet in the end, it remains primarily about different European imperial projects, even when these are many and diverse, since indigeneity operates in these narratives of mestizaje/metissage only as a dejected element that legitimizes the Nationalist projects of both Mexico and Quebec.

This approved form of mestizaje is particularly important for intellectuals across the Americas, even though the form and specific discourses that it takes up remain fraught territories. As the analysis provided of *La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien* in later chapters shows, the artists included in this study have readily activated *latinité* and mestizaje/métissage to explain the aesthetic qualities as well as the cultural and regional significance of their collaborations. And yet, even when the material networks are established on the premises of this imaginative tool, they are not necessarily sustained by the behaviors or actions implied by its connotations. The dichotomies set forth by the Bilbao Law continue to be activated in the imagined becomings that are continuously staged and circulated across North America, where networks of cultural production, such as theatre, have proven apt stages for the imagining and enactment of these dichotomies.

Latinité and its Material Realities

Although it is key to understand the intangible quality of *latinité* that suggests a cultural place without any specific geographical or historical demarcation (and that makes it such a powerful imaginative tool) there are ways in which the ideas associated to the term are

⁴ For more on the work done by Montreal-based company Ondinnok, see <http://www.ondinnok.org/en/> and “Chapter 5” in Burelle.

grounded in material ways. Some of the elements that constitute *latinité* as expressed in the Bilbao Law – such as art, spirituality or philosophy – operate also in material systems, such as religious, cultural or educational institutions through which these cultural alliances are established as networks.

A good example of how *latinité* has been used as an imaginative tool to activate alliances through institutional networks are the mid-20th Century exchanges between Mexican and Quebecois civil actors. These early maps of cultural alliance express how the imagined elements of *latinité* were used to produce a material network that aimed to strengthen Catholic groups domestically, specifically through religious and educational institutions. It is significant that these networks were established outside of official diplomatic networks by non-government actors looking to further their political capital domestically, given that Canada didn't gain full sovereignty of its foreign relations until 1931, and that it wasn't until 1965 that Quebec gained the authority to act internationally in any official capacity through the Gérin-Lajoie Doctrine⁵. And so it was in the 1940s that a group of Quebecois nationalists found in Mexico an important cultural and political ally. In his study of these transnational relations between Mexico and Quebec, Quebecois historian Maurice Demers argues that “the transnational *imaginarie* of nationalists in Quebec and Catholics in Mexico interconnected during the 1940s to produce lasting ties (...). Latin identity became the symbolic nexus of their mutual agendas” (37).

Basing the relationship on a premise of cultural affinity built on a discourse of a shared *latinité*, groups associated to traditional values and national ideals established the first substantial relationship of exchange. The key constituent elements of *latinité* that were activated were Catholicism and the opposition of art/culture vs. commerce, so that the majority of these exchanges would take place through Catholic institutions, including schools. In the years of World War II – in great part due to severed ties with Europe – a series of religious visits and student exchanges were organized between Mexico and Quebec, led by conservative scholars and Catholic spokespeople. These cultural exchanges were primarily based either on Catholic practices, or on education programs. Most symbolically, in 1946 the Parish of Notre-Dame-de-la-Guadalupe was established in Gatineau, Quebec, in honor of la Virgen de Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexican Catholics. What is significant about the religious aspect – the notion of being unified through spirituality – is that Catholicism in this example worked both as an imagined community, in the sense intended by Benedict Anderson, and as a material network made up of powerful institutions.

In 1939 the Unión Cultural México-Canadá Francés was created in Mexico City and soon afterwards, in 1940, the Union des Latins d’Amérique (ULA) was founded in Montreal. Perhaps more than any other group at this time, the ULA significantly fore-fronted the concept *latinité* in its framing. ULA founder Dostaler O’Leary declared in 1942: “Two concepts of civilization exist in the Americas that balance each other out: the Latin concept and the Anglo-Saxon concept. As French Canadians, we belong to the Latin side” (qtd. in Demers, 89). With these gestures, Quebec sent a clear message to Ottawa, evidencing that

⁵ Formulated in 1965 by Quebec’s Minister of Education at the time, Paul Gérin-Lajoie, this doctrine asserted Quebec’s right “to negotiate and implement treaties and other international agreements in the areas of jurisdiction granted to it under the Canadian Constitution, such as health, education and culture” (“Paul Gérin-Lajoie”).

the province held important influence in the hemisphere (beyond the United States) as the result of precisely the same cultural factors that distinguish Quebec from English-Canada – this ambiguous but powerful notion of *latinité*. Through the activation of this imaginative tool, Quebec was no longer an isolated Francophone, Catholic province amidst an ocean of Protestant Anglo-Saxons, but instead became part of a cultural hemispheric majority, invoking by association the geographical, economic and political strength of Latin America. These alliances were built through existing institutions (school exchanges and the Church), but based on ideas of cultural closeness *and* cultural resistance, which is what *latinité* allows for.

What Demers shows in his study is that by performing this cultural alliance, and by enacting forms of international quasi-Catholic *fraternité* implicit in earlier uses of *latinité*, these specific groups produced political capital domestically. In Mexico, the Cristero rebellion⁶ had just ended, and the Church's grip over the political sphere had considerably lessened. For Quebec, establishing diplomatic relations beyond Canadian borders was a way of enacting their own nationalism, even when – and perhaps precisely because – these relationships were primarily culture-based, and housed in institutions that were Catholic and francophone. These gestures of support for the other's struggle strengthened the two actors in their domestic contexts, where WWII on the one hand and the Mexican Revolution on the other, left the Quebecois and the Cristeros respectively feeling marginalized within their national political spheres. Although many of the collaborations studied by Demers were short lived, what is interesting for the purposes of this study are the ways in which cultural self-representation played a role in international imaginings, and how often, cultural exchanges framed as part of international agendas are in fact intended to produce political capital that is expensed domestically. As Demers has argued, the Union des Latins d'Amérique used symbolic rather than parliamentary politics to assert Quebec as nation: "By mobilizing *latinité* as a meaning discourse of identity for Franco-phones, the ULA tried to locate French Canada at the crux of Canadian-Latin American diplomatic relations, thus improving the grim outlook for the survival of this culture on this continent." (16)

These exchanges show how for Quebecois groups, aligning themselves with Latin cultures of the Americas has been a recurring strategy in enacting nationalist projects since before the *revolution tranquille*. This is important because often these have been framed as anti-colonial (in that they oppose British colonization of New France) and portray Quebec as being powerless international actors prior to the 1960s. Going further back, Quebecois Catholic nationalists in the 1860s were strong supporters of the Second French Empire in Mexico, since it was in their interests to have French-Catholic allies in the region (although they would eventually have to settle for Catholic, not French). The French Canadian press supported this project, and Honoré Beaugrand (1848-1906), who would later serve as mayor of Montreal, famously fought for Maximilian in favor of the invasion of Mexico (Tenorio-Tello 53). What this example as well as Demers' networks show, is that Quebecois groups have always looked for cultural allies in the region to sustain their own nationalist agendas, that most of these early alliances were enacted through its Catholic institutions,

⁶ La Cristiada (1926-29) was a rural uprising against secularist, anti-Catholic and anti-clerical articles in the 1917 Mexican Constitution, known as the Calles Law. Through this decree, power was taken away from the Catholic Church as well as its affiliated institutions, and many religious celebrations at a local level were suppressed.

and that gestures of solidarity across the region, and its associated *fraternité* has been primarily symbolic.

The work done by ULA and other actors during the 1940s is important in so far as it exemplifies the symbolic importance of language and discourse in establishing these imagined connections between national communities, specifically across the Americas. Similar to the networks this project maps, these mid-century alliances represent a similar gesture of bypassing Washington in a re-imagining of the region, and are grounded in institutions associated to a *latine* ethos. As Demers states, “On the periphery of Washington’s centre of power, French Canadian and Mexican advocates of a shared Latin and Catholic ethos were engaged in an active re-imagining of socio-political relations, weaving the fabric of a connected history of cultural struggles.” (201) Beyond the specific gains of these strategies, what is clear is that there is a history of imagined linkages across the region and between these two communities, connections that strategically bypass, exclude or de-centralize Anglo-Saxon culture (and institutions) and consequently empower local agendas in one way or another, depending on the use and circulation of *latinité* and its associated dichotomies.

Cultural Institutions and Ideas of the Collective

Another constituent element of *latinité* is manifested in public funding, as this principle activates the values of the collective and the social that have been inherited in different forms in ideas of *latinité*. The role of public institutions is one of the key differences between the mid-century networks and the theatre networks analyzed in the rest of this chapter. On this point, it is important to note that an approach to funding structures for arts, culture and education that relies heavily on public resources situate Mexico City and Quebec – discursively and materially – closer to each other than to places like the U.S., where both State intervention and State support for the arts are much more limited. To date, in Mexico City both local and federal governments have been responsible for the construction and administration of the majority of museums, theatres and film studios, and the two largest universities of the city – UNAM and the Instituto Politécnico Nacional – are publically ran and offer free education to over 500,000 students (currently enrolled). This is not to say that private actors have not played a part in producing and promoting diverse cultural narratives, especially the private television networks Televisa and TV Azteca. Yet most of the infrastructures analyzed here are publically funded and in most cases, tied to government cultural agendas. How these infrastructures operate and the objectives that they sustain vary in both places, but it is significant that for the most part, these are not private actors nor are they associated to religious institutions, as they were in the mid-century exchanges.

The public character of the exchanges prompts the association of *latinité* as concerned with the wellbeing of the collective over the wellbeing of the individual – in opposition to individualistic, private interests. In this section bring attention how Quebec’s public cultural institutions have provided the necessary infrastructures for the implementation of nationalist projects in the form of long-term cultural exportation projects. At the same time, I contrast this cultural project to Mexico’s funding structures and thus highlight the material asymmetries that dictate an alliance wanting to be imagined as equal. So while funding and institutional design of arts and culture is primarily public in

both Mexico City and Quebec, the way these are structured show a significant asymmetry in how the values of the social and the collective are organized into systems of cultural production.

A clear example of how the public is structured and understood in Quebec is the Centre des Auteurs Dramatiques (CEAD), perhaps the most significant institution in the creation of the Mexico City – Quebec theater network. As part of the *revolution tranquille* in the 1960s, Quebec's nationalism took a secular turn and it was no longer on the bases of institutional Catholicism that the exchanges would take place, although as the content of many of the plays reveals, Catholicism and the Church remain a significant factor in explaining a cultural affinity between the two places. Instead, during this time Quebec began to invest heavily in secular cultural institutions that would strengthen Quebecois de souche culture. As part of this project, CEAD was created in 1965 by Quebecois writers Jacques Duchesne, Roger Dumas, Robert Gauthier, Robert Gurik, Jean P. Morin and Denys Sant-Denis, intended as a center "de soutien, de promotion et de diffusion de la dramaturgie francophone du Quebec et du Canada [of support, promotion and dissemination of the francophone drama of Quebec and Canada]" ("Mission du CEAD"). The Center was designed to produce and export Quebecois culture at a time when the Quebecois de souche were striving to become "maîtres chez nous." Until 1983 CEAD's work consisted primarily of coaching playwrights, providing dramaturgical services that would support the development of new works, and the creation of an archive of Quebecois and French-Canadian plays. In honor of CEAD's 40th anniversary, *Le Devoir* described the evolution of Quebec theatre:

La dramaturgie québécoise en était encore à ses premiers balbutiements au milieu des années 1960. (...) Même après *Les Belles-soeurs*, même après Jean-Claude Germain et le Grand Cirque ordinaire, il a fallu se battre, prendre parti, affirmer, défendre l'existence d'une dramaturgie qui nous soit propre; on arrive difficilement à y croire aujourd'hui, mais la bataille fut gagnée pièce par pièce, une première à la fois.

[Quebequois drama was in its early stages during the mid-1960s. (...) Even after *Les Belles-soeurs*, even after Jean-Claude Germain and the Grand Cirque ordinaire, it was necessary to fight, to take a side, to affirm, to defend the existence of a drama that was ours; it is difficult to believe today, but the battle was won play by play, one premier at a time] ("Un lien à raffermir").

The language used to describe the growth of Quebec theatre – in expressions such as "prendre parti," "defender" or "la bataille fut gagnée" – indicates that the CEAD was built on the values of a cultural revolution, of a sense of battle that would be won with cultural production – "pièce par pièce." And since CEAD was created to promote and develop *francophone* theatre, language was the main "weapon" with which this battle was fought.⁷ At first this approach would take the form of cultural survival within the province against Anglo influence, and eventually, it would be sustained as a project of cultural exportation

⁷ For more on the complicated history of language policies in Québec, see Bourhis (1984) and Wallot (2005).

and expansion. In this way, the sense of cultural resistance constitutive of *latinité* is legible in the ways in which Quebecois cultural institutions were framed during that time.

Always in opposition to and protection from English-Canada, language was the main wall that would keep the enemy out. This would include the invisibilization of First Nation languages of the region, for which it was essential to officialize French as the “natural” language of Quebec. It hardly comes as a surprise, then, that CEAD’s first international exchange took place with France in the 1970s, consisting of a series of public play readings.⁸ Once this link had been established, in the 1980s and as part of provincial policies to look towards Latin America, the center diversified its activities and redefined its mandate so as to include the promotion and diffusion of Quebecois and French-Canadian theater beyond the province. But it wasn’t until 1998, once post-NAFTA conversations between Mexico City and Quebec cultural agencies had been established, that CEAD developed its now famous writers residencies.⁹ These residencies were the key to setting in motion the circulation of Quebecois texts, which would become the primary form of exchange between Mexico City and the francophone province.

CEAD is a great example of how Quebec has built its cultural institutions – designed to promote its nationalist project both domestically and internationally through cultural production. What I want to highlight now is an aspect of its design that contrasts significantly with how Mexican cultural institutions are structured: a long-term vision in terms of project funding. In a 2003 interview, then director of CEAD Diane Miljours stated that “Il fait circuler les idées; mais il ne faut jamais oublier que c’est un travail à long terme [ideas must circulate; but we can never forget that this is a long term endeavour]” (qtd. in Lévesque). Miljours’ statement is key to understand how Quebec runs its cultural institutions – Quebec generates policies that think long term. This becomes even more apparent in contrast to its Mexican counterparts, a difference that reveals one of the main reasons why Quebec and Mexico City have been such good partners.

In Mexico, most types of public funding are short term and project driven – no more than three years, and usually granted to an individual artist or project. In my conversation with co-founders of Le Carrousel (the oldest children’s theatre company in Quebec, founded in 1975), Suzanne Lebeau and Gervais Gaudreault, isolate this as one of the starkest contrasts between work conditions in Mexico and those in Quebec. During Le Carrousel’s prolific exchanges with Mexico in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Lebeau and Gaudreault encountered many talented Mexico-based artists who often found their creative processes truncated by the way these funding structures were designed. To Lebeau and

⁸ This will be particularly important in the second part of this chapter, when it becomes clear that Mexico’s cultural relationship to Quebec in the last thirty years has been significantly mediated by French immigrants to Mexico.

⁹ A residency for the development of francophone works by Canadian authors; a translation residency that hosts a range of international translators; and themed residencies that vary in format. Since CEAD doesn’t have a large venue to host these events, the residencies usually expand into other parts of the province, such as Tadoussac, Orford, Montfort, Villa Saint-Martin de Pierrefonds and Gros-Mont National Park. This is significant since it decentralizes the activities outside of Montreal, although Montreal still acts as the node of these encounters – where they are conceived of and operated – similar to the role Mexico City plays in Mexico.

Gaudreault, this was the main difference between the state of children's theatre in Quebec and the state of children's theatre in Mexico at the time – in Mexico, all the pressure fell on the individual who had no long-term way of being sustained by the collectivity of a group. From our conversation:

SL: Yo sentía que la diferencia era bastante sobre los recursos. Porque no había salvo unos grupos muy raros, como La Titería, no había grupos con una verdadera trayectoria. Había muchos artistas aislados que trabajaban haciendo proyectos y proyectos – porque los artistas reciben una ayuda para tres años. (...) Aquí cuando recibimos una ayuda personal es para un año. Nunca – siempre pensé que esa ayuda para 3 años quiere decir algo. Es una buena manera de ayudar a los artistas. Pero para los grupos no es una buena manera para nada. (...) Porque un grupo no puede desarrollarse por tres años. Por supuesto. Puede hacer uno, dos, tres proyectos, pero no puede hacer más. (...) Era realmente la gran diferencia porque aquí por lo menos había veinte grupos ayudados de manera regular. Entonces puedes desarrollar una historia.

GG: Y para crecer poco a poco. Porque la discontinuidad no permite crecer.

SL: Desarrollarse y crecer. Crecer en el pensamiento y en la creación.

[SL: I felt that the difference was mostly about resources. Because there were no, except for a few rare groups, like La Titería, there were no groups with any real trajectory. There were a lot of isolated artists doing projects and projects – because artists received support for three years. (...) Here when we receive personal support it's for a year. Never – I always thought that the 3-year help meant something. It is a good way to help artists. But it is not a good way to help groups at all. (...) Because a group can't develop in three years. Of course. It can do one, two, three projects, but it can't do more. (...) It was really the main difference, because here there were at least twenty groups that were receiving regular support. Then you can develop a history.

GG: To grow bit by bit. Because discontinuity doesn't allow growth.

SL: To develop and grow. To grow in your thinking and in your creation.] (Lebeau and Gaudreault)

In Lebeau and Gaudreault's observations we find a key and recurring difference between how Mexico City and Quebec conceive of arts funding, even when in both cases there is a strong culture of public funding. In Mexico most theatre funding programs have centered on individual artists or individual projects, and similarly, it has been individual artists who have done the majority of the labor in producing and maintaining the connection to Quebec. In Quebec, the funding vision is much more long term and collective, as is evidenced in Miljours statement, and cultural institutions such as CEAD are responsible for the production and maintenance of the communities' networks. Thus it has been institutions, more than individual actors, what has sustained the relationship with Mexico

City from the side of Quebec. And Mexican artists in search of opportunities have looked to Quebec's international initiatives to bolster their theater practice and to gain experience and visibility abroad.

In Mexico City today the closest thing you have to CEAD is an online platform, *Dramaturgia Mexicana*, that "congrega, difunde y promueve la dramaturgia de México [congregates, disseminates and promotes Mexico's playwriting]" (*Dramaturgia Mexicana*). It was created by a group of playwrights in 2017, and it is intended to help connect contemporary Mexican drama to those who are interested in studying, translating or producing these texts. This initiative came solely from the artists, and has done important work strengthening the playwright's guild and creating an archive of Mexican plays. But the project necessitates the type of labor that CEAD specializes in – one led by literary managers, dramaturges and public servants whose sole job is to promote the development and circulation of these works. But as is often the case in Mexico, it is the artists, in this case, the playwrights themselves, who are taking on this labor without having the material conditions or the specialized training that it necessitates.

With a fifty-year old institution like CEAD as its counterpart, it is hardly surprising that in these histories of exchange, Quebecois plays have had much more success and circulation in Mexico than vice versa. Although the money for collaborations often comes from other places (such as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec, or the Conseil des arts de Montréal) this proves the importance of the work CEAD does in generating connections, incentives and spaces for exchange, of mobilizing the archive, and of dealing with the legal and bureaucratic labor required for the circulation of these works. This type of structural, long-term support is indispensable in determining how far any direct funding can go. In my view, this type of infrastructures are much more significant in enabling a productive relationship of exchange than the shared cultural affinities that *latinité* invites us to imagine.

Efforts to import Quebecois models to Mexico City show that without the full support of a government agenda, the long-term possibilities of these initiatives are limited, as was evidenced in the Mexican version of CEAD's *Dramaturgies en Dialogue*, the biennial translation seminar that accompanies the *Semaine de la Dramaturgie*. The first *Encuentro Internacional de la Traducción Teatral* held in Mexico City in 2010 received support from eight cultural and academic institutions in Mexico and three embassies.¹⁰ Yet when the a second edition was organized in 2014, this was not the case. All institutions that had provided support in 2010 backed down, and the Seminar was paid for only through *La Capilla* (directed by Schoemann): "El segundo, cuatro años después, tuvo mucho menos apoyo. Si el primero fueron hablo quizá de 350,000 – 400,000 pesos, el segundo lo hicimos con puros apoyos de *La Capilla*, osea, 40,000 pesos. Todas las instituciones se retiraron, pues cómo vamos a apoyar ahora, ya una vez [The second, four years later, had a lot less support. If the first one was maybe 350,000 – 400,000 pesos, the second we did with support only from *La Capilla*, that is, 40,000 pesos. All other institutions backed down, [saying] how are we going to support this now, we did it once]" (Pérez Mortera). This is a

¹⁰ FONCA, Centro Nacional de las Artes, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, INBA, UNAM, Consejo para la Cultura y las Artes de Nuevo León, Instituto Cultural de Yucatán and Universidad Veracruzana, Canadian Embassy, Spanish Embassy and the Délégation du Québec.

clear example of how, without the structural support of cultural institutions dictated by an agenda of international projection, these types of models can't be fully replicated through the artists' efforts only. Similarly, cultural affinity or closeness is insufficient once these structures are not available.

Again we see in this example the difference between individual led initiatives and institution led initiatives. Although CEAD has to ask for money on a project-to-project basis for all of their international activities, there is an institutional structure that sustains these initiatives. The international counselor at CEAD, Sara Fauteux, explained that after 10 editions, *Dramaturgies en Dialogue* (the name *Semaine de la dramaturgie* took in 2003) will disappear and be re-imagined into something else, as the institution re-evaluates a new, more relevant format for the years to come. This, of course, proves impossible when individual artists are leading these initiatives, without the backing of established institutions intended to generate continuity. And yet I argue that these individual artists have been on the side of Mexico, the most significant nodes of the network. In what follows, I zone in on key players – primarily translators – who have been the stages and *metteurs en scene* of this partnership. Yet despite these asymmetries, it is public and government investment and involvement in cultural production what enabled a theater network in the 1990s.

NAFTA Gets the Ball Rolling

According to Mexican theater critic Rodolfo Obregón, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw: “l'échange le plus fecund que nos deux scenes aient jamais connu, encourage par l'Accord de libre-echange nord-américain (ALENA) [the most prolific exchange that our two scenes have even known, encouraged by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)].” (2007:74) As was discussed in the introduction, the North America Free Trade Agreement – while it failed in many of its trade-oriented goals – became central to regional imaginings of North America of the 1990s. Certainly, NAFTA played an important role in making us imagine North America as region, and activated the work of imagining the compatibilities and incompatibilities of the cultures coexisting within it. As an idea, North America offered an ideal space of imagining upon which to reinstate the Anglo-Saxon/Latin dichotomy, and thus resists U.S. imperialism and its neo-liberal dominance of the region. In the realms of cultural production, the treaty prompted this imaginative labor and consequently, helped enable, albeit indirectly, the material networks that sustain the theater collaborations and exchanges studied here. In this process, *latinité* was used as a guiding concept in justifying a strong, cultural investment in the Mexico City-Quebec relationship, foregrounding cultural and affective affinities in an attempt to gain power as actors in this newly imagined region. Even when there existed no significant precedent of this cultural compatibility, it was assumed that a shared *latinité* would make this relationship successful.

The first inter-governmental collaboration initiative between Quebec and Mexico in the cultural sphere came about in June 1982, with the creation of the Grupo de Trabajo México-Quebec.¹¹ This was two years after the Délégation générale du Québec à Mexico opened in

¹¹ According to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “el Grupo de Trabajo México-Quebec (GTMQ) (...) es el instrumento para la elaboración y coordinación de programas de cooperación entre socios quebequenses y mexicanos en los ámbitos cultural, educativo,

1980, an institution that plays the role similar to that of an Embassy, but in the representation of a province, not a Nation-State.¹² Both the Délégation and the GTMQ initiative considered partnerships in diverse sectors, not only of cultural exchange,¹³ and yet they represent the only significant government initiative to link Mexico and Quebec in a cultural sector before the signing of NAFTA in the mid-nineties.

This changed after the famous trade agreement came into effect in 1995. Although NAFTA doesn't explicitly address cultural issues in general, its implementation certainly prompted a shift in cultural policies in both Mexico and Quebec. How much the connection is direct is hard to say, since in my investigations I found no explicit language either in the policies, cultural programs or public statements by government actors that connected NAFTA to these cultural initiatives. But what is clear is that while NAFTA and the ideas of North America that it produced circulated the region's public sphere, cultural initiatives connecting Mexico and Quebec emerged. Since the agreement was signed by leaders of the three Nation-States – Mexico, Canada and the United States – asserting its *latinité* through its relationship with Mexico allows Quebec to resist its federal government dictating who and how Quebec is to cooperate across the region. This is especially significant after the 1995 Referendum in Quebec,¹⁴ where the election result was 1% of the vote away from separation from Canada. If anything, it was a key moment for Quebec to produce as much domestic political capital as possible, and its *latine* neighbor in the region – Mexico – once again proved to be a timely ally in this endeavor.

In my conversation with Mexican playwright Luis Mario Moncada – who participated in many of these collaborations both as an artist and as the director of the public cultural center Centro Cultural Helénico in Mexico City – he recalled:

Pero te digo, no surgió de abajo, de los artistas. No fue iniciativa de los artistas, fue una política pública. Y yo creo que en ese sentido tu hipótesis es absolutamente verídica, pues, de que creo que fueron estrategias institucionales para vincular. Que Estados Unidos hizo sus primeros acercamientos, pero creo que no prosperó por ahí, o no supieron por dónde, o fue más complicado, no sé, y en cambio con Canadá fructificó de una manera muy importante.

científico-tecnológico y económico [the GTMQ (...) is the instrument for the elaboration and coordination of cooperation programs between Quebecois and Mexican partners in the areas of culture, education, science-technology and economy] (“XV Grupo de trabajo”).

¹² Its focus is “la promotion des interest du Quebec auprès des institutions politiques mexicaines, de meme que dans le secteurs de l'économie, de l'éducation, de la culture, de l'immigration et des autres secteurs relevant de la competence du Quebec [promoting Quebec's interests alongside Mexican political institutions, as well as in the economic, education, cultural, immigration and other sectors relevant to Quebec's competence]” (“Délégation générale”).

¹⁴ The 1995 Referendum asked: “Do you agree that Québec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the Bill respecting the future of Québec and of the agreement signed on 12 June 1995?” The results were a 50.58% No win against a 49.42% Yes, with a difference of less than 50,000 votes and a 93.52% voter turnout (“Québec Referendum (1995)”).

[But I'm telling you, it did not come from the ground, from the artists. It was not the artists' initiatives, it was a public policy. I think in this sense your hypothesis is absolutely true, I think these were institutional strategies aimed to link. The United States made some initial approaches, but I don't think they got very far, or they didn't know the way, or it was more complicated, I don't know, but with Canada it flourished in a very important way] (Moncada).

According to Moncada, the strong relationship between the two provinces was not something that spontaneously came "from the ground up," but was instead the result of a series of government policies that promoted interest. A key aspect of his recollection is that despite initial connections being framed as tri-national initiatives, the relationship that resulted was primarily between Mexican and Quebecois artists. I argue that at the time of the first tri-national encounters, it was in Quebec and Mexico's interests to see this partnership through, one that would be framed around cultural affinities but also, sustained by very directed exchange programs that at the time were not replicated with English-Canada or with U.S. institutions. During this time, Mexico and Quebec would establish a relationship between its public cultural institutions that would actively bypass the U.S., and even while the federal Canadian government provided considerable financial backing (at least until the Harper years starting in 2008), the relationship was imagined as a Latin North America, even when the network would rely heavily on federal funding in Canada.

The first wave (1997-2007) of prolific exchanges between Quebecois and Mexico City artists was activated by a series of diplomatic initiatives like the one described above. While meetings between cultural actors from the three countries took place in the late 1990s (Moncada specifically recalls a CEAD visit in 1997), the most significant staging of these policies took place in April 2002, when then Quebecois Minister of Culture and Communication, Diane Lemieux, brought a large delegation from the Quebec to Mexico City to take part in the *Recontres culturelles Mexique-Quebec/Encuentros culturales México-Quebec 2002*. This five-day encounter was organized by Lemieux's team in partnership with the Mexican CONACULTA (National Arts and Culture Council), led at the time by Sari Bermudez, and the *Délégation général du Québec à Mexico*. Quebecois puppeteer Jacques Trudeau describes it as follows: "C'est en avril 2002 qu'a eu lieu, dans la ville de Mexico, un événement mémorable, lequel a insufflé un dynamisme extraordinaire dans les relations culturelles entre le Québec et le Mexique. Ceux qui y ont participé en gardent un souvenir impérissable! [It was in April 2002, in Mexico City, a memorable event, that inspired an extraordinary dynamism in the cultural relationships between Quebec and Mexico. Those who participated keep a lasting memory!]" (111).¹⁵ Trudeau's excitement in this

¹⁵ The Quebec delegation consisted of over 70 members of Quebec's culture and communication milieu, and its representatives in the theater arena were the *Conseil québécois du théâtre*, the *Festival du théâtre des amériques*, the *Festival international des arts de la marionette*, the theater companies *Carbone 14*, *Les Deux Mondes*, *Theatre d'Aujourd'hui*, *Theatre Sans Fil*, *Le Carrousel* and *Maison Theatre (Dumas)*. As Jacques Trudeau's description reveals, the encounters were framed around Quebec-Mexico relations, that is, province to nation-state, and took place in Mexico City.

recollection is representative of the strong affective associations to the cultural partnership established during those years between Mexican and Quebecois artists, a narrative based on affective affinities that would become the recurring through-line used to explain the prevalence of the exchanges.

Quebec found a receptive partner in Mexico that, at the time, was working hard at putting Mexico City on the map of international cultural exchange. As then Director of the National Theatre in Mexico, Otto Minera, stated on a panel about Mexico-Quebec collaborations held in 1999, “la Ciudad de México se merece que haya programación internacional permanente [Mexico City deserves to have permanent international programming]” (Minera qtd. in Mateos Vega). Given this precedent, the 2002 Recontres Culturelles were not intended to spark a new relationship, but to celebrate and continue what had proven to be a very successful one since the late 1990s. In my mapping of these exchanges, I argue they perform the necessary visibility to produce the political capital that both places were in dire need of, both domestically and regionally, and once again, *latinité* would serve as an active imaginative tool in doing this work.

Although this first wave of networks was built upon festival trails that went beyond the capital city (Cervantino in Guanajuato or Telón Abierto in Aguascalientes), the majority of these connections have been established in or through Mexico City, and all diplomatic negotiations concerning cultural programs have been staged there, affirming Mexico City as core. With its 70-person delegation, Quebec was certainly performing its cultural expansionist project, evidenced in the fact that there was no equivalent diplomatic trip to Quebec by Mexican or Mexico City officials during the three decades of collaboration. I argue that during these first staged encounters, the shapes that the networks would take in the next thirty years were established – with Mexico City as the primary host of a heavy inflow of Quebecois cultural content. And the central narrative was established, foregrounding cultural affinities between the *latine* nations of North America, actively by passing the U.S. and obscuring federal involvement from English Canada.

The cultural meetings of the late-90s recalled by Moncada resulted in a series of concrete exchange programs – the material manifestation of this imagined relationship. This is significant because it shows how these staged encounters – that were later supported by directed artist programs – helped imagine the region through an affective and aesthetic compatibility. It is also worth noting here that CALQ (Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec) was created in 1994, with the explicit objective of promoting Quebec culture in and outside the province, and this funding agency would provide the necessary financial backing. So that at the time of these encounters, Quebec had the cultural public employees whose sole job was to find ways of deepening this relationship, while it had a funding agency interested in supporting the province’s francophone cultural production and exportation. In 1999, Mexico’s INBA (National Institute of Fine Arts) agreed to sponsor an observer at the Festival de théâtre des amériques in Montreal, and selected French-Mexican translator and director Boris Schoemann for this task, who, as the last section of this chapter will show, became a central node in the network. A year later, FONCA (National Fund for Arts and Culture) created a writer’s residency exchange program with Quebec’s CALQ– and Schoemann was selected as the participant on the Mexican side for the first edition. That same year, CEAD invited Mexican translator and director Mauricio García Lozano to workshop Quebecoise Carole Fréchette’s newest play, *Jean et Béatrice*, and would bring him back in 2002 to direct the world premier. Key actors at CEAD, such as the

international delegate Nadine Desrochers, and the cultural attachés at the Délégation générale du Québec à Mexico, Isabelle Gelinas and later Gilberto Palmerin, were essential in producing these exchanges at the turn of the century.

The mid to late 1990s were then the moment when as part of re-imagining North America, Quebec and Mexico put a dynamic into place that grounded their collaborative relationship on ideas of arts and culture, more so than on the religious values of the mid-century exchanges. This narrative was channeled and sustained through public cultural institutions, and would take shape in a diverse range of exchanges.

Festival de Théâtre des Amériques

Before delving into how the networks that derived from these post-NAFTA initiatives took shape and how forms of exchange embodied ideas of *latinité*, I look briefly at an earlier instance in which Quebec activated this concept in order to make itself visible hemispherically through the creation of a series of cultural festivals, specifically, the Festival de théâtre des amériques, created in 1985. According to Canadian Latin Americanist Hugh Hazelton, starting in the 1980s “there was a general feeling that Quebec had to reach out beyond the ocean of Anglophones and connect with somebody else in the Americas, namely Latin America. And that was a Quebec government objective” (Hazelton). Again, activating *latinité* would be part of a strategy of establishing Quebec as a cultural nation and as a political actor by extending beyond “the ocean of Anglophones” and towards its *latine* neighbors. As material networks were imagined regions, closeness and geographies are enacted, festivals became a way for Quebec to concretely activate the idea of *latinité* in the service of this national project.

The Festival de théâtre des amériques is a great example of how the imaginary and the material elements of *latinité* are often in tension, a result of the reductive dichotomies that frame it despite its imaginative flexibility. The festival was created by Marie-Hélène Falcon and Jacques Vézina in 1985, and is hosted in Montreal every two years. As part of a project of activating a hemispheric *latinité*, for its first editions the festival had a strong focus on Latin America, inviting artists from across the hemisphere to Quebec’s largest city and generating an important space for circulation and conversation across the Americas.¹⁶ As is stated in the festival’s website, “The festival played an active role in supporting contemporary theatre by co-producing new works, arranging international exchanges and providing a showcase for artists and companies from here and abroad” (“History”).¹⁷ This

¹⁶ For a list of invited countries at each edition, see <http://fta.ca/en/the-fta/archives/>.

¹⁷ In parallel to the festival, a series of translation *encuentros* took place that would prove significant in generating the networks of the late 1990s. In 1987 the first of these, *Dramaturgies des amériques*, was coordinated by CEAD in partnership with the Centro Latinoamericano de Creación e Investigación Teatral (CELCIT) in Venezuela, and was simultaneous to the 2nd FTA. In 1995 an event called Teatro de las Americas was co-organized by Playwrights’ Workshop Montreal and the Coordinación de Difusión Cultural at UNAM, where Mexican, Canadian and Quebecois playwrights worked together in a series of staged readings, roundtables and translation workshops. While for the 1987 *Dramaturgies des amériques*, playwright Felipe Santander was the only participant from

festival is one of many festivals in Montreal, a city that has, since the 1980s, been constructed as a festival hub that both hosts and exports festival models.¹⁸ So since its inception, the Festival de théâtre des amériques has had this two-fold purpose – building Montreal as a festival city in the realm of the performing arts, and reaching out to Latin America as a way of grounding Quebec’s cultural relevance in the hemisphere.

An interesting example of how the festival was used to activate ideas of *latinité* in the form of a theater project was staged in 1991. For this 4th edition, famous translator of Quebecois plays, Linda Gaboriau, led an initiative called *500 ans plus tard*. A believer that festivals “should be forums for creation and cultural exchanges” (“500 ans plus tard”), Gaboriau allied with festivals from Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica and Spain to write and co-produce six plays about the colonization of the Americas, to present at all the festivals, starting with the FTA in June 1991. “The organizers of six international festivals signed the “San José Agreement” at the Festival Internacional de San José por la Paz in Costa Rica in the fall of 1989” (“500 ans plus tard”). This project shows the FTA’s interest in expanding and deepening the relationship with artists from Latin America through the 1980s and into the 1990s, while the gesture of signing an agreement on an international forum such as a cultural festival evidences the ways in which the relationships established through the festival networks were conceived of and performed through the repertoires of official, diplomatic relations. It is also significant that Spain was a creative partner in this project, evidencing how *latinité* is activated as part of a transatlantic alliance that, as we will see later in the chapter, often includes Europe in the form of France or Spain.

In my conversation with FTA founder and co-director, Marie-Hélène Falcon, she was of the opinion that this initiative was not particularly successful, first because Festival de théâtre des amériques was not really text-oriented, and this project was based on a series of play readings. In addition, the premise of an inter-festival collaboration about “the discovery” of the Americas made her uneasy: “I was quite reluctant because the discovery of the Americas – we were certainly against the expression. We liked the massacre of the Americas” (Falcon). In a way, the project did not intend to engage deeply with complicated colonial histories, but instead looked to enact an accepted history – almost a celebration – of the event. In a way, a re-telling of this history as framed by Gaboriau, curated by the art elites of Quebec, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica and Spain, would reinstate the same power structures that the term Latin America originally granted the elites of the Americas in the form of an accepted mestizaje.

Falcon also recalls that these types of collaborations between festivals seemed superficial, using the platforms provided by international festivals to stage diplomatic meta-performances – such as the signing of the “San José Agreement” – that were much more concerned with circulating the international agendas of political actors than they were with the content, quality or relevance of the collaborative pieces: “We were trying to – but we were very different festivals. Bogotá was a very big, mainstream thing, really big with big exchange with all the countries in the world, with papers being signed, with the

Mexico, in the 1995 event he was joined by Sabina Berman, Hugo Hiriart, and José Cabellero.

¹⁸ A good example of this is MUTEK, an electronic music and digital arts festival held annually in Montreal since 2000. MUTEK hosts international versions of the festival, most famously its Mexico City edition which is also held annually since 2003.

picture of the minister and most of the time it was absolutely not good at all” (Falcon). For the 4th edition of FTA the plays written for *500 ans plus tard* were presented in a series of stage readings, but very few of them saw full productions in their home countries nor did they make the international festival circuit, as the project had intended. This project had the potential to activate certain forms of regional imaginings, and the primary work it was intended to do replicated the format of diplomatic performances - quick, scripted, superficial gestures that produce simple and discernible narratives. But it was evident, even to Falcon, that those motivations hardly produced quality art.

The Festival de théâtre des amériques was held biennially until 2007, when it changed its name to Festival TransAmériques, although it continued to be directed by Falcon until 2014. Since 2007, the festival is held annually. The new version of the festival combines theatre and dance and the focus shifted to be on genre and form, less than on representing a region: “the only criterion is to present strong work, regardless of theme or place of origin” (“Mission and Artistic Vision”). If in its beginnings it appeared to be a festival about the Americas, today, the festival is much more about its host – Montreal. “Multilingual, hybrid, festive, the Festival TransAmériques reflects the rhythm and image of its home base – Montreal, our cultural metropolis” (“Mission and artistic vision”). If we look at the frequency of Mexico’s participation in the festival, an interesting connection can be made between the conceptual changes the festival has undergone and its relationship to Latin America. For the first six editions of the festival between 1985 and 1995, Mexico was present at every edition in one way or another. After that, the festival doesn’t program a Mexican production until fifteen years later. So since 1995, Mexico has participated at the festival with only four productions, all of which have been by the same company.¹⁹ Mexico City-Quebec exchanges were most prolific between 1997 and 2007 (including Quebec’s participation in Mexican festivals), and during these years Mexico was fully absent from Quebec’s most important international theatre and dance festival, an initiative that in 1985 had began as a way to generate a cultural network with Latin America.

Still, during the 1980s the Festival de théâtre des amériques played an important part in producing regional imaginaries where Quebec linked itself to Latin America through cultural production – again, through a notion of shared *latinité*. And while, however brief, connections made during the first editions of the festival proved to be significant in

¹⁹ While it was Festival de théâtre des amériques, Mexico was invited with a production for the 1st edition in 1985 (*Novedad de la Patria*, directed by Luis de Tavira and produced by UNAM); for the 3rd edition in 1989 Mexico participated with two productions (Jesusa Rodríguez, “El Concilio del amor”; and Laura Yusem’s “Pablo”); for the 4th edition in 1991 Mexican playwright Vicente Leñero was part of Linda Gaboreau’s co-production *500 ans plus tard*; and in the 6th edition in 1995, Mexican cabaret artist Astrid Hadad presented *Heavy Nopal*. And as we saw, during the 2nd edition in 1987, Felipe Santander was present as part of the Dramaturgies des amériques. For the 4th edition of the festival in its new format, Festival TransAmérique in 2010, the Mexico City company Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol brought two shows – *Asalto al agua transparente* and *Catalina*. Although the work done by Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol fits the aesthetics of the new FTA in the sense that it “breaks down boundaries” between artistic genres, it is worth noting that since 2010, Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol has been the only Mexican company to be invited to the festival, coming back in 2011 with *El rumor del incendio*, and again in 2018 with *Tijuana*.

establishing the strong networks at the turn of the century, Mexico's participation also shows how that connection was primarily used to make Montreal a stronger urban center, and consequently, strengthen Quebec's place in Canada and in the region. When it was important for FTA to imagine itself as performing and producing stages for *latinité*, Mexico was an important partner. As the festival became much more about Montreal, this was lost. But more than any other form of collaboration, this hemispheric festival has allowed Quebec to narrate itself as culturally Latin America and imagine itself as part of a larger geography, even when the material networks that have been established as a result are, today, primarily with Europe.

Forms of Exchange

Working from *latinité* and towards modes of production, the second half of the chapter maps out the different forms that the circulation of theatre products has taken in the last thirty-years, considers the cultural policies that enabled them, the markets they are a part of and how they were framed and generally enacted. Specifically, I am interested in how these forms of exchange represent the different constituent elements of *latinité* both as imaginary and as material. I divide the narrative of the exchange into two waves. A first wave (1997-2007) was, as I have argued, prompted by post-NAFTA initiatives, and took several forms – heavy presence of Quebec companies in Mexican theatre festivals; a series of co-productions between Mexico and Quebec companies; production of Quebec plays in Mexico City; and the implementation of exchange programs, primarily of writers and translators that would later sustain what I'm calling the second wave. This second wave (2008-2018) begins when festival presence decreases due to a drastic reduction in funding, especially Canadian federal funding where a lot of the money for tours and travel of large companies came from. It is marked by the Harper years (2006-2015), when not only did these funding cuts affect the possibilities of exchange (in 2008 Harper announced a \$45 million annual cut to federal arts spending), but the strict visa requirement implemented on Mexican citizens on July 2009 presented new costs and complicated bureaucratic processes in order for Mexican artists to travel to Canada. Thus, the second wave consists primarily of the translation and production of Quebecois texts in Mexico City, which intensified into the second decade of the 21st Century. In what follows I want to highlight how two different types of exchanges – children's theater and co-productions – relied on *latinité* to frame these collaborations, albeit in different ways.

In parallel to big Quebec productions appearing on the international festival circuit in Mexico,²⁰ there were two other genres where Mexican and Quebecois companies found strong alliances – puppet and children's theatre. In the case of children's theatre, Quebec and Mexico share a tradition that is less common in English-Canada. As Lebeau – who is also a scholar of children's theatre – explained in our conversation, most Anglo traditions of

²⁰ Specifically, Festival Cervantino – Mexico's most important International performing arts festival, held in Guanajuato since 1972, and to the Festival del Centro Histórico, a close second to El Cervantino, created in 1985 (the same as the FTA), initially intended to revitalize Mexico City's downtown. These festivals hosted the work of Robert Lepage's visually impressive work or Carbone 14's multi-media productions, and later, the global phenomenon that became Cirque du Soleil.

the genre developed in schools, whereas in Quebec, as is the case of Mexico, there was no direct connection between children's theatre companies and school systems. Instead, these companies developed alongside other theatre companies. By the late 1990s, the Festival Internacional de Teatro para Niños y Jóvenes Telón Abierto, directed by Larry Silberman, was well established in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. The biennial festival hosted children's theatre companies from all over the world, and in 1998 they invited Quebecoise playwright Suzanne Lebeau to give a conference on Le Carrousel's work and legacy. She recalls the conference had to be in Spanish, which she didn't speak at the time, so she translated and learned the text phonetically in order to present it. Despite not speaking the language, she claims a profound connection was made during the event:

Me acuerdo de haber dicho exactamente lo que todos estaban dispuestos a entender. Estaban buscando las palabras para decir esto. Y fue realmente un golpe increíble. (...) Entonces, regresé diciéndome tengo que aprender el español. Absolutamente. Algo pasa con México. Algo pasaba por supuesto.

[I remember having said exactly what they were all willing to understand. They were looking for the words to say this. And it was really an incredible hit. (...) So, I came back telling myself, I have to learn Spanish. Absolutely. There's something there with Mexico. And of course there was something there] (Lebeau).

It is interesting that Lebeau explains the success of the collaborative relationship that developed primarily with an (inexplicable) affective closeness, and in our later conversation she framed this in opposition to an Anglo tradition of children's theatre. The influence of Le Carrousel would be profoundly felt in the development of Mexican theatre in the next decade.²¹ As children's theatre artist Amaranta Leyva wrote in 2014: "La historia del teatro par niños en México tiene un antes y un después. Ese parteaguas se llama Suzanne Lebeau [the history of children's theatre in Mexico has a before and after. That turning point is called Suzanne Lebeau]" (Leyva).²² Despite Lebeau's explanations of

²¹ Two years later Lebeau came back to Telon Abierto to teach workshops and give another conference, and that same year Le Carrousel's production of *l'Ogrelet* was presented at the Festival del Centro Histórico in Mexico City, followed by a 10-city tour around Mexico. In 2002 *l'Ogrelet* was published in its Spanish translation by Paso de Gato; in 2003 *El Ogrito* was published again, this time by El Milagro, alongside *Salvador*, another of Lebeau's plays. And in 2004, Tramoya published three other plays by Lebeau in their Spanish translations, *Contes d'enfants reels*, *Petit Pierre* and *Une lune entre deux maisons*. Through an initiative of the Ministry of Culture, *El Ogrito* was translated into Maya and has had several productions by Maya theater companies in the Yucatán and in Chiapas. These plays were taken up by Mexican directors, and continue to be produced across the country – a production of *El Ogrito* has just closed its most recent run in Mexico City (October 2018), directed by Enrique Singer, current director of the National Theatre Company.

²² Alongside Le Carrousel's presence, other Quebecois children's theater companies such as les Deux Mondes and DynamO Theatre presented work and offered workshops at Telon Abierto and Centro Histórico at the turn of the century. Simultaneously, the Montreal festival Les Coups de Théâtre – the oldest children's theater festival in Quebec – invited

this success as being grounded in cultural affinity presupposed of a *latine* culture, I argue that much of this success is due to the fact that Le Carrousel has a very solid infrastructure for development of new plays specifically intended for children's theatre – which is not the case in Mexico – and that these plays follow a similar tradition which is not based on educational or didactic theatre, as it is in places like English-Canada. Both the modes of production and the tone and aesthetics of children's theatre in Mexico and Quebec are similar, and while Quebec has the means for extensive play development processes, Mexico has both the publishing culture and the production density to make this a successful exchange. This also explains why the circulation of texts did not also flow in the other direction during this time. So although Lebeau gives an explanation based on affective and cultural affinity, I argue that the success of Le Carrousel in Mexico was primarily due to how the two production structures complemented each other.

Around the same time when Lebeau's work was taking traction in Mexico, a series of co-productions between Mexico City and Quebec companies took place. As we will see in the following chapter, these productions, more than any other form of collaboration, focused on performing regional discourses and used *latinité* as a way to imagine a larger, cultural map. That is, an alliance based on an aesthetic mestizaje/métissage that would reveal the international reach of these two cultures. This was the case of *Latitudes Croisees*, a collaboration amongst three companies – Omnibus le corps du theatre (Quebec), Teatro Línea de Sombra (Mexico) and Theatre du Mouvement (France) – presented at the Festival del Centro Histórico in 2003. What is particularly interesting about this collaboration – and is a recurring pattern in how the Mexico-Quebec relationship has been imagined and enacted – is the triangulation with France.

French artists and companies have been key in establishing networks between Mexico and Quebec, and I stop here a moment to reflect on what this mean in terms of regional imaginings. Of the many connotations of *latinité*, one which the relationship between Mexico and Quebec has not relied on, crosses the United States – that is, *latinité* as Latino/a/x, what Tenorio-Tello describes as “the non-United States or as the United States that somehow was, and is, not really the United States – Latino, Latina – the racio-cultural cluster of things that were assumed to be the authentic realm of a larger part of the U.S. population” (13). In a co-production such as *Latitudes Croisees*, Mexico and Quebec are being reimagined as a Latin North America that completely bypassed the U.S. – its own *latinité* included – and yet finds an important partner in France.²³ This, I believe, is the result of Quebec's focus on language (primarily in opposition to English) above all other cultural practices, which is also why France was CEAD's first international partner. It is also

Mexican company Los Endebles (directed by Boris Schoemann) to present their productions of *l'Histoire de l'oie* by Michel Marc Bouchard and *Pont pierres et la Peau d'images* by Daniel Danis (2005). In this case, it was Mexican productions of Quebecois plays presented at the Montreal festival, and not, as might perhaps have been expected, productions of Mexican texts.

²³ This is very different to the ways in which *latinité* has been re-imagined in other parts of Canada, specifically in Toronto, where initiatives such as the Rutas Panamericanas/Panamerican Routes Festival is allowing for much more inclusive forms of solidarities across the hemisphere. See <http://www.nativeearth.ca/1314season/rutas-panamericanas/>

a result of a longer history of French influence in Mexico – in the 19th Century, French language and culture were the marker of the elites, and many of the inherited literary and theatrical canons that still populate Mexican curricula are French. So that activating existing connections to France in the staging of these collaborations seems strategic, both in the practical sense of having previously collaborated with artists and cultural institutions from France, and also in the imaginative sense of highlighting an anti-Anglo and anti-U.S. sentiment through the ideas of a transatlantic *latinité*. And yet in practice, as the case studies will show, English is often used as a lingua franca in these collaborations, albeit not as a language connected to identity or national imaginings but as an essential tool in their construction.

Latitudes Croisees incorporated the mime and movement styles of Omnibus and Théâtre du Mouvement, with the multimedia, anti-naturalist style of Línea de Sombra, in the representation of a transatlantic travelogue. Of the production, Mexican critic Rodolfo Obregón wrote:

Por una parte, debemos celebrar (con la Puerte de las Américas abriéndose frente a las narices) la integración de Teatro Línea de Sombra a las formas y medios de la producción internacional (...). Por la otra, hay que lamentar, en este espectáculo particular, los vicios y lugares comunes del teatro hecho específicamente para la internacionalización, aquel que no puede desprenderse las etiquetas y rótulos de Export Quality.

[On the one hand, we must celebrate (with the Door to the Americas opening under our noses) the integration of Teatro Línea de Sombra to international forms and means of production (...) On the other hand, we must lament, in the case of this production in particular, the vices and clichés of theatre made specifically for internationalization, that which cannot be detached from the labels and marks of *Export Quality*] (Obregón, 2003:85-6).

Obregón's review exposes the two levels of performance that were occurring in the creation of the piece – the aesthetics that often result from these types of collaborations, sustained by clichés, and the work the production was doing of performing Mexico as the “door to the Americas” through international aesthetics, whatever that may mean. Another example of a co-production during this time is *La vie ne vaut rien/La vida no vale nada*, created by Ensemble Sauvage Public and Teatro Arena between 1999 and 2003, that will serve as the case study for the following chapter. This type of collaboration is perhaps the most complex and the most expensive – as will be explored through the close reading of *La vie ne vaut rien* – so it is also the least common. Yet co-productions such as these reveal the limitations of the superficial narratives of intercultural or international collaborations that rely on reductive imaginative tools such as *latinité*, and evidence the illegibility and complexity of co-producing meaning in those conditions. At the same time, these co-productions evidence the challenges of establishing the material conditions that enable these theater products, both as a result of their financial requirements and of the complicated cultural divides that need bridging in order to work together. As Chapter 3 will show, the cultural closeness imagined through *latinité* often proves insufficient on these material fronts.

Translator as Node

During the first wave of collaborations a strong translation network was established, of which some results we have already seen. The focus that this project has on translation is closely related to the limitations that arise from many of the forms of collaboration seen so far. I argue that translation is the place where the challenges of intercultural exchange are most clearly evidenced, and so it is significant that the most prolific of these forms of exchange has been the translation and production of Quebecois texts into Mexican Spanish. There is an important argument to be made that translation from French to Spanish and vice versa is facilitated by the structural closeness of the two languages, although this does not account for the specifics of the theater translation network between the two places. Other factors need be considered, such as the compatibility between Quebec's cultural exportation policies that rely heavily on international translators, and Mexico's large theatre market much more focused on production than on new play development processes.

I argue that *latinité* presupposes a cultural affinity amongst communities that in many other ways are different, and so that doing the work of first, imagining, and then, enacting a relationship between them will inevitably require complex translation work. In this sense, I understand translation not only in terms of linguistic systems (L1 – L2), but as cultural translation even amongst communities that might share a language. Given the translation labor required of any project framed around a premise of *latinité* – especially where linguistic translation is required – it is not surprising that the node of the theater networks discussed here is a translator: Boris Schoemann. In what follows, I trace how this theater translation network was established and how Schoemann has acted as node both in the imaginings of the relationship, and in the material structures of the network.

In 1999 Mexico's FONCA launched a writer's exchange program, that consisted of a two-month writing residency by a Quebec author in Mexico City and of a Mexican author in Quebec. Suzanne Lebeau, Marc Antoine Cyr, Luis Martin, Boris Schoemann, were all participants during the first wave. For his residency in Montreal in 1999, Boris suggested a translation project instead of the development of a new play, and during his stay, the four Mexican plays that he translated were presented in Montreal in the form of staged readings, set up by Larry Trembley at UQAM. In 2002, as part of the Quebec mission to Mexico, another accord was created through CEAD and Centro Cultural Helénico, directed at the time by Luis Mario Moncada. The two institutions agreed to translate and present three plays written by their counterparts at their annual International New Play Festival for three consecutive years (2002-2004). Of these exchanges and translations, few Mexican texts made it to a production stage in Quebec. The only Mexican play – as far as I've been able to find – that saw a full production in Quebec during the first wave was Ximena Escalante's *Fedra y otras griegas (Phèdre et autres labyrinths)*, translated by Genviève Billette and produced by Théâtre de l'Inconnue in 2005.

Other important spaces for the translation of dramatic texts were translation seminars and residencies hosted in Canada.²⁴ In 2003, the CEAD hosted its first translation

²⁴ Specifically the BANFF International Literary Translation Center, which is open to translators from all over the Americas, is not francophone or anglophone only, and includes

seminar (Séminaire International de traduction théâtrale) and international writer's residency (Résidence internationale d'écriture), which continue to be held in Montreal biennially. According to Sara Fauteux, the current international counselor at CEAD, the seminar has two objectives: "In one way it is to promote the playwrights of Quebec. (...) But also mainly with no interest, just to serve the translators, make sure that they have a context, that we bring some new ideas, that they have these privileged working situation where they can just reflect on what it means to translate theater" (Fauteux). These programs show that CEAD acknowledges the centrality of the translator in the type of regional imaginative work and the establishment of material international theater networks that Quebec is interested in. Interestingly enough, and following on the ideas of *latinité* that place art over commerce in the service of a collective, these residencies are framed less as political initiatives (exporting Quebecois de souche culture) or commercial endeavors (expanding Quebec's market), and more as a public service to the development of the art.

While the theater network between Mexico City and Quebec saw frequent and diverse activity between 1997 and 2007, it has been sustained primarily through texts and a handful of translators. The most active of these has undoubtedly been Boris Schoemann, since he has participated in this network as translator, director, producer, publisher and cultural promoter. If we follow his trajectory we find that in addition to playing so many roles, Schoemann found himself to be the right person at the right time in the right place, as he embodied a notion of *latinité* that was being activated at the time. As a French-born theatre practitioner based in Mexico, he was read by institutions both in Mexico and in Quebec as being a fitting profile for many of the post-NAFTA initiatives, since he represented the imagined *latinité* where Mexico and Quebec are linked (and translated) through France.

Schoemann's first contact with Quebec was initiated through INBA, where he was chosen to attend FTA as special guest in 1999. When he came back from that trip, Mexican director Mauricio Jiménez showed him Michel Marc Bouchard's work, and Schoemann fell in love with his plays. He contacted Bouchard directly with his translation of a fragment of *Les Feulettes*, and Bouchard gave him the green light to continue translating the play in its entirety. Schoemann had seen Mauricio Jiménez's 1998 production of Bouchard's *Les muses orphelines*, (translated by Natalia Traven), and would later translate and produce his own version of the play with his company, *Los Endebles* (named after Bouchard's play, *Les Feulettes*). This was Schoemann's first translation and production of Bouchard's work, created in the year 2000 at La Capilla, co-produced by CUT and the Délégation General du Québec à Mexico. As a result of his interest in the work of Quebecois writers and his fluency in the two languages, that same year Schoemann won the first México-Québec writer's exchange fellowship financed by FONCA. As was previously discussed, since he was not a playwright he proposed a translation residency, translating four plays by Mexican authors

other forms of literary texts; CEAD's translation seminars, usually hosted simultaneously to its international new play showcase (initially called Semaine Internationale de la Dramaturgie, today Dramaturgie en Dialogue); and the Tadoussac, Quebec residency organized by Playwright's Workshop Montreal, which also expands beyond francophone theater despite it being based in Quebec, but requires the translator to have a director in their home country interested in producing the translation.

into French.²⁵ During this first residency Schoemann also became close to the CEAD, who gave him many plays to read, all by Québec authors, in the hope that he would be interested in continuing this translation work.²⁶

Translation residencies were key for Schoemann because, amongst other things, he was able to meet many of these authors in person, and establish friendships and artistic bonds that would outlive government interest. It is significant also that Schoemann established these relationships in his first language, French, which helps avoid a considerable amount of mistranslation that would have taken place had the conversations been established by speakers with different levels of fluency be it in Spanish, French or English. I stress then that what has been often framed as a network sustained by an inherently close cultural affinity between Mexico and Quebec has primarily been mediated by a French-Mexican artist, and by the cultural attaché at the Mexico City Délégation Generale du Quebec (2005 – to date), Dominique Decorme-Bordet, who is in fact also a French immigrant to Mexico.

This translation network was expanded once Schoemann began training translators more directly through translation workshops, making sure that many of these Quebecois authors, who were now close collaborators, were made visible to these younger translators. There was also the incentive of paid translation, and Quebecois authors were generally very receptive to being approached by Mexican translators – they were interested in being produced in Mexico, they made the time to establish a dialogue with these translators, and they were almost always funded by Canada and/or Quebec to go to Mexico to see their plays produced in Spanish. In some ways, Schoemann is exactly the type of partner that Quebec was looking for when they were hoping to populate their translation initiatives – someone with strong ties to a large theatre market abroad, and with a deep knowledge of the French language. In addition to this, Schoemann was not at first a theater translator, but a director and a performer, which made the uptake of his translations much easier once he began translating Quebec texts more regularly.

Another key aspect to establishing the network was the vast publishing market that Mexico represents. In addition to translating, directing and in some cases, starring in many of these plays, Schoemann has also published them through La Capilla's publisher, El Milagro. Schoemann re-launched this publisher in 1992, taking after what Salvador Novo had done in the 1950s when he founded La Capilla. El Milagro has published over 100 contemporary plays in Spanish, by both Mexican and international playwrights, including many of these Quebec plays. Publication both snowballs productions and is a way to keep a register of what is most popular in both Mexico City and in other parts of the country. The text in translation and production is one thing, but publication has given these texts its own possibilities of circulation and agency within a wider network, and has significantly expanded Quebec's market across the continent.

²⁵ Specifically, works by Antonio Serrano, Oscar Liera, Humberto Leyva and David Olguín.

²⁶ It was during a translation residency at Montfort, Quebec where Schoemann met Daniel Danis, Larry Trembley and Louise Bombardier. To date, he has translated and directed over twenty plays by Quebecois authors – including four plays by Daniel Danis, two plays by Larry Tremblay, two plays by Louise Bombardier, one play by Wajdi Mouawad, one play by Evelyne de la Chenelière, three plays by Jasmine Dubé and seven plays by Michel Marc Bouchard.

Through the strong relationships he established with playwrights and with the CEAD, and in his work as the editor of *El Milgaro*, Schoemann is the node of the network through which Quebecois texts have been translated, published and disseminated in Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. Significantly, he has also trained a generation of translators who have multiplied Quebecois presence in Mexico City, most significantly, Humberto Pérez Mortera. Pérez Mortera's initial interest in Quebec theater was advanced by two professional relationships – his partnership with director Hugo Arrevillaga, and his connection to Schoemann. Aside from having seen Schoemann's work during his years in training, Pérez Mortera worked at La Capilla as Schoemann's assistant, where he was exposed further to these works as well as to the Mexico-Quebec networks, especially since by this time Schoemann had a lot of influence at CEAD in recommending people for CEAD's international activities. In our conversation, Schoemann made an interesting reference to how it was that Pérez Mortera and Arrevillaga came about taking on Mouawad's plays:

Humberto Pérez que fue mi asistente en La Capilla y que luego fue traductor, es traductor, también ha traducido muchos textos. Yo empecé con Wajdi Mouawad, pero él siguió con todas las traducciones de Wajdi. Hugo Arrevillaga que también fue mi actor en *Los Endebles* y en muchas otras obras, luego empezó a querer dirigir las obras de Wajdi que yo le dejé porque ya, tenía demasiadas que dirigir y él me pidió tomar las de Wajdi y entonces pues también, no las puedo hacer todas.

[Humberto Pérez who was my assistant at La Capilla and later became a translator, is a translator, he has translated a lot of texts. I started with Wajdi Mouawad, but he continued with all of Wajdi's translations. Hugo Arrevillaga who was also an actor in my production of *Los Endebles* and in many other plays, he later began wanting to direct Wajdi's plays and I let him because I had too many things to direct and he asked to take on Wajdi's and also, I can't do them all] (Schoemann).

From this recollection it seems that Schoemann, by the mid-2000s knew himself to be the node of the network – the central player, who, as he expresses, granted permission for others to take on new translations of Quebec texts. As the previous section shows, Schoemann was not the first or the only person to bring many of these authors to Mexico, but he was certainly the most prolific in those first ten years, and has remained the central player. In the case of Wajdi's plays that Schoemann himself had co-translated this makes sense, since translators must grant permission for production, but his recollection suggests he also granted Pérez Mortera and Arrevillaga permission to pursue Wajdi's work further. A type of symbolic passing of the baton, or delegating of the work.

Unlike Schoemann, when Pérez Mortera encountered his first Quebec plays he did not yet speak French. He had been studying playwriting at SOGEM in Mexico City, and had been sent to see Schoemann's plays at La Capilla – *Camino de los Pasos Peligrosos*, *El canto del dime dime* and *La historia de la Oca*. He recalls being particularly struck by Denis' *El canto del dime dime*, so when a friend of his went to Toronto the following summer, he asked her to look for a copy of Denis' play. She didn't find a copy of that exact play, and instead brought him back an English translation of Denis' *Cendres de Cailloux* (*Ashes and Stones*). "Me gustó mucho, mucho, mucho, mucho. Yo no hablaba francés, y el hecho de ver

ese texto fue lo que me impulsó a aprender. (...) Yo aprendí francés para eso [I liked it a lot, a lot, a lot. I didn't speak French, and seeing that text gave me the impulse to learn. (...) I learned French for that purpose]" (Pérez Mortera). That was around 2002-2003, and a few years later, once he had learned enough French, Pérez Mortera suggested to his friend, director Hugo Arrevillaga, that they translate the play together and produce it. In 2007 Arrevillaga directed the translation of *Cendres de Cailloux* – their first production of a Quebecois author together.

After this, Arrevillaga would become Pérez Mortera's closest creative partner in his work as a translator of Quebec plays. Arrevillaga had performed in Schoemann's first production of Bouchard's *Los Endebles* in 2000 and was familiar with this network, although it wouldn't be until he discovered what Pérez Mortera referred to as "su autor fetiche, que es Wajdi Mouawad [his author fetish, that is Wajdi Mouawad]" (Pérez Mortera), that Arrevillaga would focus a big part of his career on staging this author in Mexico. Arrevillaga and Pérez Mortera's collaboration through Mouawad's oeuvre has been ongoing for ten years - with *Willy Protogoras enfermé dans le toilettes*, *Couteau*, *Un obus dans le Coeur*, *Incendies*, *Architecture d'un marcheur*, *Les larmes d'Oedipe*, *Assoiffés* and *Visage retrouvé*²⁷.

The majority of these translations were paid for by CAC, and some were done during translation residencies either in Quebec (Tadoussac and Montreal) or at BANFF. The CAC translation subvention was a key factor in launching Pérez Mortera's partnership with Arrevillaga. For their first translation, Danis' *Cendres de Cailloux*,

pedimos la beca que tiene el consejo de las artes de Canadá, la beca de traducción, nos la dieron. Eran \$27,000 pesos y fue con lo que produjimos, porque el dinero para producción de los teatros siempre ha sido un desastre en México. No llegaba, no llegaba, entonces bueno, ¿qué hay? Ya estamos ensayando, está ese dinero...

[we applied for the Canada Arts Council grant, the translation grant, and we got it. It was \$27,000 pesos and it's what we used to produce, because production money for theatres in Mexico has always been a disaster. It didn't arrive, it didn't arrive, so then, what do we have? We're already in rehearsals, we have that money...] (Pérez Mortera).

As they awaited production money in Mexico, Pérez Mortera put his translation salary – awarded by CAC – towards the production. This relatively small funding opportunity coming from the Canadian government went a long way in Mexico City. Again, the asymmetries in how the two governments conceived of arts funding generated a dependent relationship between the artists in Mexico City and the Quebecois institutions. After this first translation, Pérez Mortera has received the translation subvention from CAC nine times, but with the recognition he and Arrevillaga have received for their productions of these Quebecois dramatists, raising funds in Mexico has fortunately become a less

²⁷ Arrevillaga has worked with other translators in his Mexico City productions of Mouawad's *Litoral* (Boris Schoemann and César Rodríguez), *Fôrets* (Raquel Urióstegui), *Ciels* (Raquel Urióstegui), *Pacambo* (Raquel Urióstegui), *Seuls* (Raquel Urióstegui), and *Le soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face* (Esther Selignson).

complicated issue. What is most significant about this is that CAC (the Canadian Arts Council) is a federal funding agency, and yet was used by these translators to translate primarily Quebecois texts, framed as a Quebec – Mexico collaboration.

In my conversation with Violeta Sarmiento, who has recently played an important role in this network as translator and producer, she spoke about her experience starring in Arrevillaga's production of Mouawad's *Fôrets (Bosques)* in 2011. After *Incendies'* success in Mexico City (the play had five ongoing runs between 2009 and 2014), the cast could not believe when the production of *Fôrets* – which would go on to have three runs – had a similar reception.

Así, si la obra empezaba a las 8 de la noche nos enterábamos que desde cuatro horas antes la gente se formaba, y se acababan los boletos y era así como de, ¿qué? ¿Está pasando eso? Y era una sensación muy rara. Era de, pues estamos haciendo teatro, ¿cómo es que eso pasa? Era una sensación muy linda y a la vez era – osea, ocurría de función a función esta cosa.

[So, if the play started at 8pm we would hear four hours before that people were lining up, that tickets were running out and we were like, what? This is happening? It was a very strange sensation. It was like, we're making theatre, how is this happening? It was a very nice sensation and at the same time it was – I mean, this would happen for every performance] (Sarmiento).

The partnership that Pérez Mortera and Arrevillaga launched in 2007 had, by 2014, made Mouawad's work a significant part of Mexico City's theatre landscape, and it was through this that Sarmiento, the most recent Mexican participant in CEAD's translation seminar, was incorporated into the network.

An actress by training who until recently was part of the Compañía Nacional de Teatro, Sarmiento's testimony is particularly valuable given the different angles of her involvement with Quebec theatre – as audience member, as performer, as translator and as producer. She recalls being an audience member to many of the early-2000 productions of Quebec texts, fresh out of acting school, and was later involved as an actor in two of Arrevillaga's productions of Mouawad's plays, *Fôrets (Bosques)* in 2011 and *Ciels (Cielos)* in 2012. Simultaneously in 2011, Sarmiento took a theater translation course led by Schoemann (assisted by Pérez Mortera) that resulted in her translating, producing, directing, performing in and touring Dominick Parenteau-Leboeuf's *Iris tient salon (Iris hace sala)*. This project inserted her into the existing translation network, and in August 2018 Sarmiento was invited by CEAD's translation seminar.

In my conversation with her, I asked Sarmiento to what extent she had been aware as audience member that the works she saw in Mexico City by Mouawad or Bouchard or Frèchette or Danis were all from Quebec. “No, pues hasta donde recuerde, al menos concientemente, no [No, not as far as I can remember, at least not consciously]” (Sarmiento). But when she was involved in Arrevillaga's productions of *Fôrets* and *Ciels*, this changed. It was once she was part of the creative process in these two productions that Sarmiento began to gain a clearer sense of Quebec and its influence on Mexican theatre. So that when she was selecting a play to translate from French into Spanish for the translation workshop led by Schoemann, she was open to his suggestion of her translating a Quebecois

text. Since *Iris tient salon* was her first translation and she was only then getting further acquainted with the French, she chose something short. She translated this children's monologue, produced it in Mexico City in 2015, and in 2018 the production was invited to participate at the 15th edition of the children's theatre festival in Montreal, Coups de Theatre, where Sarmiento performed the play in French. Like Perez Mortera and Arrevillega, Sarmiento's contact with Quebec drama went directly through Schoemann. And like Perez Mortera, Sarmiento learned French for the purposes of doing this project, and by her own admission, even by the summer of 2018 she still felt like there was much she didn't get from the conversations at the CEAD translator's seminar. More significantly, she had to learn the entire text for *Iris tient salon* in the French phonetically, in order to perform her *mise-in-scene* to a Quebecois audience at the Coups de Theatre children's theatre festival.

Sarmiento is part of a resurgence of Mexican presence in Montreal. In 2018 alone, there were three Mexican productions invited to Montreal festivals – *Tijuana* by Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol at Festival TransAmériques, Violeta Sarmiento's production of *Iris tient salon* at Coups de Theatre, and Boris Schoemann's production of Maribel Carrasco *Los cuervos no se peinan* also at Coups de Theatre. This last production is significant because despite Schoemann having translated dozens of Quebec plays into Spanish, it wasn't until 2014 (and later 2018) with this play that he was invited, for the first time, to translate and direct a Mexican text for a Quebec audience. Most significantly, the play was translated and directed by Schoemann and produced in 2018 by Jasmine's Dubé's company, Bouches Décousues. Schoemann's ability to translate to and from the two languages makes him the exception even in the world of theater translation, and this has allowed him to be a nodal point of circulations going in different directions. As we have seen, he embodies a triangulation between Quebec, France and Mexico that makes him read as a prime carrier of *latinité*, more so than Perez Mortera or Sarmiento. In these types of cultural networks, people like Boris Schoemann are doing deep translation work, in as much as they translate an imagined cultural closeness and make it fit a material system.

Reflections

By the time the Quebec theater journal *Jeu* published a special issue on the Mexico-Quebec exchanges in 2007, the sense was that this was an extremely productive relationship, not only in that it was constant and prolific, but in that it was diverse in its manifestations – festivals, tours, co-productions, publications, exchanges of new plays, conferences and workshops. The Special Issue shows how during this ten year period each place had an influence on the way theatre was being made and conceived of in the other, even when, as Rodolfo Obregón argues in his contribution to the volume, “Un échange inégal” (translated by Laure Rivière), “les deux lignes d'action principales ont, à mon avis, eu des résultats diamétralement opposés [the two main lines of action have had, in my opinion, diametrically opposing results].” (2007:74) The author argues that the direction of the exchange went primarily one way – North to South – and he attributes this to Mexico's inability to promote itself abroad, especially with its Northern neighbors.

Comme dans tant d'autres secteurs d'échange entre les pays d'Amérique du Nord, l'ineptie des négociateurs mexicains est un exemple : pour économiser quelques

pesos, ils finissent par investir davantage dans l'importation (ici, des mises en scène) qui ne produisent que peu de bénéfices, qu'à promouvoir à l'étranger ce qui vaut la peine dans ce pays. Dans ce sens aussi, le Canada francophone a beaucoup à nous apprendre de sa politique culturelle.

[Like in many other sectors of exchange between countries of North America, the ineptitude of Mexican negotiators is an example: in order to save a few pesos, they end up investing more strenuously on importation (in this case, in *mises en scènes*) that produce very few benefits, than in promoting abroad what is worthy in this country. In this respect, French-Canada has a lot to teach us about its cultural policy] (2007:77).

As was discussed in the first half of this chapter, there are important asymmetries that have dictated the shape of these collaborations even when the imagining labor rarely accounts for these. *Latinité* prompts us to image the relationship between communities through a premise of *fraternité* that suggests a horizontal and equal relationship, but we have seen that the material networks that result from these imaginings develop under very different conditions in each place. The question of why Mexico imported Quebecois theater so readily but Quebec has never really imported Mexican theatre, is recurrent in the Special Issue and in most of the conversations I have had with artists and cultural actors involved in this network. Cultural policy design has a lot to do with this, as Obregón argues, as do many other factors, starting with scale, as Mexico City alone duplicates Quebec in population. As much as Quebec's actions and discourse suggest that they want to increase their presence in Mexico (quite literally by showing up with a 70-person cultural mission), Mexico's discourse was very different, and was much more focused on making Mexico visible, specifically Mexico City, as a cultural hub in the North American imaginary. This implied being a stop on the map, a place that others come to, and not necessarily exporting cultural products. Like other actors had done in the mid-century partnerships, Mexico and Quebec used each other symbolically and materially in order to garner political power and visibility at home and in the region, and along the way, we have seen how *latinité* has been used for these purposes.

Although Mexico hosted most of the exchanges, Quebec and Canada paid for a big part of it. As the translation network shows, through paid translations Quebec generated a *modus vivendi* for theatre translators in Mexico, who are often underpaid and under-credited. The exchanges not only offered dignified salaries for this work, but they offered training and development spaces for this specialized labor. In our conversation, Humberto Pérez Mortera said of his experience in working as a translator with Quebec: "Me ha disciplinado. También el lado de ser un mediador cultural. De ser pues un traductor de alguna manera preocupado para que mi nombre vaya en portada, para que me paguen bien [It has made me more disciplined. Also being a cultural mediator. Of being a translator who is in a way concerned with my name being on the book cover, with being paid well]" (Pérez Mortera). In the establishment of this network, the role of the translator has been foregrounded not only in the linguistic sense, but in their work as cultural mediators both of theater products and of the regional narratives that often frame these products as part of a Latin North America.

We have also seen that Mexico City's rich publishing culture is one of the clearest ways in which Mexico performs itself as "the door to the Americas," providing a route for the imagined *latinité* to circulate across the transatlantic Spanish-speaking market, so that this imaginative tool is made to work hand in hand with a very material network – the publishing market. The theatre publishers Paso de Gato and Tramoya publish new plays alongside academic publications, and El Milagro (based at Teatro La Capilla, directed by Schoemann) specialize in the publication of contemporary drama, both Mexican and international. Many of the Quebec plays in translation discussed in this study have become accessible in Mexico and across Latin America and Spain thanks to these publishing initiatives. This has expanded the network beyond Mexico City, and it is in part what has sustained the exchanges once arts funding was cut in Canada in 2008 and visa restrictions complicated travel. So even when Lebeau and Le Carrousel have not collaborated with Mexico in over a decade, Lebeau's plays continue to be produced there because so much of her work in translation was published and circulated during those first ten years.

This is also one of the examples in which Mexico City operates as an important node in the network. Companies from all over the country and the world interested in producing these translations need to go through the translators in order to secure rights or get to the playwright – and the vast majority of these translators and publishers are based in the Mexican capital. The way that a lot of the circulation has been centralized through Schoemann, it has circulated primarily through the big metropolis. Not only are most of the publishing houses based there, but in our conversation, Humberto Pérez Mortera made it clear that theatre practitioners based in other parts of the country wait until these international plays are tested in the City before they take them up (Pérez Mortera). The theatre circuit in Mexico – international and domestic – is certainly very centralized, and although many of the Mexican artists involved in generating these networks are not originally from the City, such as Luis Mario Moncada or the members of Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol (the company that has so often been invited to the FTA) they are based or operate heavily from the Capital. This is an example of how Mexico City continues to be imagined as the core and center of cultural production and of international contact, especially contact that does not go through the United States, where border culture is so strong. Through its theater relationship with Quebec, Mexico City has reaffirmed itself as the cultural center of its country, and as a door towards a broader *latinité*.

At the same time that Mexico City is imagined as the "door to the Americas" – an entry point through which *latinité* is manifested into material worlds – Quebec is most often imagined as an island amidst an ocean of Anglophones. I argue that these local imaginings have also directly affected the shape these material networks have taken. Quebec's sense of isolation combined with a feeling of cultural endangerment – two of the central ideological building blocks of institutions like CEAD and CALQ – does not predispose its publics or its theatres to invest in the production and consumption of cultural products that "threaten" more than assert Quebecois de souche culture. Perhaps if Mexico had invested more in exporting large productions to tour Quebec or participate at international festivals such as FTA, there was little Mexican cultural policy could do to incentivize Quebec artists and companies to take up Mexican texts as part of their yearly programming. And even if Mexico had replicated Quebec's translation support models, Quebec translators have enough support within their borders to have to look for it abroad.

We find also that Quebec's objectives since the 1960s are very clearly directed towards its consolidation as (settler) nation, and this has meant asserting itself on international stages as being culturally distinct to the rest of Canada by activating the dichotomies historically suggested by *latinité*. The way Quebec institutions are set up, plenty of resources are channeled into the exportation of Quebecois, francophone culture, and yet they still require international players – cultural mediators – to circulate these products outside of the province. Mexico City has shown to have both the players and the publics necessary to make this possible, and so Quebec has continued to allocate resources in this direction, while Mexican artists are desperate for any kind of institutional support. The relationship to Quebec has also dignified the work of theater translators, not only as cultural mediators, but as money-makers. Through royalties and publications, these translators have broadened the market for themselves and for Quebec writers through a much larger Spanish-speaking market. So that Quebec has been interested much more in Mexican artists as cultural translators that labor to produce material and imagined connections amongst these communities, and not necessarily on Mexican art per se.

The chapter has shown a diversity in forms of collaboration – from festival participation, co-productions, and the translation, production and publication of texts. It has explored how each of these necessitates specific types of support and relies differently on larger regional narratives of cultural closeness. The chapter also shows that Mexico has had perhaps a handful of people sustaining these networks – most prominently Boris Schoemann – whereas on the side of Quebec we find it is institutions that are acting as the key nodes. I argue this has to do with how the networks are assembled and sustained. In my conversations with people at CEAD and FTA it became clear that the people responsible for international partnerships are usually responsible not only for the relationship of their institution to Mexico, but to the rest of the world. Sara Fauteux estimates that she currently maintains the relationship between CEAD and partners in around twenty countries. This means that these centers will have one or two people at most who are the primary partners in each country, and the network will expand in the direction that those points of contacts decide, or through their own already established networks abroad. This explains why CEAD has relied so heavily on a French-Mexican collaborator, Boris Schoemann (and his recommendations of other translators) in the last twenty years, or why FTA has repeatedly invited the same company to perform since 2010. So that these networks rely on these connecting nodes, an aspect that both sustains while it centralizes, and consequently constraints, mobility.

Still, there is more Quebec theatre produced in Latin America than in English Canada, and these networks evidence that the majority of these flows have passed through Mexico City. Through translation and publication, Mexico City has become the node that produces a link across North America and expands into Latin America, carrying through these texts, travels and productions an implicit marker of *latinité*. In the following case-study chapters, the specific challenges of co-producing (chapter 3) and translating text for performance (chapter 4) will be addressed, both through the lens of how meaning circulates in these processes, and by reading the economic and political infrastructures that enable these exchanges. What I urge us to take away from the reassembly of these networks is how, whether it be the mid-century exchanges between civil actors or the creation of the Festival de théâtre des Amériques, the concept of *latinité* has operated as a key imaginative tool in connecting Quebec and Mexico, providing an assumed affinity that

garners the necessary trust towards establishing and sustaining unique cultural partnerships across North America. At the same time, we have seen how the networks connected to these imagined notions of a Latin North America are much more complex and asymmetric than the idea of *latinité* would suggest. This chapter has shown that the two markets and modes of production analyzed here complement each other for reasons that are primarily political and commercial, even when the prolific exchange is so often framed around aesthetics and cultural affinity. In maintaining the dichotomies set out in the Bilbao Law, exchanges dictated by a shared *latinité* would perhaps be amiss in admitting themselves as commercial transactions instead of upholding the Latin values of beauty, art and spirit over commerce, industry and power.

Chapter 3: Co-producing digestible imaginaries in *La vida no vale nada*

El vértigo y la incertidumbre que produce tener que pensar a escala global lleva a atrincherarse en alianzas regionales entre países y a delimitar – en los mercados, en las sociedades y en sus imaginarios – territorios y circuitos que para cada uno serían la globalización digerible, con la que puedan tratar.

[The vertigo and uncertainty that come from having to think at a global scale leads us to entrench ourselves in regional alliances between countries and to demarcate – in the markets, in society and its imaginaries – territories and circuits that make it into a digestible globalization, with which one can deal.]

Nestor García Canclini

La vida no vale nada es un proyecto teatral que intenta conjugar dos visiones del mundo, tres idiomas y un sinfín de personajes sobre un tablero apócrifo en el que – nos han dicho – habitualmente Dios juega a los dados.

[*La vida no vale nada* is a theater project that attempts to blend two visions of the world, three languages and endless characters on an apocriphal board where – we have been told – God habitually plays dice.]

La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien (program)

Introduction

In the opening epigraph, Néstor García Canclini argues that the vertigo and uncertainty of a growing sense of globalization produce regional alliances between countries, ones that demarcate “in the markets, in society and its imaginaries – territories and circuits make it into a digestible globalization, with which one can deal” (García Canclini, 6). To him, the work of imagining a North American region (and how it is made to operate through NAFTA), exemplifies this notion of a “digestible globalization.” This chapter will explore how a specific theater production – *La vida no vale nada / La vie ne vaut rien* – strategically connected a collection of tangential global imaginaries, all based on international economic and political treaties: through this project the then emerging imagining of a new North American region (NAFTA) was connected culturally and linguistically to South America (Mercosur) through Mexico, at the same time that it connected to Europe (European Union) through Montreal. This theater production is read then as being part of an international reaction to global times, used to stage the narratives that make globalization digestible through regional demarcations. Reading how language and translation operate in the assemblage of this co-production, reveals the intricacies and mirages of “making the global digestible”.

In 2001, Mexico City theatre company Teatro Arena collaborated with Montreal-based Ensamble Sauvage Public (ESP) on a three-year theatre project, a co-production that would consist of two runs, one in Mexico City and one in Montreal, of a show that would be co-created by the two companies in a process of back and forth circulation between the

provinces. The play was devised by the group, and Mexican playwright Luis Mario Moncada wrote the script based on a series of tri-lingual improvisation exercises in which all performers participated. By looking closely at the tri-lingual component of the development process, the chapter analyzes moments of specific cultural and linguistic divergences that make “global thinking” vertiginous and uncertain, and the translation work necessary in order to render this vastness somewhat more “digestible.” Looking closely at language reveals the complicated implications of this labor, even at a regional scale where often the illusion of full translation and cultural affinity attempt to demarcate a regional connection. As the chapter will explore, it is, quite contrarily, primarily through mistranslations and misunderstandings that these regional interactions are assembled.

The following is playwright Luis Mario Moncada’s recollection of a moment in one of the tri-lingual development workshops:

Hay un ejercicio que se llama “¿qué vamos a hacer con pato?” [...] el ejercicio consiste en que todo lo que te dice el otro es cierto y tú tienes que seguirlos. Entonces no es una impro de conflicto, sino es una impro de construir juntos una fábula. Entonces el ejercicio de “¿qué vamos a hacer con Pato?” consiste en que simplemente tienes un grupo de actores y uno suelta la primer frase y a partir de eso uno tiene que seguir, y nunca puedes contradecir lo que el otro dice. Entonces es un asunto como acumulativo y que va creciendo, entonces claro, están todos los actores, los seis actores, y uno empieza – “¿qué vamos a hacer con pato?” ¿no? Y el otro, “pues es que deberíamos ayudarlo con su problema” ¿no? Y “sí claro, ¿pero cómo lo apoyamos?” Y empieza a crecer. Y claro, como es un ejercicio que tiene mucho de verbal, el cómo se comunicaban ellos era muy extraño. Hasta que llegó el momento mágico del ejercicio. Porque resulta que como se empezó a dar era una cosa así medio de criminales o ladrones, una cosa que tenían oculta que tenían que llevar no sé a dónde. El caso es que uno de ellos, para ocultarlo, porque estaba la policía cerca y los amenazaba, se lo traga ¿no? Uno de los mexicanos. El caso es que esta cosa que tenían estaba dentro del tipo ese, y uno de los actores mexicanos, en medio de la improvisación, dice: “es que tiene esa madre en la panza.” Y los canadienses no entendieron, sólo Marcela, entonces los canadienses voltean a ella y le dicen, “¿qué pasa?” Y ella así con el ojo estupefacto, dice, así como disciplinada en que tiene que seguir la premisa de la historia, dice, “es que su madre está en la panza.” Y todo, enloqueció ahí el ejercicio porque todos tenían que seguir, o sea no podían cuestionar, la premisa – entonces sufrían justificando el cómo es que la madre había terminado en la panza de este cuate. Entonces claro, cuando terminó el ejercicio y comentamos, nos dimos cuenta de que ahí estaba el germen de la obra ¿no? O sea en ese equívoco idiomático es el que nos iba a permitir – entonces eso es lo que, leyendo la obra, te das cuenta que permea en todo el texto ¿no? Entonces creo que inmediatamente dijimos, creo que va por aquí.

[There is an exercise called “What are we going to do with *pato*²⁸?” [...] the exercise is based on the premise that everything that the other person says is true and you

²⁸ The word *pato* translates into English as duck, but Pato is also short for Patricio or Patricia. Thus, *pato* could be used to refer to the animal or it could be used as a name.

have to follow them. So its not conflict improv, it is an improv meant to build a story together. So the exercise “What are we going to do with *pato*?” consists of, you simply have a group of actors and one of them delivers the first line and from there you have to follow, and you can never contradict what the other said. So it’s an accumulative thing that grows, so of course, you have all the actors, the six actors, and one of them says – “what are we going to do with *pato*?” Right? And the other, “well we should help him with his problem.” Right? And, “yes, of course, but how do we help him?” And it starts to grow. And of course, since it’s a very verbal exercise, the way they communicated was very strange. Until the magical moment of the exercise came. Because it turns out the whole thing turned into something about criminals or robbers, they had something hidden that they had to take somewhere. The point is that one of them, in order to hide it, because the police was close and threatening them, swallowed it, right? One of the Mexicans. So the point is the thing they were hiding was inside this guy, and one of the Mexican actors, in the middle of the improvisation, says: “he has that *madre*²⁹ in his belly.” And the Canadians didn’t understand. Only Marcela. So the Canadians turn to her and ask, “what’s going on?” And she, with her eyes stupefied, says, very disciplined in that she has to follow the premise of the story, she says, “what happens is that his mother is in his belly.” And everything, at that moment the exercise went crazy because everyone had to follow, they couldn’t question the premise – so they suffered through justifying how the mother had ended up in this guy’s belly. So of course, when the exercise ended and we discussed it, we realized that that’s where the seed of the play was, right? That language-based mistake is what would allow us to – so that is what, when you read the play, you can tell is permeating the entire text, right? So I think we said immediately, we think this is the way] (Moncada 2017).

Since the exercise described by Moncada was so word-based, this type of constant translation was necessary – but translation that, given the nature of the exercise, could only build on the misunderstandings and mistranslations, and could not contradict them in order to correct them. In this account it appears Marcela Pizarro was the only one from the Quebec side who understood what was meant by the expression “tiene esa madre en la panza”, and so she had to find a way to build on the improvisation without taking a step back or contradicting what the Mexican actor had said. To me it is less clear that Marcela, of Chilean descent, would grasp as clearly what the actor had meant by *madre*, although her knowledge of Spanish would have allowed her to draw the general meaning from context. Regardless, the translation she provided the other Quebec actors was based on the use of *madre* as mother, instantly transforming the fiction produced thus far by the exercise. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, the accumulative work of these misunderstandings is used by Moncada in constructing the action of the play, allowing for possibilities in the action that only become plausible under the premise of mistranslation.

It could be argued that it is in the falseness of this translation that the action arises and that this alternate world is created. In *After Babel* George Steiner invites us to stop

²⁹ The word *madre* translates into English as mother, but *madre* is also used in Mexican colloquial Spanish to mean thing/object. By saying, “he has that *madre* in his belly”, the actor meant to indicate that the other actor had the hidden “thing/object” in his belly.

seeing falsity as a negative (228), since it is precisely our ability to “un-say the world” what allows us to “imagine and speak it otherwise” (228). These ideas around embracing falsity seem particularly useful in the context of the arts, and specifically in the context of this production. Language, Steiner argues, “is the main instrument of man’s refusal to accept the world as it is” (228). Falsity becomes the tool by which we are able to speak and imagine different worlds. This argument can be employed to address the anti-theatrical prejudice in order not to deny the falsity of theatricality, but to uncover its potential as world-maker (or re-maker). Steiner argues, then, that it is not “‘a theory of information’ that will serve us best in trying to clarify the nature of language, but a ‘theory of misinformation’” (228). The way in which the creative process for *La vida* was conceived based the truth of its fiction on the falsities of translation upon which the intercultural encounter is so often staged. The production could be read as an example of what Una Chaudhuri would call practical interculturalism, one that does not “simply reproduce already established (and hence already politically coded) images of cultural difference; instead it would *produce the experience of difference*” (Chaudhuri 196).

I begin with this example of how mistranslation served as a guiding principle in the creative process through which *La vida no vale nada / La vie ne vaut rien* came into being, as a way to shift focus towards the details of translation as it operates in these exchanges – in how it translates the vastness of the global into a digestible region. By analyzing a co-production in detail, this chapter aims to take the larger considerations of the first two chapters and explore how these framings operate in the specifics of establishing, producing and circulating a theater collaboration between Mexico and Quebec at the turn of the century. The show was financed by funds secured from both sides, it was co-produced, it involved roughly the same number of participants from each country, and it required both teams to travel back and forth several times over a period of four years. This case study allows us to follow closely a creative process where two companies permanently based in different countries of North America, collaborate to devise a production intended – primarily by funding sources – to perform the two places as being culturally connected. The first part of the production takes place in 2001, seven years after the NAFTA came into effect, and its inception and development can help evaluate the ways in which the specific regional discourses and government cultural initiatives of the time manifested in these types of projects.

The themes of the play and the focus of the conversations generated around it reveal active interest in the intercultural as well as in North America as a region, although as the opening anecdote shows, the challenges of this task cannot be underestimated. In order to grasp its complexity, the negotiations between the work of imagining and the material systems that enable the production need be read as problems of translation and translocation. In this way, the first part of the chapter explores how the collaboration was conceived of as part of the regional international project drafted in chapter two, an attempt towards a digestible globalization produced through a perceived cultural affinity. And yet, the co-production was framed by both cultural actors and artists as being part of a larger global phenomenon, and presented as an embodiment of a form of cultural mestizaje/métissage. The second part of the chapter will consider how the production was devised, financed, promoted, programmed and received first in Mexico City and two years later in Montreal, asking throughout what the production reveals of the cultural negotiations taking place at the time, and of the ways in which material conditions affected

and determined the outcomes of these negotiations, at times in stifling and at times in productive ways. Here not only will the challenges of translation be foregrounded, but the cultural affinities assumed of a Latin North America will be put into question as the politics of Quebec's *interculturalisme* show a resistance, not an openness, to Mexican cultural products. In this way, this case study evidences important tensions between the larger regional international narratives and Quebec's own internal separatist narratives of the time.³⁰

Framing the Production: An International Project in Global Times

Before going into the details of the production and the complexities of its mistranslations, I consider how it was framed by the company and by other cultural actors as part of an international project in global times, an attempt towards the creation of digestible globalization through regional alliances. I observe how terms like *mestizo* and *métissage* were activated to suggest an interculturality – often expressed loosely as multiculturalism – through which the production was packaged, circulated and financed. This shows how the production was part of larger conversations taking place at the time, and represented the implementation of cultural exchange projects set into motion with the signing of NAFTA.

Although they had different levels of experience, by the time they collaborated both Teatro Arena and Ensemble Sauvage Public (ESP) had worked abroad and had faced publics of different countries. This co-production, *La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien*, would be part of a larger project conceived by ESP:

En el proyecto (*Migrations/migraciones*), sometimos el tema de la migración (...) a cinco directores de diferentes culturas. (...) Estaremos de viaje en un largo exilio que tendrá cinco escalas: Quebec, México, Mali, Rusia y... Canadá; creando cada vez un espectáculo nuevo.

[For the project (*Migrations/migraciones*) we subjected the theme of migration (...) to five directors from different cultures. (...) We will be on the journey of a long exile with five stops: Quebec, Mexico, Mali, Russia and... Canada; creating each time a new show.] (Program *La vida no vale nada*)

This description, written by ESP, shows an interesting conception of national imaginaries, listing Quebec and Canada as two different places, a distinction that, as we will see in this chapter, will remain central to the Quebec team. At the same time, the above description contextualizes *La vida no vale nada* within a larger project of international collaborations involving a series of intercultural creative processes. The project's angle as described in the program was particularly attractive to public institutions doing work around cultural exchange between the two countries. National theatre institutions in Mexico City at the time were putting important efforts into making Mexico City a strong host of international presence, and this focus in cultural policy gave the first part of the project (the Mexico City

³⁰ Only ten months after the NAFTA had come into effect, Quebec held its second referendum for national sovereignty, with its largest voter turnout in Quebec's history (93.52%) and a very close win of the "No" option with 50.58% of the vote (Gall).

mise-en-scène) significant momentum that did not travel with the same force when it made its way North. To Quebec the work of cultural exportation has historically been essential both economically and in terms of its cultural identity, and this case study shows important tensions between Quebec's interest in circulating the work of Quebec artists outside their borders and a resistance to opening spaces within Quebec to artist or projects conceived abroad.

One of the interesting aspects of this case study is how it was publicized and critiqued by scholars and critics in line with government cultural actors. Accompanying the Mexico City production a discussion panel titled "La Migración, el Multiculturalismo³¹ y la Creación [Migration, Multiculturalism and Creation]" was organized, to take place after the show on opening weekend. The panel consisted of Martin Acosta (director of *La vida*), Marcela Pizarro (ESP actor and producer of *La vida*), Luis Mario Moncada (author of *La vida*), Boris Schoemann (translator to French for *La vida*), Néstor García Canclini (globalization scholar) and Otto Minera (director of the National Theatre). The panel was organized by the Coordinación Nacional de Teatro and the Canadian government representatives in Mexico.³² The thematic focus of the panel was, "la migración vista en el contexto histórico actual de globalización, que la diferencia de otras circunstancias como puede ser de carácter racial o religioso; el fenómeno del multiculturalismo y la circulación de las ideas [migration seen within the current historical context of globalization, that distinguishes it from other circumstances such as those of a racial or religious nature; the multiculturalism phenomenon and the circulation of ideas]" (Perea).

For the discussion panel, the production of *La vida* was used as a case study and starting point to ground the conversation in the context of a Quebec-Mexico exchange at the turn of the millennium. For Otto Minera, then director of the National Theatre, it was important to frame this production as part of a larger agenda of international collaborations, claiming that these types of projects had drawn little attention in the past and that it was time this changed. "La Ciudad de México se merece que haya programación internacional permanente [Mexico City deserves to have permanent international programming]" (Minera qtd. in Mateos Vega), stated Minera during the panel, as he went on to announce similar co-productions to take place during the Festival Internacional Cervantino³³ that same year. From these statements it is possible to read directed efforts to

³¹ See introductory chapter for in-depth differentiations between the multicultural, Multicultural and intercultural. Briefly, multicultural theater refers to work that does not draw attention to cultural differences, usually derived from grassroots experiences of cultural pluralism; Multicultural to work that promotes cultural diversity in line with national narratives and official policies; and intercultural to "intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions" (Gilbert and Lo 36). Yet I argue that in this discussion panel, the Multiculturalism is intended to mean what I have laid out as being *intercultural*, expressed by Ric Knowles as cultural contact with a "focus on the contested, unsettling, and often unequal spaces *between* cultures, spaces that can function in performance as sites of negotiation" (Knowles, 4).

³² Canadian Embassy in Mexico and the Délégation générale du Québec á Mexico.

³³ El Festival Internacional Cervantino is the most significant theater festival in Mexico, held in the city of Guanajuato since 1972. It is a member of the European Festivals Association and of the Association of Asian and Pacific Arts Festivals.

project an international image of Mexico City, and the co-production of *La vida no vale nada* fit right at the center of that narrative. Although the panel was intended to discuss culture in global times, it was clearly part of an international project – that is, a project to establish a regional dynamic not only between cultures, but between nation-states. As we will see later on in this chapter, Mexican reviewers who wrote about *La vida* engaged fully with the exercise of imagining Mexico City as a “permanent international” stage. By stating that Mexico City *deserves* (se merece) a permanent international theater scene, Minera both suggests that this has not been the case, and that such invisibility on a world stage is in some way unjust. Having a permanent international scene means that people travel to you–Mexico City then deserves, under this statement, that companies from other nations (and in this statement Minera refers to companies of the global North) come to Mexico City. That the Mexican capital appear as a stop on a map. That it become visible and valuable as a site of international contact. In the creation of the discussion panel that accompanied the production and in the framing made by the National Theatre director, critics, and other actors involved, we can read directed efforts to imagine and stage these regional narratives. Through these efforts, regional migration flows and global cultural contact are made digestible through regional alliances between nation-states.

In his intervention for the panel, translator Boris Schoemann – discussed in detail in chapters two and four – observed that *La vida no vale nada* was not only a mix of languages or cultures, but of acting techniques, stating that, “en teatro sí somos globalifílicos” (in theatre we are globaliphiles) (qtd. in Mateos Vega). I read this statement as indicating that in theatre we (and the first person plural could refer both to theatre people, or to Mexicans, or both) have a desire towards engaging with global forms, despite strong anti-global sentiments on other issues that relate primarily to the protection of indigenous cultures and fears of homogenization and economic exploitation. Now, if we look at the following statement made by ESP members Martin Choquette and Marcela Pizarro for the purposes of promoting the show, we can see how cultural contact in this instance was generally viewed as both positive and productive: “Estamos convencidos de que con este encuentro, con el mestizaje de los diferentes métodos de trabajo podemos hallar un teatro más representativo de las sociedades multiculturales actuales [We are convinced that with this encounter, with the *mestizaje* of the different working methods we can find a theater that is more representative of current multicultural societies]” (Pizarro and Choquette qtd. in Mateos Vega). By this logic the best way to use theater to portray an existing multiculturalism is to create from within the point of contact – *producciones mestizas*.

This chapter considers the range of possibilities made accessible as a result of this contact, yet I fear the statements I have cited here fall all too close to equating *mestizaje* with globalization. They read to me as follows: global means being international (engaging with other Nation-States), and this engagement derives in a mix, a *mestizaje* (described in Quebec as *métissage*) that represents multicultural societies and hence, is to be desired. As many interculturalism scholars have argued, I am of the opinion that the desirability of these exchanges is less an issue of diversifying cultures, but an issue of how and in the service of whom power operates within these collaborations³⁴. Most significantly, these

³⁴ Starting with the criticism made by scholars such as Bharucha, Gilbert and Lo, Ric Knowles and Balme against the Intercultural Theater of the 1980s (Brook, Barba, Mnouchkine), that consisted primarily of the appropriation of non-western performance

statements attempt to harmonize these dynamics, presenting them as perfect fits and closed transactions. As the second part of this chapter will show, the co-production achieved neither, and yet I argue that this is precisely what makes it representative of intercultural performances.

As we see in the description of the *Migrations* project provided by ESP in the programs for the two productions, the concepts of *métissage/mestizaje* were central in how the show was framed:

Este proyecto emana del deseo de confrontarnos a culturas diferentes de la nuestra y a diferentes maneras de practicar el teatro. Estamos convencidos que con este encuentro, con el mestizaje de los diferentes métodos de trabajo, podemos encontrar un teatro más representativo de las sociedades multiculturales actuales.

[This project emanates from the desire to face different cultures and different ways of practicing theater. We are convinced that with this encounter, with the *mestizaje* of different working methods, we can find a theatre that is more representative of contemporary multicultural societies] (Program *La vida no vale nada*)

Although it can be said that the companies were employing a metaphoric use of the terms – not necessarily implying a biological mix between ethnicities – how these words operate in relation to their different publics bring about multiple references that produce different narratives in each place. The work done through a co-production is not one of mixing two, unified cultures into a new, mixed form, and in this way the biological metaphor is profoundly limited. The mixing that comes about in this process implies instead exposing the complicated networks of cultural influences and histories that make up each group. In the case of *La vida*, contact and collaboration make visible these complicated histories in interesting ways that might otherwise remain imperceptible within their own contexts. *Mestizaje* and *métissage* are terms that perfectly encapsulate the problems with language that this project addresses, as they exemplify the deep pools of cultural meaning contained in words, their potential economic and political implications, and how quickly and freely they circulate across time, place and culture.

Although the cultural government actors and the creative teams readily employ the terms *mestizaje* and *métissage* to suggest a positive, conciliatory interaction, it is important to stop a moment at how the two terms have been made to operate in Mexico and in Quebec, respectively. Specifically, we find that their use in this context is continuing the work of colonial elites in grounding themselves as native to the Americas, at the same time that it invisibilizes the violence of a colonial past (and present). In Mexico, the racial category of *mestizo* has evolved in complex ways since the Spanish conquest, but has consistently existed within different forms of invisibilization. During the sixteenth century “mestizo referred to the illegitimate children of Spaniards and Indians who lived in Mexican society” (MacLachlan and Rodríguez 218), and since many of these children were considered illegitimate, they did not exist in any official reports until the eighteenth century, and were usually assumed either as *criollo* (Mexicans of Spanish-only descent) or

forms by white, mostly male directors in search of an ahistoric, universalist, utopic essence with which to fill the ‘empty space’ of the stage.

indigenous. So although *mestizos* made up a large part of the population, the term *mestizo* officially applied “to marginal persons unacceptable to either group” (216) and didn’t come to be considered a social group until the eighteenth-century. Still eighteenth-century Mexico relied first on socioeconomic criteria than on ethnic distinctions, and so successful mestizos were still thought of primarily as criollos and less successful mestizos as indigenous.

After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) José Vasconcelos offered a very different take on the concept of *mestizaje*, advancing the concept of the cosmic race (1925). This cosmic race, or ‘bronze race’, was the race of Iberoamerica – an agglomeration of all the races of the world that had come together in the Luso and Hispanic Americas and from which a new civilization would derive. From this perspective *mestizaje* was praised and *mestizos* were seen as the outcome of this new race, yet in Vasconcelos’ conception of this ‘bronze race’ difference was again erased – we are all mestizos and hence we are all the same. In these ways, *mestizaje* as a term in Mexico carries a complex history of invisibilization through contact, first in denying the racial category in favor of a social category, and later in the homogenization of all racial categorizations into one, mixed race.

Métissage in Quebec carries both the connotation of its dictionary definition, “union féconde entre hommes et femmes d’origine ethnique différente”³⁵, at the same time that it connotes the Métis, a specific indigenous groups in Canada of mixed indigenous and French, English or Scottish decent, recognized as indigenous people under the Constitution Act of 1982³⁶. In the case of Canada, the different groups of Métis are identified very specifically and their mixed origins are visibilized in official policies.

“The term “Metis” in article 35 does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage, rather, it refers to distinct people who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, have their own customs, ways of life and recognizable and distinct collective identities separate from those of their Indian or Inuit or European forebears” (*Alliance Autochtone du Québec*).

Thorough processes of identification are required in order to be considered Métis, and the factors considered go beyond a biological mix and contemplate proof of belonging to the place and customs of a social group that must be visible and distinguishable from Indian, Inuit or European-only customs. As Julie Burelle shows in *Encounters on Contested Lands*, *métissage* has been employed by many Quebecois de souche and settler Canadians – John Ralston’s *A Fair Country* is a clear example of this – to produce a claim to nativeness equal

³⁵ The other two definitions that appear in *Larousse* also involve biological mixing: « 2) Croisement de variétés végétales différentes, mais appartenant à la même espèce. 3) Croisement entre animaux de la même espèce, mais de races différentes, destiné à créer, au bout de quelques générations, une race aux caractéristiques intermédiaires. » (<http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/m%C3%A9tissage/51001>)

³⁶ In Article 35 of the Constitutional Act of 1982 the aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined to include Indian, Inuit and Metis peoples. In this Act important rights were granted to First Nations people, including the recognition of ancestral rights and the rights issued from treaties, and a guarantee that the Charter of Rights and Freedom not have a negative impact on ancestral rights. (*Alliance Autochtone du Québec*)

to that of Indigenous peoples. We see then how the very different local histories of *mestizaje* and *métissage* – apparently equivalent in translation – operate differently in each place. In Mexico it does the work of homogenizing through invisibilizing difference, an almost inherent condition in all its uses – we are all mestizos; while in Quebec it points to a very specific social group, one that makes visible a complicated history of colonial tensions. So although we find the terms being used as metaphors for aesthetic or cultural hybridity in nonchalant ways, they continue to perform these deeper histories.

It is clear then that the production was conceived as part of a regional initiative, framed as an instance of global cultural expression, and narrated through the activation – loosely employed – of key terms such as multicultural and *mestizaje/métissage* that suggested harmonious, and perhaps more digestible, forms of aesthetic and cultural mixing. Beyond the larger framings of the project, an interesting aspect of the drive towards internationalization through co-production – and one that complicates these narratives – is that co-productions require very specific material conditions that expend more time and resources, and require different skill sets to in-house productions or tours. A reading of the infrastructures that enabled this co-production, in hand with a reading of the creative process and its mistranslations, offers a clearer picture of the intercultural dynamics operating in these exchanges.

La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien

The Set-Up

In 1997 Martin Acosta collaborated with ESP for the first time. He travelled to Montreal to work with the company in the development of a workshop production of *Las historias que se cuentan los hermanos siameses*, a text Moncada and Acosta had been devising for some time and that would later have a longer run in its full-length version in Mexico City. Martin Acosta had been known for engaging in collaborations with companies from different countries and had toured his work extensively, especially in the United States. He was an established director and scenographer, artistic director of Teatro Arena (founded in 1989), with experience in the challenges of international work and diverse creative methods. ESP was a newly established company in Quebec (founded in 1996), interested in working through issues of identity, such that represented the internal diversity of the company. Of the four key founders, Marcela Pizarro is from a Chilean family, raised and trained in Montreal; Cécile Lasserre is half-French, half-Torontonian, trained in the US and Russia; Louis Frank is Swiss and trained in England and Russia; and Martin Choquette is Quebecois de souche.

The first collaboration between Acosta and ESP was a success for the company in terms of the quality of the show produced and of the experience gained in working together. The show did not have much visibility with critics or larger audiences, but it set up an important precedent for what would become the ESP project, *Migrations*. Around the same time of the first collaboration with Acosta, Marcela Pizarro worked in a France-Mali-Quebec co-production titled *Une hyène à jeun* by Mali playwright Massa Makan, directed by Patrick Janvier (France) and performed in three continents by a company of African performers. These experiences with companies from other countries, as well as their personal experiences of migration and diverse training, led ESP to draft a four-year project

that would involve co-productions with their colleagues in other countries, the *Migrations* series. For ESP, it was important that these co-productions were full-on collaborations:

The important thing of migration was that I mix the teams. I really wanted 50/50. Because I was dissatisfied, I was fed up. I did not see the co-production. I saw a Quebec production done the Quebec way, and an African text being, as we say in French, *passé a la sauce Québécois* (Lasserre).

Before embarking on co-productions, ESP produced their own version of *Migrations* presented in 1999 (a three-week run at Montreal Ars Interculturels). It was a devised project in which, as Choquette described in an interview, “nous avons alors décidé d’aller chercher des moments autobiographiques. D’improviser sur ce que représente la migration pour chacun de nous [we decided to look for autobiographical moments. To improvise on what migration represented for each of us]” (qtd. in Hèbert). Through this production, referred to as *Migration I*, the young company projected an image of what critic Catherine Hèbert described as “citoyens du monde incapables de rester en place [citizens of the world incapable of staying put]” (Hèbert), during a time in Quebec where tensions around a Multiculturalism rhetoric and the threats it posed to Quebec’s identity were running high after the 1995 referendum. The company was made up of artists who – perhaps with the exception of Choquette – were in one way or another outsiders to what Lasserre called Quebec *pure laine*³⁷ culture and ancestry.

We were not funded by the Quebec, ever, we were funded by the Canada Arts Council. And at the beginning when we started, I remember that someone – the juries change all the time – but at the time we were told that our projects were not Quebecois enough. [...] And I didn’t realize, because I was writing you know, grants, why probably on the side of Quebec we were not funded but in Canada Council we were, because I was talking a lot about multiculturalism and for Quebecois of that era it made them crawl out of their skin. Because for them multiculturalism was, I think, synonymous with assimilation, it was a way of the liberal government to try and assimilate them (Lasserre).

It is important to note that the *Migrations* co-production projects did receive some Quebec funding, but it was in fact a very small fraction of the cost. The CALQ (Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec) had been founded in 1994, and as the newly funded Quebec arts and culture agency it was focused primarily on supporting what it understood to be Quebecois culture, which was very much in line with a privileging of *de souche* culture – white and francophone – that would separate Quebec culturally from English-Canada. The Canada Council for the Arts, on the other hand, had been established in 1957, and since the 1970s push of Pierre Trudeau towards a more Multicultural Canada,³⁸ showed more interest in

³⁷ The term translates into English as “pure wool” and it is used in Quebec to refer to people whose ancestry is exclusively French-Canadian, that is, derived from French settlers. It is what Burelle calls Quebecois de souche culture.

³⁸ As a result of Quebec’s *revolution tranquille*, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau launched the Royal Commission into Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-1969). This Royal

projects that integrated the two official Canadian cultures in addition to other non-official cultures – such as Pizarro’s Chilean influence – as well as the international components. In this respect, Lasserre’s assertions that there was little funding on the Quebec side for this type of project is correct (although the company did receive some support from CALQ). In the late 1990s, narratives of integration or Multiculturalism were not the popular narratives for arts grants in Quebec – narratives of diversity that are now much more common in official cultural institutions. As we will see later on in this chapter, this explains to some extent why the Montreal leg of the co-production struggled both with finding space and with finding funding, regardless of the fact that they were a young company. ESP and their explicit narratives on cultural *métissage*, language diversity and alternative migration routes that made reference both to Africa and to Latin America, challenged the stability of a quebécois de souche identity that had felt under threat for centuries, and that had been significantly sustained by the provincial support of what was understood at the time as Québécois content.

Of all the sponsors that appear in this first program³⁹ - an impressive number of public and private institutions invested in making the project happen – we see that of the nine institutions associated to Canada, five of them are focused on promoting international relations, and of these nine, four are specific to Quebec as a province. On the Mexican side, none of the public institutions supporting the production are provincial, as the support came primarily from the federal INBA (Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, founded in 1946) and FONCA (Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, founded in 1989). Both of these institutions list international initiatives as part of their objectives, framed around language of intra- and interculturalisms: “Fomentar la interculturalidad artística con otros países [promote artistic interculturalism with other countries]” (*Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes*); “compartir mercados, tecnologías y productos culturales, ante la prodigiosa pluralidad de culturas y de identidades que conviven en nuestro país y en el resto del mundo [share markets, technologies and cultural products in the face of the prodigious

Commission would decide to allow French to join English as an official, federal language (Official Languages Act 1969). In response to strong criticisms to the Commission – Québec continued to feel they were culturally secondary to Anglo culture and First Nations groups resented the fact that the Commission seemed to consider English and French as the only two official cultures of Canada – Trudeau’s government implemented the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy in 1971. This policy was “intended to preserve the cultural freedom of all individuals and provide recognition of the cultural contributions of diverse ethnic groups to Canadian society” (“Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1971”.) It consisted of social participation assistance for diverse cultural groups, support in creative exchanges between groups, and English and French language learning programs. The policy promoted Multiculturalism but not multilingualism.

³⁹ Conseil des Arts du Canada, Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (Québec), Ministère des Relations Internationales, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Commerce International, Office Québec-Amériques pour la Jeunesse, Délégation générale du Québec à Mexico, Ambassade du Canada, Georges-Laoun Opticien, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Instituto Mexicano para la Juventud, and Consulado general de México en Montréal (Program *La vida no vale nada*)

plurality of cultures and identities that coexist in our country and in the rest of the world]” (*Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes*). Yet similar to the case of the Canadian funding agencies at the time, there was no explicit support for these types of co-productions. Although the international angle was very attractive to these institutions given the aforementioned objectives in their missions, INBA and FONCA supported the production as a Mexican production through initiatives for which the artists were eligible as Mexican artists, such as the Becario Ejecutante and the Jóvenes Creadores individual grants that Carmen Mastache, Marco Pérez and Bruno Castillo held. There was support in the form of travel grants (Moncada 2017) and important production costs were covered through the venue Teatro El Galeón, managed by INBA. But there was no support designed specifically for these types of projects.

Yet what is certainly worth noting from the cited list of sponsors is that there was interest from Mexican, Quebecois and federal Canadian institutions in promoting the project, and that as co-producers, ESP and Teatro Arena made exhaustive efforts to gather these diverse sources of support. Most of this interest was channeled into the first *mise-en-scène* in Mexico City and lost considerable momentum for the 2003 Montreal production, due in part to the lack of long-term financing for co-productions as well as tensions with Quebec funding agencies and *diffuseurs*. As the chapter will continue to show, the production was much more valuable for Mexico City’s internationalization project than it was to Quebec, as Quebec would channel its interest in translation projects like the one studied in the chapter four, where their role was primarily that of cultural exporters. Again, language was used as both a weapon against Anglo acculturation, and as a wall to keep out other cultural influences that could destabilize French dominance, even when Spanish shared the *latine* roots of the Quebecois de souche.

Devising a New Play

It was decided that the first co-production of the *Migrations* project, *Migration II*, would be with the Mexican team. The collaboration would consist of a Mexican director and playwright, Martin Acosta and Luis Mario Moncada respectively, and six actors, the three ESP collaborators (Marcela Pizarro, Martin Choquette and Cecile Lassarre) and three Mexican performers (Carmen Mastache, Marco Pérez and Bruno Castillo). Mastache, Pérez and Castillo were involved primarily as actors, while Pizarro, Choquette and Lassarre wore many other hats throughout the process, especially as producers and as cultural and linguistic co-translators of the Quebec side. Lassarre claims that having a Mexican playwright was essential to ESP: “We wanted a Mexican author, because I said, if we take a Quebecois author it will be a Quebecois play. So we want a Mexican author, writing in Spanish” (Lassarre); and Moncada recalls discussing the genesis ideas with their Quebec counterparts, “que era en realidad con los que dialogábamos [with whom we dialogued]” much more than with the Mexican actors. “Nuestros actores mexicanos iban más como en plan de ejecutantes [our Mexican actors were there more as performers] (Moncada 2017). The plan was then to have a Mexican writer bring together the content generated through dialogue and improvisation by both teams, with the Quebecois actors having significant say in the shape the piece would take.

The development process began in late 1999 and lasted approximately a year and a half, after which *La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien* opened first in Mexico City (July

2001) and two years later in Montreal (2003). Before any formal creative process began, two meetings took place. The first was a two-week ESP trip to Mexico where the project was first discussed, and the second was in Quebec, where Acosta and Moncada visited briefly in order to gain a sense of the theater scene and scout venues in Montreal. The first workshop session took place in Montreal, when the Mexican convoy spent a few weeks with ESP generating material that Moncada took back to Mexico to produce the text. Before this trip, the only premise of the show had been *migrations*. As the invitation and the initiative had come from ESP, this through line connected the Teatro Arena – ESP collaboration to the larger project that ESP had started a few years, that included their piece *Migration I* and future co-productions with Mali and Russia. At the same time, the amount of movement that the project required – companies travelling back and forth from different countries, dealing with cultural and linguistic barriers that had to be conciliated – made *migrations* as a central theme a generative subject. According to Moncada, he had been happy to work around this theme although it was not necessarily what interested him most about the project:

Martín y yo lo aceptamos de entrada, también en parte porque Martín y yo, digamos que nos interesa mucho ese aspecto formal del teatro ¿no? No es que el tema fuera lo que nos caía como anillo al dedo en el momento – pero había material para nosotros. Y nos interesaba más bien la otra parte que era ¿cómo hacemos una obra con unos tipos a los que no conocemos, en otro idioma, no?

[Martin and I accepted the theme, in part because Martín and I, let's say we're very interested in the formal aspect of theater. It's not that this theme fit us perfectly at that moment, but there was material for us. We were more interested in the other aspect which was, how can we make a play with people we don't know, in another language?] (Moncada 2017)

The openness with which ESP entered the process suggests that perhaps to them also, the theme was only a starting point for what they were most interested in – embarking on an intercultural creative process.

To me it was the most interesting part of what we did. Working with other groups [...]. How to do theater in different culture, but it's also different systems. And you realize, you realize links. You realize differences, because of systems. It makes you more aware of the funding and political systems behind funding culture. The funding and also how old the art is in different [places] – and what the roots are (Lasserre).

During our interview, Moncada recalled feeling the time pressure as the first trip to Montreal drew near. Although the writing process would be a devised, collaborative exercise, as the playwright the text was primarily his responsibility. Him and Acosta had a series of exercises planned, but he felt he was arriving empty-handed. They had the keyword, *migrations*, and, as the first mise-en-scene of the project would be presented in Mexico, it had also been decided that both in the fiction and in practice, the migration flow would go south, from Montreal to Mexico City. And yet although Moncada and Acosta had

had several meetings before leaving for the first workshop session in Montreal, nothing had come up.

Y creo que un día antes, revisando obras y demás, surgió para mí la idea de *Peer Gynt*. Entonces *Peer Gynt* es en realidad el subtexto que está en *La vida no vale nada*. Bastante diluido, pero ya si se fija uno, la verdad es que ahí está, el tema. Entonces, en realidad trabajamos con la idea del primer acto de *Peer Gynt*, que es la huida de él. Huye de su responsabilidad y de su madre. Y de este posible casamiento.

[And I think it was the day before, looking through plays and such, that I had the idea of *Peer Gynt*. So *Peer Gynt* is actually the subtext in *La vida no vale nada*. Pretty diluted, but if you look carefully, its there, the theme. So, we worked with the idea of the first act of *Peer Gynt*, his escape. He flees his responsibility and his mother. And that potential marriage] (Moncada 2017).

This last minute choice of text is interesting because it worked as a known reference for all involved, regardless of the diversity in training – those who had trained in Mexico, in Quebec, in France, in England, in Russia and in the US were all familiar with Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. So this 1867 Norwegian drama became a structural starting point for the text, to the extent that the main character is called Pierre Green (and that was after a failed attempt to find a Quebecois last name that mirrored Gynt) and his journey is full of nods to the first part of Ibsen's *Gynt*. Since *Peer Gynt* already circulated as a globalized cultural commodity, it served as an effective mechanism in making these processes of cultural exchange more digestible, in the sense intended by García Canclini. Although the production still faced complex problems of translation, using *Peer Gynt* as a starting point allowed the group to bypass some of these cultural translation challenges by giving everyone something known to hold on to.

The choice of Ibsen's text is also significant in showing how often, these types of collaborations find points in common outside of the cultural markers usually associated with those participating. That is, in this case, what made the initial process more digestible required the use of a cultural product that was in fact, globally legible to both groups and yet culturally distant from both Mexico City and Quebec. If, as we saw in the previous chapter, many of these relationships were framed through the lens of *latinité*, Ibsen's role as the structural common ground undoes the hypothesis of a latin sensibility working as the primary binding element. If anything, the movement undergone by Ibsen's text exemplifies Bourriaud's *radicant*, or how art may inhabit globalized culture without falling into the standardization presupposed by globalization. As expressed by Bourriaud, to be *radicant* implies "setting one's roots in motion, staging them in heterogeneous contexts and formats, denying them the power to completely define one's identity, translating ideas, transcoding images, transplanting behaviors, exchanging rather than imposing" (22). *Peer Gynt* as the meeting point and structural basis for the text that was then adapted to 21st Century Mexico City through a series of improvisation exercises, certainly speaks to movement like that described by Bourriaud. Movement that, significantly, bypasses the possibility of defining identity through roots.

The other significant influence with which Acosta and Moncada arrived in Montreal, would be much lesser known to the Quebec counterparts – the 1967 Mexican film *Los*

*Caifanes*⁴⁰, that tells the story of a group of friends who wander the streets of Mexico City at night, a film that marked an important shift in the way that Mexico and its capital were portrayed in film. In addition to the *migrations* theme provided by ESP, the references for Moncada were these two existing art objects, one grounded in the local histories and spaces of Mexico City, *Los Caifanes*, and the other a known text of the European theater cannon that provided a familiar plot to be deconstructed in the labyrinths of downtown Mexico City. As the Quebec production would come to show, this level of specificity became impossible to translocate in the translation process, losing depth at least in as much as was legible to Montreal audiences.

The Mexican team arrived in Quebec with these references and a series of improvisation exercises that would help generate content. For ESP, part of the objective of inviting Teatro Arena was to engage with a more experienced director that would expose them to new ways of working, and so further their training.

I was thinking that most of these people that shaped us are super experienced and come from very definite traditions. We were still young, we were all actors. I said, come on, we were all trained as actors, really. We're creators but we're trained as actors. And I said, well to me, I'm more interested in working in co-productions with more experienced directors that have a lot of vision. Because for me, proposing migration was a way also of training the company, indirectly (Lasserre).

This is particularly interesting since for *Migration I*, Pizarro expressed in an interview: "Nous souhaitons briser les façons habituelles de faire du théâtre. [On] travaille à décloisonner le rôle du metteur en scène [We wish to break the usual ways of making theater. To work on deconstructing the role of the director]" (qtd in Hébert). Although dialogue between the two companies during the co-production was open and layered⁴¹ (many conversations between the same two people would one day be producer-director and the next director-performer), workshop and rehearsal sessions were led by Acosta, and all final creative decisions were left to him. In this respect, more traditional hierarchies of the theater operated throughout the process, with the final authority and final responsibility falling on the director, who, given the unique circumstances under which he worked, relied heavily on his Quebec counterparts in order to be able to lead.

A co-production such as this required a different process of deconstructing the hierarchies of the theater. It was not, as ESP had worked before within their company, about avoiding having a clear leader in the room and instead having all members simultaneously lead each other. Instead, it retained the role of the director – in this case, the man with the most experience – but changed considerably the conditions of rehearsal.

⁴⁰ Directed Juan Ibañez and written by Ibañez and Carlos Fuentes.

⁴¹ It is important to note here that the fluencies in languages varied considerably amongst the teams. Only Marcela Pizarro from ESP and Mexican actress Carmen Mastache spoke fluent Spanish, French and English. Most members spoke their first language, either French or Spanish, and English, and a few only spoke their first language, although they were able to grasp things here and there in the other two. Levels of language fluency/diversity were balanced between the two companies.

By incorporating the challenges of intercultural and interlingual communication, the director automatically had to make considerable space for those who were fluent in the other cultures – he had to trust and take their lead in order to be able to direct the team, since he was unable to communicate equally in all directions. In the formalities of the rehearsal room, Lasserre recalls interesting contrasts:

Martín has a way of directing that is more (...) there was a way of working that was different. And I remember the actors, you know, they were very casual. We don't treat the director as a master. We discuss. And we criticize. And we question. And we say what we think, and we have a very – you know, depending on the director of course. But that's our relationship especially in creative process. As we notice that the Mexicans were saying, 'director', you know, they were very formal with Martín. Which was a shock to us because in Montreal we're like – "are you kidding me?" And Martín was totally accepting it, but when we arrived in Mexico we were like oh my goodness, there's a whole structure. There was a hierarchy that we don't have in the rehearsal room. The relationships and the way of working was a bit different (Lasserre 30).

So although the companies were used to different forms of interactions that sustained certain hierarchies, both sides were open to working differently and adapting learned dynamics in the context of these intercultural encounters.

The exercises during the first workshop, based on the *dramaturgia del actor* techniques by Spanish playwright and director José Sanchis Sinisterra, consisted of improvisation games designed to generate material. Moncada recalls having ten to twelve days to work with the actors, after which he would have a couple months to produce the text. And these sessions, he expressed, were unusual for the Mexican team, as they consisted of eight-hour days focused on a single project. In Mexico it is most common for artists to be rehearsing several projects simultaneously for longer periods, so rehearsal periods are usually less intensive. According to Moncada, it was through these improvisation exercises that it quickly became evident that the central aspect of the dramatic conflict would be language-based, as is evidenced in the opening anecdote to the chapter. The mistranslations around *madre* produced through that improvisation exercise are a good example of how, through these encounters, the communication challenges between the two teams became very productive generators of interesting material, so much so that the action of the play was constructed on this very trope.

After the Montreal workshop Marcela Pizarro did the work of transcribing and translating the hours and hours of recorded material that had been generated in those weeks of work. This was the first of many translation processes that the text would undergo. Using these translated transcriptions and references previously discussed (migration, *Peer Gynt* and *Los Caifanes*), Moncada produced an initial version of the *La vida no vale nada / La vie ne vaut rien*. The title of the play can translate into English as "Life is worthless" and is a line from the song *Camino de Guanajuato* by well-known Mexican composer, José Alfredo Jiménez, as well as the title of the 1955 Mexican film *La vida no vale nada*, starring Pedro Infante singing a version of the song. In an interview, Acosta explains that this title resonates since in the creation of the play they understood migration as a condition that we are all born with, and not only as a form of circulation across borders.

“Planteamos la migración como un viaje, ya sea para huir o para buscar la manera de bastarse a sí mismo, de madurar [we thought of migration as a journey, either as a way to get away or as a search towards sufficing oneself, towards maturing]” (Acosta qtd. in Velázquez Yebra). In this way, the theme of migration worked both as a life metaphor and as a narrative of movement across physical, cultural and linguistic borders. It also suggested a form of constant uprooting characteristic of contemporary worlds, one that echoes Bourriaud’s “multitude of simultaneous or successive enrootings” (22) that produce global culture. At the same time, Acosta explained that Mexico City was conceived as a place of transit, where assimilation and adaptation are always taking place: “Creo que somos una raza que se asimila y metamorfosea constantemente para sobrevivir [I believe we are a race that assimilates and transforms constantly in order to survive]” (Acosta qtd. in Velázquez Yebra). This made Mexico City and specifically, Centro Histórico, an ideal setting for a story about migration understood more broadly.

The script combined English, Spanish and French, and the main plotline told the story of a Quebecois young man, Pierre Green, who tired of being nagged by his mother and after breaking up his ex-girlfriend’s wedding only to leave her stranded on the side of the road, impulsively embarks on a trip South. Once there, we follow him into the streets of Mexico City through a series of encounters in the *Centro Histórico*, where he comes across six other characters who happen to find themselves wondering those same streets on that same night, enacting their own complicated struggles – the Quinceañera (Paloma), her Chambelán (Jimmy), the Mariachi (Jacinto), the Taxista, the Prostituta (Tamara), the Padrote and the Evangelist from Connecticut (Terese) on her way to Guatemala. Although Pierre brings us into this world, once we are in Mexico City he steps in and out of the action, and we see relationships and plotlines develop amongst the other characters at different street crossings. These stereotype-like characters all came out of the Montreal workshops, and part of what Moncada tried to do was play with the idea of these types to reference the often superficial ways in which we read a different culture (the Quinceañera, the Mariachi, the Evangelist, the Prostitute), while at the same time giving these characters depth and more complex stories (Paloma, Jacinto, Terese, Tamara).

According to Lasserre the first version of the text was a big disappointment to her. She could see how the Mexican characters had depth and complexity, but she found that the other characters, those meant to be played by the ESP cast, were much less interesting. She recalls:

A problematic that I thought of first was, Luis Mario will be very much able to write the Spanish side. The Quebecois was my problem. [...] it was interesting what Luis Mario ended up doing. It was more *his* vision of Quebecois. Which for us at times was a bit foreign, we had to adapt to that, because we don’t see ourselves the way a Mexican would see us (Lasserre).

She regrets not having had a Quebec writer work with Moncada, just as much as she regrets not voicing her opinion more assertively at the time. The text underwent a few more drafts, but found its form once rehearsals began, as the play retained the improvisational approach of the first workshops. In the end, the characters were significantly co-written by the cast, since so much of the specificity and the depth of the ESP characters could not come

from Moncada. “In fact, what we were asking him – like him capturing our reality in Quebec was very difficult as a Mexican author. It was almost impossible” (Lasserre).

In my conversation with Lasserre an important reflection came out of this observation. What Moncada witnessed during the improvisation sessions combined influences on the side of Quebec from many different cultures that could not be understood with nuance by someone who had very little experience in that place. The company that, when in Quebec, was trying to push against notions of quebecois de souche culture, found themselves trying to package their group into a block, into a unified, legible version of Quebec when working with a Mexican team. “We tried to be Quebecois identity because we were dealing with Mexicans, it was another entity so we felt two blocks, but no, it’s complex. Even in the Mexican identity there was complexities, you know, like, Blanca told me she’s from an Arabic country, Lebanese” (Lasserre). This tendency to become a block, a unified, closed whole in the face of another culture is a serious trap, a constant in the history of these types of self-aware intercultural interactions. In response to this issue, Rustom Bharucha drafts a useful theory of the *intracultural*, one that considers cultural exchange within the Nation-State. Throughout this work (2000), Bharucha undoes the myth of a monoculture within the nation, and shows how hybridity doesn’t only happen when cultures encounter one another, but that internally cultures have developed sophisticated techniques for negotiating cultural difference as a result of complicated histories of contact and exchange. His invitation, then, is for us to theorize the intercultural in relation to and with acute awareness of intracultural forms of exchange. The notion of the intracultural helps to complicate the imagined forms of interactions that multiculturalism as policy attempts to produce, showing the internal divisions and power struggles produced by cultural contact within the Nation-State.

What is interesting about this example is that a group such as ESP, so focused on the intracultural process of making theater in Quebec, found themselves oversimplifying the narratives of their own diversity in the face of an intercultural exchange with the Mexican team. When working internationally this oversimplification is often what makes of these processes more digestible (and mobile) as globalized cultural commodities. These simplifying tendencies are produced in part by the processes of grant writing and of generating narratives that are legible to a large range of audiences, but it also becomes a way of defining oneself in the face of another. This process of translation – in attempting to explicate through common reference points – may begin as oversimplification, one that, with enough time (i.e. enough resources) could be deepened in endless negotiation. As Bourriaud would have it, “we practice translation and organize the discussions that will give rise to a new common intelligibility” (188). Since the text was produced primarily by a Mexican playwright, without the Quebec team shedding a clearer light on the intracultural dynamics of their group, the nuance called for by Lasserre would hardly be picked up by the Mexican team and represented in the production. Yet even with Lasserre’s own reflection that the group constantly fell into the temptation to think itself as a block and to homogenize in the face of the other in order to become more legible, the complex dynamics of their intraculturalism are manifest throughout. If anything, the following analysis of the two *mises-en-scène* prove that the labor of translating themselves amongst themselves continued throughout in a process of constant negotiation between the groups.

First mise-en-scène: La vida no vale nada en Ciudad de México

ESP spent a little less than three months in Mexico City, which included both rehearsal time and the time of the run. The Mexican production ran for five weeks at El Galeón, a multiple-use theater that is part of the Centro Cultural del Bosque, the largest, public performing arts center in Mexico City, made up of eight theaters. El Galeón, as are all the theaters at CCB, is publically funded, and it is known to show experimental productions from well-established companies. The fact that the production took place in this theatre shows both that Teatro Arena was considered to be an established and an experimental theater company, and that the production had interest and support from the public arts funding agencies that program these venues (INBA and CONACULTA).

According to Moncada the five-week rehearsal period showed the contrast between working techniques, starting, again, with the fact that Mexican companies are less used to short rehearsal periods as they are usually rehearsing several projects simultaneously, in addition to doing other types of work (most commonly teaching or administrative work). Moncada recalls that the Quebec actors were generally much more prepared, arriving at rehearsals on time, with the text memorized and ready to go (Moncada 2017). He was surprised by the discipline of the Quebec actors, and how it contrasted with the way the Mexican team worked, often arriving late, without having memorized the text and always rushing to another rehearsal. Since, as was previously noted, the ESP cast was not fully satisfied with the depth of the characters in the first versions of the play, this rehearsal period in Mexico City was essential in their finding the nuance and complexity of these characters. Lasserre recalls being cautious in the way she approached this process, as she was worried that Moncada would feel offended or contradicted. Once in the rehearsal room it became clear that this type of input was exactly what the play needed, and Acosta and Moncada, being used to this type of devised and open collaboration with actors, conceived it as part of the creative process:

How can we maybe take what he (Moncada) wrote and then pull it up, you know? Propose that we ad lib more (...). And that's what we ended up doing with my character, and developing, adlibbing quite a bit when I was acting. I did that I think here and there. Which Luis Mario being an actor-writer, on the contrary, was very happy. Completely happy. Because he feels that the actor should do that (Lasserre).

This sense that the text and the production remained always unfinished, open to constant changes and adaptation by the actors, continued throughout the run. An interesting example of this was Pierre's relationship to Spanish. During the length of his stay in Mexico, Martin Choquette (the actor playing Pierre Green) picked up Spanish. Since an improvisational tone had been set from the beginning of the creative process, the actors had a lot of freedom to play off one another when on stage. According to Moncada, by the end of the run, Choquette had learned Spanish and would sometimes respond, as Pierre, in Spanish.

Lo chistoso es que él en el proceso, ya ensayando en México durante la temporada (...) aprendió español ¿no? Entonces la obra se empezó a transformar durante todo el proceso. Osea ya durante las funciones había cosas que ya respondían en español y pues era una cosa muy chistosa porque decíamos, éste en una noche aprendió

español. Comienza la obra sin hablar nada, y de pronto ya está así como – (risas). Había ciertos momentos en los que ya dialogaba en español y tú decías – pero que era una noche tan extraña que, digamos, terminabas creyendo.

[The funny thing was that he [Choquette] during the process, once we were rehearsing in Mexico through the run (...) he learned Spanish, right? So the play began to be transformed throughout the process. During the performances there were things that he responded to in Spanish and it was a very funny thing because we'd say, this guy learned Spanish in one night. The play starts and he speaks no Spanish, and suddenly he like – (laughs). There were certain moments in which he would now be dialoguing in Spanish and you'd say – but it was such a strange night that, you could say, you'd believe it] (Moncada 2017).

This example shows how Martin Choquette's own experience of immersion in Mexican culture changed the story, the fiction and the linguistic world of the play, and the team decided to let the show progress as such. Again, the improvisational nature of the play (one that assumed that no one player fully understood all sides of the equation) continued to shape and shift the text and never allowed it to become fully fixed.

It is important to note that for the Mexico City production, Acosta decided not to subtitle the French into Spanish, and only provided a few key words projected onto the walls. The first section of the play was all in French, and lasted about ten minutes. Moncada resisted at first, but apparently the decision was met with interesting reactions from the public. Lasserre recalls being surprised at how open the Mexican audience was to this experience:

You know what surprised me? Is that that experiment, I don't know why, but it worked really well in Mexico. More than it did in Quebec. The public in Mexico was so receptive. I mean the first part is in French, of *La vida* (...). And there was a silence. I remember people really, I felt they were listening and super curious. And I think they really enjoyed this kind of constant, you know, of languages. And it's funny in Mexico it didn't bother them. In Quebec it was a must to have subtitles. They were not going to have without – and it was very strange to me (Lasserre).

Lasserre's description of this audience behavior – this very palpable work of listening in order to make sense of a language most people in the audience did not understand – shows an important openness to the unfamiliar. By not providing subtitles, Acosta was taking a risk in which the audience would either become engaged as active listeners, or lose interest from the top of the show. In the experience of migration, the fact that you don't really know where the other comes from and that they exist in a world that you are unable to understand, changes our disposition towards them, either producing rejection or augmenting our work as communicators. By not subtitling the first part of the play, Acosta was taking a risk in order to produce a similar effect in his audience. It appears this risk paid off, and running the first part of the play in French with only sporadic translated words projected onto the set, produced active engagement from the Mexican public. I read Acosta's decision suggested the experience of coming to an unknown place or of encountering others who come from a different culture, and it revealed important

distances operating in these intercultural exchanges, instead of attempting to appear to overcome them through subtitles. In such exchanges we usually don't have fully subtitled interactions – and even then – subtitles are always the re-interpreted tip of the iceberg. The sporadic Spanish words being projected onto the walls during these first scenes were, in a way, the tip of that iceberg, and what happened under the water was accessible only to those able to understand the spoken French. It also took away from the logo-centrism of the play, inviting the audience to be immersed and become more aware of other elements on stage.

In Mexico the show received generally good reviews from important journals (*El Universal, La Jornada, La Jornada Semanal*), and with a five week run and a total of twenty-four performances, word got out and the show had an overall good turnout. In my interview with Moncada, he said of the reception of the show:

Aquí sí fue un montaje no diría que importante en términos de repercusión o una cosa así, digo, tuvo buenas y malas críticas, hubo de todo. Creo que se ponderó mucho la idea de la colaboración, porque sí era algo novedoso hasta cierto punto (...). Sí estaba en un momento en donde, quizá en ese momento particularmente, digamos lo que hacíamos Martin o yo sí tenía un foco importante.

[Here it was a production that – I wouldn't say it was important in terms of its repercussions or anything like that – it got good and bad reviews. I think people pondered the idea of the collaboration, because it was to an extent something novel (...). It was a time when, particularly at that time, let's say that what Martin and I did carried an important spotlight] (Moncada 2017).

The show and the roundtable did not go unnoticed, even when they were not groundbreaking for the theater scene in Mexico City, and the production was awarded the ACPT award in Mexico (Premios de la Agrupación de Críticos y Periodistas de Teatro) for best production that year. As Moncada explains, the collaboration aspect of the project was the central focus of the reviews, approached by Mexico City critics from two angles. The first dealt with the formal aspects of the experiment, which brought to the fore the mixing of aesthetics and story-telling techniques, as well as larger expectations of what theater or story should be. For Mexican critics, formal concerns, less so than perhaps identity or migration themes, proved to be of more relevance – similar to the statement made by Moncada that to him and Acosta, any one thematic was of less interest than the formal experiment of working with a company from a different country.

An interest in form can be seen, for example, in Patricia Velázquez's choice to begin her review by defining the production in terms of genre: "Concebida como una tragicomedia, pero llevada al escenario como un melodrama fantástico con tintes mágicos... [conceived as a tragicomedy, but staged as a fantastical melodrama with a magical tinge...]" (Velázquez); or in Noe Morales' criticism of a lack of dramatic unity in the story: "mientras estas subtramas van cosechando peso en el desarrollo narrativo, e interés en el espectador, la anécdota que se supone central, la del canadiense Green, queda relegada a un plano bastante lejano [while these subplots give weight to the narrative development, and interest the spectator, the supposedly central plot, that of the Canadian character Green, falls behind into a distant plane]." Yet in that same *La Jornada Semanal* review, Morales

deems the production successful in its attempt to establish: “un rico diálogo cultural entre Primer y Tercer Mundo sin caer en clichés como el del gringo sonriente e idiota y el del mexicano sumiso y transa (salvo por ciertos momentos) [a rich dialogue between the First and Third world without falling into clichés such as that of the idiotic, smiling *gringo* or the submissive and cheating Mexican (with the exception of a few moments)]” (Morales). Although the majority of critics referred to the production as an experiment, and seemed to be well aware of the unique circumstances under which it was devised, the privileging of an Aristotelian sense of dramatic-unity and of definitive genres is evident in these reviews. They were also weary of oversimplifications or essentializing clichés, even when reproducing the North/South binaries that bring their own sets of preconceptions.

Second, Mexican critics were interested in the international aspect of the project. Reaffirming many of the regional discourses analyzed in previous chapters, Patricia Velázquez frames the production around the assertion (made in this case by the Quebec actors, Pizarro and Choquette) that “México es la puerta de enlace de América Latina, al igual que Montreal es la puerta hacia Europa [Mexico is the connecting door to Latin America, in the same way that Montreal is the doorway towards Europe]” (Velázquez). Noe Morales, in the form of praise, refers to this as “el carácter cosmopolita [the cosmopolitan aspect]” (Morales) of the project. The show produced a sense not only of a collaboration between the very locally grounded traits of Montreal and of Mexico City – but to the reviewers, the production seemed to project onto a much larger global imaginary, both due to the strategic positionality of Montreal and Mexico City in regional imaginaries, and to the scope of the larger Moscow-Mali-Quebec-Mexico project. In this respect, the production achieved the work of producing digestible forms of globalization through regional alliances that helped imagine connections between very different places.

In her review, Olga Harmony forgives potential dramatic faux-pas under the consideration that this particular production is one in a series of stories:

Las partes del norte, separadas por tres años una de otra, complementan la historia de los personajes quebequenses aunque nunca se nos diga el destino final de Pierre, que sin duda cumplirá su búsqueda en los otros países en que se dé el experimento.

[The sections about the North, separated by three years, complement the story of the Quebec characters, although we never learn Pierre’s final destiny, something that will no doubt be resolved in his search through the other countries where the experiment takes place] (Harmony).

In this way, the yet to exist Mali and Moscow experiments played an important role in the ways in which the play was framed and received in Mexico – as part of a larger project in which incompleteness or generalizations were read in consideration of these other productions where the gaps would be filled at a later date. The show placed Mexico within a larger circulation of theatrical creation and cultural exchanges, and the idea of being visible in this global imaginary – the fantasy perhaps, of visualizing a Moscow audience imagining Mexico City, where Pierre Green had just been – was worthy of interest and excitement to Mexican reviewers. It was certainly doing the work that Otto Minera imagined of making Mexico City a permanently international stop (Mateos). We see then

that even in how it was imagined – and not only in its material components – this first *mise-en-scène* in Mexico City was highly networked.

Second mise-en-scène: La vie ne vaut rien à Montréal

The Quebec side of the co-production took place two years later in November 2003. The original plan was for the show to travel soon after the Mexican run had closed, but finding a theater and proper funding in Quebec proved more complicated than expected. Since the Mexico City team had covered housing, per diem, salaries and most production costs when in Mexico, it was expected that the Quebec team do the same for the second part of the project. According to Lasserre at that time there was no proper funding scheme set up in Canada for a co-production, something that considered the amount of time and expenses required of this type of project and that really allowed them to “mix teams” (Lasserre). In 2001-2002 the company received \$6,000 CAD from the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec (CALQ), specifically granted for the project *La vida no vale nada/La vie ne vaut rien* and travel to Mexico (Conseil des Arts, 2001-2002). This travel grant fell under the category of “Difussion hors Québec des arts de la scene et de la littérature,” and was part of an initiative by the Conseil des Arts to export Quebec culture. Again, as shown in chapter two, support was designed primarily to strengthen Quebec as an exporter of culture, and not to make the space for cultural products devised elsewhere (even when these included Quebec artists).

The other form of international support offered by CALQ during that period was focused on the organization of national and international events in performing arts and multidisciplinary arts, but did not consider a production process that combined artists from different countries, so *La vida* was not eligible for this type of support. After the 2001 travel grants, ESP received no more funding from CALQ for this project. In addition to that grant, between 2001 and 2003 ESP received five grants from the Canada Council for the Arts⁴², one under the category of Theatre Production Project Grants for Emerging Artists (\$8,000 CAD in 2001), three under the category of the Theatre International Program (\$2,800 CAD and \$2,000 CAD in 2002; \$3,800 CAD in 2003) and one as part of organizational development program, The Flying Squad (\$3,250 CAD in 2003). During this period, The Canada Arts Council for the Arts had several international programs, none of which considered a co-production process for theater⁴³, so again it was difficult to fund this type of project much more fully through public arts funds.

In the end, the 2001-2002 CALQ travel grant supported the Mexico City run, but since ESP did not receive any funding through CALQ the following years and the three International Program grants (totaling \$8,600) from the Canada Council for the Arts would not cover the cost of the Montreal run, the project faced serious financial problems. As was noted by Lasserre, the Canada Council for the Arts was more open to funding the project,

⁴² “Disclosure of Grant and Prize Recipients,” Canada Council for the Arts, <http://canadacouncil.ca/about/public-accountability/proactive-disclosure/grant-recipients>

⁴³ These included International Co-Production Program for Dance (theater projects were not eligible); International Assistance in Music; International Residencies Program in Visual Arts, International Touring Assistance in Music and International Translation Grants.

providing consistent support during the three-year period, but none of their programs were really designed to fully finance this type of production. In the reports she drafted for the Canada Council for the Arts, Lasserre recalls expressing in detail the needs for these types of productions based on their experience with the *Migrations* project as a way to provide feedback for the way the Council supported theatre companies at the time (Lasserre). Today, a Co-Production component of the Arts Abroad initiative exists within the Canada Council for the Arts funding scheme, and it consists of multi-year funding that contemplates the needs of these types of projects and covers up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$50,000 CAD.⁴⁴

Another complicated issue for ESP in planning the Montreal run was finding a venue. According to Lasserre not only did they not have a good recording of the Mexico City production to show Quebec *diffuseurs*, but these same *diffuseurs* were generally unwilling to take a risk with a show such as *La vida*. “And that’s when we had a hard time finding theaters. Because a lot of *diffuseurs* said, there’s no way people are going to sit through ten minutes in Spanish” (Lasserre). The claim was that there was no public for this type of production in Montreal, since Quebec audiences wanted to see Quebec content (and by this I read Quebec culture to be understood as quebecois de souche culture), and the CALQ funding system was set up with that in mind. In contrast, the multilingual aspect of *La vida* would be hard to sell to Quebec audiences, and neither ESP nor their Mexican counterparts were well known in the Montreal theater scene. This is a good example of how the notion of cultural affinity based on a ‘Latin’ compatibility is an idea most often used to frame the exchange as an international project (and in the direction of Quebec products being imported into Mexico), but that was not at this time being activated or recognized by *diffuseurs* or audiences in Quebec. That is, *latinité* – with all the currency it provided in establishing parts of this network after NAFTA and in producing a sense of a digestible globalization in the region – provided little capital when it came down to diversifying content in Montreal.

According to Lassarre, the text by itself was a hard sell since the subtle distinctions between the soap opera stereotypes and the more complex lives of these characters was lost on Quebecois *diffuseurs* who didn’t have the full context or a sense of the full *mise-en-scène*, so much of it having been developed through improvisation.

I know that we wanted to go to Festival de Théâtre des Amériques, and she told us that she thought that the play was too soap opera, because she didn’t understand first of all, Spanish. She didn’t understand what Luis Mario and Martin Acosta were doing, playing with caricatures of Mexican society. And she didn’t understand the references they were dealing with, she didn’t understand everything (Lasserre 24).

From this anecdote we see there was a flawed conceptual translation of what the *mise-en-scène* in Mexico City had been to what it could be in Montreal, both in terms of cultural context and in terms of text to stage. The problem would prove to be one of translocation – where context fails to be fully transported in the translation processes.

Finally, Espace Libre took interest in the show, and ESP was offered a space in their 2003 season. Espace Libre, built in 1981 from an old fire hall, is in the eastern end of

⁴⁴ <http://canadacouncil.ca/funding/grants/arts-abroad/co-productions>

downtown Montreal (historically a working class neighborhood), less centrally located than most theatre spaces but a venue that since the eighties has a solid reputation for developing innovative works, considered “a creative hot spot in Montreal” (Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia). Since it had been so difficult for ESP to convince a theater to program them, when a slot was offered to them at Espace Libre, Pizarro and Choquette decided to take it. This commitment with a theater, according to Lasserre, was a big mistake since the funding had not yet been secured. An opening date on the horizon got the clock ticking, and the potential losses in case funding fell through would now extend beyond those initially involved in the project and affect the theater’s programming for that season. This could have serious negative consequences for the young company in terms of their reputation. It also meant taking time away from public outreach, which ESP felt was essential if they were to garner an audience. With an opening date set, ESP formalized the invitation to the Mexican team, hoping that the funds would somehow come through. Unfortunately, they did not, and the ESP cast, especially Pizarro and Lasserre, had to take on all the labor themselves both of hosting the Mexican team and of re-staging the production. Since there was so little money, the rehearsal time for the remount was minimal, and in the end ESP was not able to fully hold up their side of the agreement.

In its 2003 Quebec *mise-en-scène* the show received somewhat negative reviews on opening night. According to Lasserre these were not unfounded. Given the circumstances under which the show was remounted in Quebec – new cast members that had no more than a few days to rehearse with their Quebec counterparts; an actress who flew in the day before opening night; and the Quebec actors doing the simultaneous work of hosting, performing and producing without proper funds – these reviews were no surprise. According to Lasserre, after a few performances the show in its new version solidified substantially, yet unfortunately a ten-day run did not allow for the better reviews to circulate fast enough. Interestingly enough, she notes that the Mexican team was what saved that first performance:

As I’m telling you, the Mexican part (...) in my opinion they were the strongest the first night. They were completely able, in the split of a second, they arrived three days ago, four days ago, fly in the night before, but they were able to sink in and get right into it. And you go yeah, that’s the quality of Mexican actors. It’s the quality of Mexican actors, like to hold the – you know, things are not going the right way but they just go on and they do it (Lasserre).

She reflected on a certain flexibility that the Mexican team had, not becoming paralyzed by uncertain or less than ideal conditions, that in her experience was not common in either English or French Canada – the Mexican cast adjusted well even when everything seemed chaotic. Their lodging was covered and they were given a small per diem, but since funding had fallen through their salaries could not be covered. “We paid it little by little. I think we still have a little percentage to pay. We paid it, Marcela and I, little by little” (Lasserre). When we compare Lasserre’s statements to Moncada’s reflection that ESP were considerably more prepared and more disciplined than the Mexican team during rehearsals in Mexico City, there is perhaps something to be said about how a company works differently when they are not in their home turf. In both cases, the actors had arrived with only one project to attend to, and were able to dive in fully into their performances

without having to worry too much about other production logistics. With these statements we can tell that the teams were more prepared to perform when they visited their colleagues than were they worked at home, and this was noted by the host teams in both cases.

Analyzing the critical responses in Quebec, we see that one of the central interests of Quebec reviewers was the emphasis on the diversity of the cultures involved from a perspective less of a global projection, and more along the lines of the complicated notions of Multiculturalism previously addressed. That is, the production was read domestically in regards to the internal diversity politics of Quebec, and less so in relation to what it represented internationally (let alone regionally). In contrast to Mexican reviewers, who, although aware of the African and Russian components of the larger project, primarily divided the exchange occurring in the specific collaboration into two parts – Mexican and Canadian (only some would specify Quebec) – in Quebec the notions of interculturality were expressed to show considerably more diversity and nuance, at least as it concerned ESP:

Il s'agit d'une sorte de coproduction mexicano-québécoise. En fait, si l'on était pointilleux, il faudrait aussi souligner des influences russes, chiliennes, suisses, belges et françaises dans cette production [This is a type of Mexican-Quebecois coproduction. In fact, if we are exact, it's important to highlight also the Russian, Chilean, Swiss, Belgian and French influences in this production] (“Tout au fond du labyrinthe”).

For Mexican reviewers the internal diversity of each of the groups was less relevant, whereas in Quebec the fact that ESP as a company was made up of people with different backgrounds was relevant to that specific public. It was also, as we have seen, the way in which the company was identified (and self-identified) more generally – as an intercultural project where the internal diversity of the company was definitive in its interests and in the nature of its creative processes. Although Teatro Arena and particularly Martin Acosta had for some time been associated with engaging in international collaborations, there is very little or possibly no attention paid to internal diversity within the Mexican group. The silent *mestizaje* of Mexico.

Reviews aside, the Quebec production had a good enough turnout to reveal that there was an audience for this type of international collaborations outside the larger international festival type of productions.

We always did multilingual, because that was the thing I was interested in, melting of languages and, people would say, we don't have the public for it. When a theater took our show we did have the public, and you know who was that public? They didn't even know this public existed because it was from Mexico, all the Latino community showed up. They didn't even know that public existed (Lasserre).

Even without proper infrastructure for a large publicity campaign, and although the show passed much more unnoticed than it did in Mexico due in part to the fact that Ensamble Sauvage Public were less established in Quebec at the time than Teatro Arena were in Mexico City, the show attracted a public that many Quebec theaters had not been thinking

about. It showed that this public existed and that it was interested in consuming cultural products on these topics, as well as attending events that incorporated languages outside the two official languages of Canada. As we see through the subtitling choices and the reassuring statements made by the artists that the show would not be too difficult to follow, we can see that the production was framed primarily for a francophone audience, most likely resistant to languages (and cultures) that it was unfamiliar with. And still, from Lasserre's statements, we see that by combining diverse linguistic publics, francophone Quebecois audiences became more open to the experience:

I think the public, once they saw the play, the show had really good response in the theater. And some critics. And more so as the run went. You know there was a word of mouth, and Quebecois really enjoyed it. So it's interesting because I think the reticence was much more from le *diffuseur*, from theatre directors. Who had an idea of who their public was and what their public would like (Lasserre).

In important ways, the production made certain publics visible that had until then received very little consideration from both *diffuseurs* and public arts agencies in Quebec. Although the second *mise-en-scène* of *Migrations – La vida no vale nada* à Montréal – was less successful both financially for the teams and in terms of its visibility, it did important work in revealing flaws and misconceptions in Quebecois narratives of identity and culture.

Of Spatial and Linguistic Labyrinths

The last section of this chapter will explore ways in which the fiction of the play created interesting spatial and linguistic labyrinths that the characters and the audience were made to navigate. Through these deliberate confusions an experience of miscommunication and disorientation was created, one that to an extent reflected the experience of the collaboration itself as well as the larger themes of migration and intercultural contact that drove the piece from its inception. This close reading of the play text – and when relevant of the *mise-en-scènes* – identifies places where the spatial, cultural and linguistic aspects are signified in layers in order to embody the intercultural exchange, and how they are used to produce a regional imaginary of disconnect and multilingualism. It explores the work of translation in complicating essentializing regional narratives, and the constant becomings of the intercultural scenarios it enables.

The play begins and ends on very vague, international spaces (it opens in the cyberspace of a chat room organized by country and ends with the International Departures screen at the airport). The action continues in what feels like a very generic North, and de-centers the usual South to North migration flows by bringing the characters into the complex – and acutely specific – labyrinths of Mexico City. Structurally, it is framed around the North/South configuration, as its four part division shows: Part I (the North); Part II (the South); Part II (the North); Part IV (the South). The first half of the first scene takes place in an internet chat room, and all the action is described by the characters' dialogues. As with the following stage direction: "*Pierre está frente a la computadora. A su alrededor, el ciberespacio* [Pierre is in front of his computer. Around him, cyberspace]" (Moncada 2001:2). Then Pierre's opening dialogue, referring to himself in the third person: "PIERRE: *Pierre entre dans la salle des pays. Est-ce qu'il y aurait une jolie brune inéressante à*

quí parler?" [PIERRE: Pierre enters the countries' room. Would there be an interesting, pretty brunette to talk to?] (Moncada 2001:2). Place at the top of the play, then, is cyberspace – it is the virtual space of the chat room that in this case, is organized as an international space – the *salle des pays*. This virtual space is itself organized through imaginings of nation-states, and the audience is asked to imagine nation through interactions that are primarily linguistic.

And yet, Moncada plays with the flexibility of cyberspace, undoing these national borders with the click of a button: "MANDRIL: Mandril deja la sala de países y entra a Latinos bilingües [Mandril leaves the countries' room and enters Bilingual Latinos] " (Moncada 2001:2). In this way, our imaginings of nation in this virtual space are complicated through the same maker that is used to perform nation in cyberspace – language. As presented here, the Bilingual Latino group exists outside of the countries' room (you leave one to enter the other), accessible primarily through language but not constrained by the imagined borders of the national. Moncada dialogues here with the implications of cyberspace at the turn of the century, exploring how the internet was shifting the chronotopes of cultural contact in the opening gesture of a theater production about and derived from international and global interactions.

In the action of the play, the chat room is intended to produce initial contact, and once contact has been made, a private space is generated for the conversation to continue through private messaging. It is in this multilingual virtual space that the action of the play begins to unfold, as it is here where Quinceañera (Paloma) and Pierre speak for the first time, and it is in this brief conversation that Mexico as a destination is first planted in Pierre's mind. Simultaneously, Quinceañera meets with her boyfriend Chambelán (Jimmy) in this inconspicuous chat room, as they figure out their next step now that she's found out she's pregnant with his baby. Amidst this chaos of voices, nationalities and languages, the opening scene gives the audience more information than they are able to grasp since they lack the context of who the main players will be. It also doesn't seem to be grounded in any one place – the space is virtual and any reference to place is generated through the language used by the chatters.

In 2000, when the conversations for the project began, cyberspace as a place of contact was only just becoming a common resource, and beginning the play in cyberspace was a way to draw attention to the new possibilities that this technology provided when thinking globally. In a way, *Migrations II* as a creative collaboration was an experiment at this level. I read this opening as an introduction to the larger project itself – where artists from many parts of the world explore different forms of contact that are now available to them, and that potentialize the possibilities of collaboration in a highly in-person medium such as theater. An example of a time when, as Bourriaud observes, "artists become semionauts, the surveyors of a hypertext world that is no longer the classical flat space but a network infinite in time as well as space" (184). Yet as the play unfolds, we encounter the challenges of communication and exchange despite these apparent forms of rapid access staged in cyber/hyperspace, and the apparent infinite possibilities provided by this space mirror Pierre's disorientation and confusion when faced with this sense of access to all places and all possible futures.

In this first scene, Moncada marks a shift in place with the stage direction "*Transición*" (2001:4) and as soon as we hear/see Pierre's mother enter, we are instantly grounded in Pierre's bedroom in Montreal. We have left cyberspace, and have landed in

The North. These scenes all take place in and around Montréal, with specific locations described generically in the script – a bus stop in Montréal; the side of the road; Pierre’s bedroom. There are no references either to specific street corners or recognizable sites that would situate an audience in one or another area of Montreal. Instead, the North as place is only characterized by a description of the weather. Part III opens with the following line: “PIERRE: Mon pays ce n’est pas un pays. C’est l’hiver [My country is not a country. It is winter]” (Moncada 2001:49). In contrast, the action in the South is very specifically located, even when the characters’ paths are labrythic and difficult to follow. When asked about this in our conversation, Moncada explained:

Como lo explicaba gráficamente, es que era una especie de estructura de pinball. Es decir, dos personajes llegan, son dos pelotas que se cruzan, chocan, y cada uno sale en dirección distinta donde se va a encontrar con otra pelota. Y realmente la obra es un poco así ¿no? De la interacción que tenemos tú y yo, tú sales disparada para algún lugar al que no ibas ¿no? Porque todos cambian de dirección inesperadamente y chocan con otro que los dirige a otro lado, entonces, por eso es el laberinto.

[The way I explained it graphically was that it was a type of pinball structure. That is, two characters arrive, they are two balls that cross, collide, and each one sets off in a different direction, where they will come across another ball. And really the play is something like that, no? From the interaction you and I have, you set off somewhere where you weren’t headed, right? Because they all change direction unexpectedly, and collide with someone who directs them somewhere else, and so, that’s the labyrinth] (Moncada 2017).

This feeling of disorientation and unexpected changes in direction is a portrayal of the experience of immersing oneself in Centro Histórico significantly based on the 1967 film, *Los Caifanes*. It inherits a notion of wandering that Nicolas Bourriaud determines essential to the ethics of resistance “to the vulgar form of globalization: in a world that is structured by consumption, it implies that what one finds is above all what one *isn’t* looking for, an event that is increasingly rare in this era of universal marketing and consumer profiling” (185). In the same way that mistranslation is used to portray the opacity of cultural contact, the labyrinth of pinball encounters foregrounds the opacity of the future while allowing for the possibility of finding that which one isn’t looking for.

The portrayal of this South is both much more specific and much more disorienting than the portrayal of the North, which supports Lasserre’s statement that the text, to her, felt more a Mexican play than a Quebec play, even when some of this unbalance was leveled in performance. When in the South, Moncada continues using dialogue instead of stage directions to situate the action – which in turn produces interesting relationships between the characters and the places they describe, as we saw with the example of Pierre speaking of his country as winter. The following examples show very different relationships to the same place. Scene fifteen is set by Terese, the Evangelist from Connecticut who has spent only a few hours in the city: “TERESE: Parece que alguien me sigue. ¿Dónde es aquí? Esquina de Palma y Madero. La ciudad en su centro es un oscuro laberinto [It appears someone is following me. Where is here? Corner of Palma and Madero. The city in its center is a dark labyrinth]” (Moncada 2001:38). Her dialogue situates the action in a specific

street corner, and reveals her own relationship to that place – it is unknown and she feels under threat. To the Taxista, to Tamara, and to Padrote, that same corner is part of their everyday circulation. Scene eleven opens with “TAXISTA: Mi taxi se quedó sin dar servicio en la esquina de Palma y Madero [Mi taxi was left out of service on the corner of Palma and Madero]” (Moncada 2001:27). And scene twelve with “PADROTE: Esquina de Palma y Madero, en la que suele trabajar Tamara. Enfrente hay un cajero de Banamex [Corner of Palma and Madero, where Tamara usually works. In front there is a Banamex ATM]” (Moncada 2001:29). To date, there is a Banamex ATM at the corner of Palma and Madero (which in the case of that scene is relevant to the action). This detail shows Moncada’s detailed knowledge of the Centro Histórico, and his desire to make the experience of being there very specific – he writes in not just any ATM but a Banamex ATM. Now, even though the same corners reappear throughout the play, the characters’ contrasting relationships to these places make it difficult to keep track of where we are on the map, especially since all we see are corners and never the characters’ treks. The effect described by Moncada in our interview is certainly achieved – as if one were looking at a map in the dark, and when characters come into contact certain points light up for the action, never fully revealing how it is these points came to be connected or what direction the characters are going next. Even knowing Centro Histórico well it is difficult to keep track of the characters’ journeys, and through this structure, the play manages to capture the blind spots of not knowing a place fully, of being a stranger to a city, both spatially and culturally.

All the Centro Histórico points selected by Moncada carry with them important historical signification – from the Teatro Teresa, the Plaza de la Constitución or the Lagunilla market. More than once, when situating the action in a specific place, the characters reference its deep history: “QUINCEAÑERA: Plaza de la Constitución. Entrando por Cinco de Mayo. Enfrente están ocho siglos de historia” [Constitution Square. Coming in through Cinco de Mayo. In front, eight centuries of history] (Moncada 2001:41). In addition to these opening, situating lines, there is one scene where the history of the city is referenced in more depth – interestingly, it is the Padrote who brings this up with Pierre – the white, male tourist from the North.

PADROTE: El destino. Aquí está tu bendito destino, en el meritito ombligo del mundo, en donde ningún pinche conquistador puede aplastar las voces que salen de abajo de la tierra. Aquí es donde habita el nahual, donde descansa el corazón de la noche. “México en una laguna y mi corazón echándose clavados...”⁴⁵

[PADROTE: Destiny. Here is your blessed destiny, right in the very bellybutton of the world⁴⁶, where no fucking conqueror can crush the voices that come out from under

⁴⁵ Famous line from *Los Caifanes*.

⁴⁶ Mexico City is often referred to as both the Bellybutton of the World (from the nahuatl Metxli (moon), xictli (bellybutton, center) and co (place), - the name given to the lake at the center of the city, and from which the word Mexico derives) and as the Heart of the Earth (from the nahuatl *Tenochtitlan*, that translates as “place of cactus fruit on stone” but is interpreted as the heart of the earth, since the cactus fruit is seen to represent a human heart and the stone is interpreted to be the earth)) (Caso).

the earth. Here is where the nahual lives, where the heart of the night lives. “Mexico on a lagoon and my heart taking dives...”] (Moncada 2001:34)

The conversation continues, with Padrote painting the scene of the central square, the Zócalo, onto the apparently empty canvas of the night. This emptiness, Padrote will show, is filled beyond what the naked eye can see:

PIERRE: Pourquoi c’est désert? Il y a personne. ¿Por qué es vacío?

PADROTE: Son las dos de la mañana.

PIERRE: *Ils sont où les 24 millions d’habitants?*

PADROTE: Allí están. Abre bien los ojos. Allí están los vendedores ambulantes, los desempleados con su cartelito de “plomero”, “albañil”, “electricista”; allá, los que vienen a pedirle milagros a la santa patrona. En aquella ventana está el presidente y abajo, los que hacen plantones y huelgas para que él los escuche. Todo México está en el Zócalo. Y si miras mejor vas a ver a los que están debajo de las lozas, los templos enterradas, los dioses derrumbados. Y hasta la pinche águila que se le ocurrió venir aquí a desayunarse a la serpiente.

PIERRE: *I don’t understand a word of what you say but it sounds like fuckin magic.*

[PIERRE: (*in French*) Why is it deserted? There’s no one here. (*in Spanish*) Why is empty?

PADROTE: (*in Spanish*) It’s two in the morning.

PIERRE: (*in French*) Where are the 24 million inhabitants?

PADROTE: (*in Spanish*) There they are. Open your eyes. There are the street vendors, the unemployed with their little signs that say “plumber,” “builder,” “electrician”; over there, those who come to ask miracles of the patron saint⁴⁷. In that window⁴⁸ is the president, and below him, those who set up protest camps and strikes so that he will hear them. All of Mexico is in the Zócalo. And if you look closer you’ll see those who are under the stones, the buried temples, the overthrown gods. And even the fucking eagle that decided to come here to have snake for breakfast.⁴⁹

PIERRE: I don’t understand a word of what you say but it sounds like fuckin magic] (Moncada 2001:34).

The conversation shows Pierre’s inability to see beyond the obvious, or to understand Padrote’s explanation of what that place is. The fact that Padrote is able to so easily expose Pierre’s disconnect with the place produces interesting tensions between Pierre and

⁴⁷ In the Spanish, Padrote uses the feminine form of patron, *patrona*, referring to the Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico. The place he indicates is the cathedral.

⁴⁸ Padrote refers here to the Palacio de Gobierno, the Government Palace, where the president works. Not to be confused with the President’s residency, Los Pinos, located 9km west of the Zócalo.

⁴⁹ Referring to the founding myth of the city of Tenochtitlan, in which the Aztecs were told by their Gods to establish their city in the place where they came across an eagle standing on a cactus plant, in the center of a lake, eating a snake. This is also the emblem of the Mexican flag.

Padrote and between the audience and the play. The way this conversation would resonate with Mexican audiences, would likely be very different to how these direct references to indigeneity would land on Quebec ears, especially considering that in Quebec, Pierre's character is representative of a Quebecois de souche culture, one usually identified as being colonized by English-Canada but with a complicated past as colonizers of indigenous lands. The Zócalo, in its complex dynamics, is a place of pride for Mexicans, and the Padrote's speech can be read as an homage to the history and diversity of the city.

Although many of these references would be lost on a Quebec audience with no knowledge of Mexican history, they would be profoundly significant to those audiences in Quebec in some way connected to this history. The play activated different reactions in different publics, but according to Moncada, it was primarily written with a Mexican audience in mind:

Terminamos concluyendo que si lo tratábamos de condicionar a dos públicos iba, nos íbamos a perder en el camino. Entonces que más bien teníamos que aterrizarlo a lo que conocíamos y podíamos manejar en ese momento. Y porque además como la premisa sí era ellos saliendo de [Montreal] – el espacio de la ficción era México ¿no?

[We ended up concluding that if we tried to condition the play to two publics it would, we would get lost along the way. So that we had to ground it in what we knew and what we could handle at that moment. And also because the premise was that they were leaving [Montreal] – the space of the fiction was Mexico, right?]
(Moncada 2017)

This might help explain the translocation problem and the need for such thorough subtitling in the Montreal *mise-en-scène*, since so much of the context would be lost on a Quebec audience. By setting the vast majority of the action in Mexico City, the production pushed Quebec audiences to do more work, even when in the *mise-en-scène* in Mexico City the long French sections were not subtitled.

Both in the spatial setting of the action and in the language dynamics, the play undoes notions of full translation or recognizable space, and instead is comfortable in zones of opacity. In the text Moncada left some sections just as they had been in the improvisation, especially the first part of the play (the scenes between Pierre and his mother, and Pierre and his girlfriend). Since those first sections were set in Quebec, basing them on the improvisations made by the Quebec actors made the most sense. But the words that Moncada worked with were not exactly the transcribed texts themselves, but Marcela's translations of those improvised dialogues. Moncada re-wrote these translated transcriptions into the scenes, that he then sent back to Pizarro who re-translated them into French. Yet the full French translation of the play (that was also used to subtitle the Montreal *mise-en-scène*) was done by Boris Schoeman and Martin Choquette. According to Moncada, this back and forth translation created a more 'neutral' French, in contrast to the very localized Spanish of the Mexican characters. Similarly to the way in which Montreal as a place is described generically, the French in the play had a similar feel. It could be said that the French used by the characters in the first section did not seem to be of any one place – perhaps only the fictional place that results not from the explicit creation of a fictional world, but from the process of creating this fiction. Language here exists

somewhere in the *translation zone* as understood by Emily Apter, “a broad intellectual topography that is neither the property of a single nation, nor an amorphous condition associated with postnationalism, but rather a zone of critical engagement that connects the “l” and the “n” of translation and transNation” (5).

Once Pierre arrived in Mexico, the languages began to mix. Moncada recalls the moment in which Pierre becomes a tourist, and so he was able to write the character more freely (Moncada 2017). All Mexican characters spoke primarily in Spanish, and when communicating with the two non-Spanish speaking characters (Pierre and the Evangelist), a mix of French, Spanish and English ensued.

PIERRE: Vous êtes libre?

TAXISTA: ¿Qué?

PIERRE: Are you free? ¿Es libro?

TAXISTA: Sí, sí. Pero voy a salir hasta alrato.

PIERRE: ¿“Alrato”?

TAXISTA: Alratito, ¿entiendes?

PIERRE: O.K. I have a lot of time.

PIERRE: (*in French*) Are you free?

TAXISTA: (*in Spanish*) What?

PIERRE: Are you free? (*in Spanish*) You fee⁵⁰?

TAXISTA: (*in Spanish*) Yes, yes. But I will leave *alrato*⁵¹.

PIERRE: (*in Spanish*) ¿Alrato?

TAXISTA: (*in Spanish*) Alratito,

PIERRE: O.K. I have a lot of time (Moncada 2001:14)

Despite the mistakes in this example the characters understand each other, as we see in Pierre’s final response. In other cases, the mix causes confusion and actually moves the action in a different direction than if the characters had understood each other. In scene eleven, Quinceañera finds Pierre tied up in the taxi, after his credit card has been stolen. She, on the other hand, needs to get to the bus station as quickly as possible to meet with her Chambelán.

PIERRE: Fucking country of thieves. Where is the police when we need it?

QUINCEAÑERA: ¿Puede hablar más despacio, por favor? No le entiendo. Necesito que me lleve a la TAPO⁵².

⁵⁰ Pierre wants to ask the taxi driver “Are you free?” which would be “¿Está libre?”, but instead he asks “¿Es libro?” which translates as “Are you book?” I translate this faux pas as “You fee?” imitating Moncada’s simple grammar as well as the change of meaning produced with the change of a single letter.

⁵¹ *Alrato* is a colloquial Spanish term to mean “later”. Mexican use of this word is very common, and it indicates an indeterminate period of time. *Alratito* (the diminutive of *alrato*) has the intention of nicely telling someone they have to wait for who knows how long.

⁵² Terminal de Autobuses Poniente (West Bus Terminal).

PIERRE: *I don't understand. Ma carte de credit. My credit card. C'est tout ce que j'ai, il faut que je la retrouve... I need to go back to Canada, find a mechanic, go and get my girlfriend. Do you understand? Do you understand what I say?*

QUINCEAÑERA: *¿No habla español? No invente. ¿Y así es taxista?*

PIERRE: *Taxi, well...*

PIERRE: *Fucking country of thieves. Where is the police when we need it?*

QUINCEAÑERA: *(in Spanish)* Can you speak more slowly please? I can't understand you. I need you to take me to the TAPO.

PIERRE: *I don't understand. (in French) My credit card. (in English) My credit card. (in French) It's all I have, I need to get it back... (in English) I need to go back to Canada, find a mechanic, go and get my girlfriend. Do you understand? Do you understand what I say?*

QUINCEAÑERA: *(in Spanish)* You don't speak Spanish? Are you serious? And you're a taxi driver?

PIERRE: *Taxi, well... (Moncada 2001:28)*

After a long conversation along these lines, Quinceañera gets in the driver's seat and begins to drive herself, while Pierre begs her to take him to the Canadian embassy. A few blocks in, she spots Chambelán at a street corner having tacos with Terese, gets out of the taxi and leaves Pierre tied up and just as lost as he was when the scene started.

In contrast to the more formal French at the top of the play, the lingua franca English intermixed into clumsy attempts to communicate across languages reads very plausible within the time and place of the fiction, as does the Spanish slang used by the Mexican characters: "MARIACHI: No seas cábula ¿eh? Si me estás hacienda güey te voy a quebrar, güey" (Moncada 2001:23). In her evaluation of the Quebec production in 2003, Lasserre reflected that perhaps the translation of these Spanish dialogues into French subtitles should have been done specifically into *joual*⁵³ in order to approximate to a Quebecois audience the local specificity of the work that the Spanish slang was doing within the play. It would have perhaps required the translation process to take a step away from a more literal form of translation, in order to find an equivalent in terms of what the Spanish dialogue was *doing* as it produced specific class and gender relations amongst the characters. Perhaps, achieving translocation would have required a different kind of play in the first place – one not so contextually dependent so that its elements could have travelled more fully when being re-localized to Quebec.

Reflections

As this chapter has explored, the *Migration II* project produced a series of regional imaginaries of the "idea of North America" by connecting its two prominent Latin regions, Mexico and Quebec, in its fiction and in its production processes, thus generating digestible forms of globalization through regionally demarcated cultural production. Even when it

⁵³ A variety of French originally spoken by the working class of East Montreal and associated to Quebecois national identity. Today, *joual* is used more broadly across the class spectrum in Quebec.

was less framed through *latinité*, the play dealt with different forms of circulations within the region, remapping the geographic imaginary by focusing on uncommon routes with its North to South flow from French-Canada to Mexico. By both imagining and embodying contact amongst these two provinces through a creative theater process, the project made visible the often overlooked points of tension and common ground between the two places, as well as the influence of predominant North American Anglo culture, seen primarily in how English is intermixed as a lingua franca with the two mother tongues in production and in the text. Even more so, the project as a bi-national collaboration was used by cultural and government institutions, as well as by the Mexican press, to generate a narrative of international projection and intercultural exchange between Mexico and Canada. The strategic positioning of Mexico City as its national core and as a 'doorway' to Latin America, as well as Quebec's link towards Europe, allowed for this imagined global projection to go beyond the two provinces. As suggested by García Canclini in the opening of the chapter, these regional imaginings at the same time narrow the scope of globalization into these digestible configurations, while they suggest connections between regions to the East and to the South.

Within Quebec the same type of work made by the press or by cultural agencies did not seem to be as prominent as it was in Mexico, and overall the project had much more visibility and support in Mexico than it did in Canada. I attribute this to several factors. First, Mexico City is the cultural, economic and political core of its country, and access to federal funds as well as nation-wide press visibility is more readily available to a company based in the capital than to a company based in another State. In addition, both Acosta and Moncada were established enough within the theatre scene for their projects to garner interest from theatre critics and theatre-going publics. Quebec, on the contrary, was at the time much more interested in its domestic culturalisms, where the intracultural work done by ESP at the time generated tensions with a provincial cultural project framed through the lens of Quebecois de souche culture.

Another important factor for this difference was Moncada's positionality in relation to the project. As a Mexican playwright who had spent almost no time in Quebec and who spoke no French and very little English, it is logical that the text Moncada produced would have a stronger focus on the specificities of Mexican culture, given he wrote the text with what he knew in mind – Mexican culture and a Mexican public. As we saw, in order to bridge this gap ESP fell into the trap of at times presenting themselves as a unified block, oversimplifying their own complexities as a group and their own specificity in order to be more legible to the Mexican team. Perhaps a production dramaturge that could have played the role of an experienced translator would have helped substantially in identifying and resolving some of the oversights of the project. For example, making sure that the Quebec version was in Quebec French would have localized the show and been a closer translation of what the Mexican slang in the original was doing in the play, or knowing how to best sell the project in Quebec to *diffuseurs* who did not have enough context to grasp the nuance of the project.

What this shows is that in order to produce and circulate forms of digestible globalization in the realm of cultural production, complex translation labor is required. In the case of the Mexican *mise-en-scène* this type of nuance was what made the play local and not a superficial encounter of stereotypes, and it is not clear that this was achieved in Quebec. It is in that space of the local, of the coded slang, where perhaps some of the

important alliances between audiences could have been generated. In that respect French as a language was understood almost generically, and in the process of multiple translations undergone by the text (first in improvisation, then Marcela's translation to Spanish, etc.) the specificity of how the two worlds interacted could have undergone a more detailed process of cultural adaptation. In an ideal world, a team of dramaturges (one from Mexico City and one from Montreal) could have accompanied the project. Although members of ESP did much of this work, as did the bi-lingual and tri-lingual members of Teatro Arena, having to focus both on following these translations processes and in developing their own characters or do other forms of labor makes is sometimes difficult. I believe that a collaboration such as this, like any good translation, would require of continued experience through repeated experiments and explorations of strategies that allow for translation through each other for each other's known publics. I acknowledge that from this lack of understanding of the world of the other the play found interesting spaces of mistranslation and misunderstanding, but I believe good dramaturgy accompanying these types of processes would not fall into the trap of trying to produce full translations or equivalents, but instead be able to regulate the levels of opacity in the service of the production's themes and of the public's experience of an intercultural encounter.

In the analyses of the critical reception of both mises-en-scène, we are able to read some of the ways in which the two places operate differently. Although the study of the creative process shows many points in common (such as an openness to work in new and unknown ways and languages, and an interest in exploring new theatrical forms and techniques based on an intercultural encounter) the reception of the two shows reveals important contrasts in worldviews – literally, of how the world is viewed from within each place. Mexico City is portrayed in the play as a complicated, layered place, permeated by a history of *mestizaje* that is present in every element of the city as a general, all encompassing trait, but never made explicit in any form of specificity or nuance. That discourse is taken on by Mexican critics, the illegibility of the city a source of pride as it is projected onto a global imaginary. In Quebec, the reading was much more local as the complicated connotations of *métissage* resonate in the ears of a francophone, and critics focused primarily on the diversity of the company and the multiplicity of cultures that the production brought together. Although the project was overall well received, reviews reveal provincial tensions derived from narratives of Canadian Multiculturalism that in the late 1990s still felt to threaten Quebecois de souche culture as both core and periphery – periphery in relation to their Anglo colonizers, and core as culturally predominant group within the province. Since the Mexican content was less legible to Quebec audiences, and the French and Quebec content of the production was much less localized, the production was read more as something foreign than as a show that, at least in part, was representative of Quebec's reality (the way it felt to Mexican critics). That being said, in both cases the shows had good turn outs and audiences were generally active and open to these less common forms of intercultural spectatorship.

Finally, we find that as a collaborative model, co-production faces important challenges in terms of funding (although 25 years later this has changed considerably, primarily from the side of Canadian public arts agencies). These types of projects require long-term funding, extensive travel, and enough funds to produce at least two full mise-en-scènes. They require specific types of skills, particularly communication skills that allow for flexibility and openness to diverse conceptions of the world. They also require trust – and

the necessary encounters that over time, produce this trust. To Lasserre, trusting your co-producers is the most important aspect, and with these types of collaborations the challenge is deepened given linguistic barriers and differing cultural codes that in less explicit ways produce bonds or contracts between people. Agreeing to collaborate through this model means not only collaborating creatively, but collaborating financially. It means sharing the money and trusting the others with the funds that you, as a company with a reputation in your home country, have procured. Although the project was, overall, successful, the financial situation faced by the Quebec team in 2003 hurt the long-term relationship between the companies.

Digamos, tuvimos un acuerdo que combinaba la parte creativa con una parte de a ver, ustedes ponen esto y nosotros ponemos esto, o conseguimos para el resto, ¿no? Y por ejemplo, la parte de allá no se terminó de pagar. Entonces eso generó ahí al final como que un malentendido que durante algún tiempo así medio raspó un poco la relación, ¿no? Porque nosotros decíamos, oigan, ustedes vinieron aquí y nosotros cubrimos todo lo que nos habíamos comprometido a cubrir. Y allá no se cubrió. Claro, ellos no fue ni mala voluntad ni nada, sino que dicen es que se les cayeron varios patrocinios y no sé qué, entonces al final no pudieron conseguir todo, ellos estaban muy apenados, pero bueno, lo cierto es que no habían cumplido su parte ¿no?

[Let's say we had an agreement that combined the creative aspect with an aspect of okay, you put this and we put that, or we get the rest, right? So for example, the Montreal side was never fully paid. So that generated in the end a kind of misunderstanding for a while that hurt the relationship a bit, no? Because we said, okay, you came here and we covered all the costs we had committed to. And the same was not done there. Of course, on their part it wasn't bad intentions or anything like that, funding fell through and so in the end they weren't able to get everything, they were very embarrassed, but well, the truth is they hadn't met their end of the deal, right?] (Moncada 2017)

During our interview, Lasserre recalled this situation, saying there is probably still some of the debt to be paid (Lasserre). But despite this, the overall feeling on both sides in relation to the project was one of satisfaction and pride in the work – a feeling of having produced an experience that was interesting and well-made, and of having done something that at that time was quite uncommon. Uncommon in how the shows pushed their publics into new forms of engagement, but also in its process and funding structures – so much so that there were no funding schemes set up to support it. But the lack of support in Quebec cannot only be attributed to ESP choices as a young company (although they do take full responsibility for their inability to cover their side of the agreement). Lack of support from Quebec's government and Montreal *diffuseurs* also shows a resistance at the time to open spaces within Quebec for intercultural work that combined local content with content from a different, non-francophone country.

In Mexico City the production was at the core, the national core, at the Centro Cultural del Bosque. In Montreal, it circulated at the margins. In this case study, we find the Mexico was generally open to acting as host to this process of exchange, while the Quebec

was more interested in supporting the export of their own content than in engaging with a lesser-known culture themselves. Historically, Mexico has imported and assimilated culture from the North into its own *mestizaje*, as theatre training syllabi and theater programming in Mexico City will quickly show. A place like Quebec, even in its peripheral status to dominant Anglo-culture in Canada (and in part as a result of), has focused a significant extent of its cultural preservation efforts in the form of cultural exportation, especially during the late-90s early 2000s. That said, this co-production shows many commonalities in terms of creative interests, and although organizational dynamics and hierarchies in the rehearsal rooms might have differed, there was a shared openness to explore devising methods and to work in a place of mistranslation and significant degrees of opacity.

Let us not forget that the initiative came from a Quebec group, a company that in the early 2000s was pushing for the creation of spaces that were much more representative of Quebec's internal diversity, and who took many risks in order to push funding institutions and establish theaters in the direction of a more diverse scene. Today these narratives are more common, and many Quebecois cultural institutions are investing important resources in a push towards diversity. As this dissertation explores, the post-NAFTA years and Quebec's contact with Latin America through initiatives such as the ones taken by ESP, made visible the complicated tensions that make this type of diversification so challenging. At the same time, for Mexico, the success of the play in its capital spoke of the possibilities available to collaborate within the region as equals, to be part of a regional narrative that could project globally and that could further situate Mexico City as a producer of knowledge and as an important international stage, perhaps for the first time integrating it into a North American imaginary (so often equated only to Anglo North America). More than the content of the show itself, the way it was framed and supported in each of the two places reveals much about their national projects, and provides a clear example of how these places rely on cultural production to stage both domestic and international agendas.

In the case of this co-production, an interesting departure from the post-NAFTA government initiatives outlined in the previous chapter is the use of *latinité* as the primary imaginative tool in enabling these collaborations. For this particular co-production, we find that the assumed affinities suggested by *latinité* that activated those initial narratives of exchange – and which enabled initial contact between the artists – are all but absent in this case study. English is used just as much in order to bridge cultural translation, and there is nothing in the fiction of the play or the companies' work methods that suggest *latinité* as a particular marker bringing the artists together. Since the production was conceived as part of a larger project that included Russia and Mali, it was, in contrast to the case study seen in the next chapter, less a *latine* and more a *global* product. The regional demarcation as a North American project established through the Quebec-Mexico connection, allowed for the digestibility expressed by García Canclini, while the rest of the project's framing, from its *intracultural* diversity to its inclusion of Europe and Africa, positioned it as not only intercultural or international, but global. Through a focus on mistranslation in the analysis of this case study, the chapter shows the intricate internal workings behind producing digestible imaginings of globalization. Most significantly, it shows how these imaginings of regional, digestible globalizations are generated through misunderstandings, producing narratives (as with the action of the play) that only become plausible under the premise of mistranslation. Globalization, then, may be rendered digestible through regional

demarcations, and yet these remain woven together and sustained by threads of misunderstandings in mistranslation.

Chapter 4: *La divina ilusión* in Translations

It is not a Quebecois play. It's a Mexican play. It's a fucking Mexican play.

Michel Marc Bouchard on *La divina Ilusión*

La cultura se libera, en cierto modo, de todas las costuras, limitaciones o hendiduras; pierde los límites, las barreras y se abre paso hacia una hipercultura. No los límites sino los enlaces y conexiones organizan el hiperespacio de la cultura.

[Culture is liberated, in a way, from all the seams, limitations or fissures; it loses its limits, barriers and opens the way towards a hyperculture. It is not limits but links and connections that organize the hyperspace of culture.]

Byung Chul Han, *Hiperculturalidad*, 21

Introduction

The opening epigraph is from my conversation with Quebecois playwright Michel Marc Bouchard in October of 2018, who, to my surprise, did not hesitate for a second in acknowledging that his most recent play, *La divine illusion*, appears to be, in its essence, a Mexican play. I was surprised by how adamant he was, although what he was saying made perfect sense to me. I had seen the production in Mexico City twice that year and it was clear that the play had a very good reception, and hence, why I chose it as the final case study of this dissertation. But although we both agreed on its success in the Mexican capital, the question remained – how could one account for the play being more Mexican than Quebecois or Canadian? And more importantly, was attempting to explain a performance through nationally bound conceptions of cultural essence the most productive way to read these networks? The project has thus far led us to this place, where a network-focused intercultural framing allows us to read how performances travel across North America, with a focus less on the aesthetic or semiotic dimensions of intercultural representations, and more on the imagining labor and the chains of production that sustain their becomings. Yet by reading these performances in relation to the *inter*, in this case both international and intercultural, it is difficult to avoid certain essentializations of culture that obscure a good part of these networks as they ground the Nation in our regional imaginings. This is particularly true when the powerful and insufficient dichotomies of *latinité* operate so readily. As a result, this final chapter tests the limits of the intercultural as an analytical tool, relying on the work of Byung Chul Han and his idea of the hypercultural.

As the second epigraph suggest, Byung Chul Han develops the notion of the hypercultural as a way of explaining cultural spaces in the global era. According to him, globalization and its technologies produce forms of cultural expression and social practices that must be read beyond national, ethnic or racial essentializations of culture. That is to say that in this hypercultural space, cultural performances are extracted from their corresponding places, from their historical context and rituals, and are juxtaposed with one another. There is a proximity and a simultaneity that Han deems hypercultural – where

the aura of a particular time and place are erased. This connectivity produces an excess of culture, an abundance of relations and possibilities that eliminates distance in cultural space. This closeness enables a process where cultural forms and practices accumulate into a density of cultural expressions based on a process of spatial and temporal juxtaposition, more so than on a cultural transaction. So that if the *inter* suggests a cultural transaction, the *hyper* would suggest an excess of culture.

Through the analysis of the Mexico City production of *La divine illusion*, this chapter addresses some of the dissertation's initial questions in order to make a move towards the hypercultural: why has the Mexico City-Quebec relation been so prolific, why is theatre such a productive space for intercultural and international contact, and how has it been that, through these exchanges, a distinct way of practicing the region continues to be re-imagined into being. In doing so, the chapter considers the specific thematic and stylistic characteristics of this play that have been used by critics and artists to explain its strong compatibility with Mexico – relying again on the dichotomies produced by an imagined *latinité* – as well as the shifting contexts in which the different versions of the play travelled across the region. In this way, the hypercultural is activated as an analytical tool in an understanding of the Quebec-Mexico instantiation of *latinité*.

Before considering the text's journey to Mexico City, the first section follows the development of *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* and *La divine illusion* – the English and French versions of the same play, commissioned by the Shaw Festival in 2015, thus considering the play's inherent dialogism and contextual flexibility in its English and French world premiers. This play's development history shows the play as being conceived beyond the confines of *latinité*, and reveals a hypercultural dynamic that is, I argue, what has enabled the play to travel with such flexibility across the region. The chapter then follows the play into Mexico City through its translation and production by Boris Schoemann, foregrounding the contextual implications of translation. In pushing the limits of the intercultural and shifting the focus to processes of translation, I explore the idea that translation for the theatre requires us to understand these performances as being constantly reassembled in shifting contexts, always dependent on how the moving actants in the network re-position at any given time. In this way, the following reading suggests that the translation and travel of these performances can be explained with more nuance if read through the lens of the hypercultural, in the sense that they perform not a transaction between two closed (linguistic/cultural) systems with a set of convergences and a set of divergences, but that they are performed into being through the rhizomatic accumulation of moving meaning and aesthetics no longer read through the illusion of national or cultural essence. At the same time that the chapter exposes the limitations of this binary thinking, it also explores the productive flexibility of *latinité* in framing cultural products and enabling their international circulation.

Bouchard in Contexts: Developing *The Divine*

Michel Marc Bouchard's *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* was commissioned by the Shaw Festival for its 2015 season. The festival is held annually at Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario, and as its name suggests, it “celebrates the life and spirit of Bernard Shaw by creating theatre that is as entertaining and provocative as Shaw himself” (“History”). Canada's most well-known theatre festival, it held its first season in 1962, and ten years

later Queen Elizabeth II inaugurated the Festival Theatre, which has allowed the festival to stage large scale productions. For the first forty years, it programmed only plays written by Shaw's contemporaries or about Shaw's life. In framing the event around George Bernard Shaw, Canada's most significant theatre festival actively celebrates its British heritage, and has historically denied – albeit in different ways – both Canada's indigenous life and its French-colonial history. It wasn't until 2003 when Jackie Maxwell took over as artistic director that this changed. Maxwell began her tenure as AD programming works by Shaw's female contemporaries, as well as commissioning adaptations of period works by Canadian playwrights. She opened the 2003 season to well-known Canadian drama – such as Sharon Pollock's 1980 *Blood Relations* – and began a new play development program that gave way to a series of commissioned works. These commissions incorporated Canada's contemporary theatre scene while continuing to embody the spirit of the festival – so either deal with Shaw's historical moment, or pursue Shaw's work of “questioning the status quo in new and different ways” (“History”).⁵⁴

Twelve years later, Jackie Maxwell commissioned and directed Bouchard's *The Divine*. An English-speaking festival, the Shaw shows English-only plays, which meant that throughout the development process, Bouchard's drafts were constantly translated into English by renowned theatre translator, Linda Gaboriau, as the playwright continued to edit the text in French. Bouchard explained in our conversation that the development of the text was sponsored by a woman who donated \$50,000 Canadian dollars for this purpose only – that is, not including rehearsals or production expenses, but only to establish the residency for the writing and the translations of the text. This donation generated ideal conditions for both author and translator to become fully immersed in the worlds of the play, and shows, again, that translation in the theater requires a detailed process of deep, contextual translation. This requires time, money and specialized labor. As was seen in the second chapter of this study, translation in the history of Quebecois and Canadian theater has been central to cultural policies since the 1960s, and there are strong infrastructures in place to support it. Because the Canadian and Quebecois markets are relatively small – especially Quebec's – its success relies on the exportation of texts within and outside of Canada, and since Canada is officially bi-lingual, translation is an integral part of sustaining national life. The comfortable conditions in which the play was written/translated at the Shaw is a clear example of this.

The Divine is a particularly interesting case to this dissertation because as its development process shows, before the text touched Mexico it was already a play

⁵⁴ The first play the Shaw commissioned was *Coronation Voyage* by Michel Marc Bouchard – a play about post-WWII Canada and the tensions between the Quebec Mafia and Anglo-Canada, framed around the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. By 2003 Bouchard was an established playwright, and had written thirteen plays successfully produced in English and French Canada, as well as around the world. *Coronation Voyage*, originally *Le voyage du couronnement* (1995) was significant not only because it acknowledged Quebec on Canada's most colonial stage, but also because the play itself exposed “the painful need to shrug off the colonial relationship” (Taylor), which Canada remains entangled in to date. As the first-ever commissioned piece of the festival, *The Coronation Voyage* was very well received, and set a successful precedent for the Shaw's play development center.

constantly dialoging two languages and several contexts, even when for each performance or publication it appears to be monolingual. The dialogism of the text is undeniable – the play shimmers in the two languages not only because it was written in constant circulation between the two (since Bouchard would write a draft in French, hear it read in English, and then make edits in French based on his experience of the English version), but because it was written with (at least) two audiences in mind – the English-speaking Shaw festival audience, and the French-speaking Quebecois audience. In looking at the many thematic and referential layers of the text, this dialogism becomes apparent. The development of the play complicates a framing of the Quebec-Mexico City relationship that reads these exchanges as taking place within the ‘confines’ of how Quebec or Mexico City are imagined, both culturally and geographically.

Even when one would be tempted to read the play in Mexico through the intercultural framing of two bound contexts (Mexico City and Quebec), what this development process shows is that the references that make up the play are not culturally bounded in that way. As we will see throughout the chapter, Bouchard takes things from many places – most of these, references that are well circulated globally, especially amongst a theatre audience – and relies on audience members who have access to a range of references that are not locally or culturally bounded. Audiences made up, perhaps, of what Han calls tourists in Hawaiian shirts – “el Nuevo hombre al final de la cultura [the New man at the end of culture]” (17). The tourists in Hawaiian shirts – the new man in a global culture – inhabits “un mundo que pierde sus límites y se transforma en un hipermercado de la cultura, en un hiperespacio de posibilidades [a world that loses its limits and is transformed into a hypermarket of culture, a hyperspace of possibilities].” (17-8) The argument is as follows: a play dialogically written in two languages, that appeals to a historical event and a historical, international icon (Bernhardt), that activates big, global topics like labor and Church abuse, that in its aesthetics takes from period dramas made for contemporary audiences (as we will see, *Downton Abbey* ghosted the Shaw production), and constantly mentions well-known theater references of a westernized cannon (i.e. Moliere’s *Tartufe* or Shaw’s social drama), is being staged and interpreted through this hyperspace of possibilities across a range of contexts.

Let us consider the specifics. As is often the case with Bouchard, the play was based on a historical event: Sarah Bernhardt’s controversial visit to Quebec City in 1905, during which Quebec’s Archbishop banned her performance of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, a play not only about adulterous love, but one that ridicules a member of the Church. Bouchard’s choice of topic for this commission covered several important requirements: it took place during Shaw’s time, it dealt with theater’s role in society, and it was relevant to Canada’s history, more specifically, to Quebec. Most significant to its translation potential, Bouchard framed this historical event around issues that are legible and relevant globally, such as labor and church abuses. These two points, I argue, are not only thematically relevant to the histories of different places, but they are materially connected across the globe – both the Catholic Church as an institution, and transnational production chains.

In its storytelling, the play is contextually layered, constantly travelling through time and space and appearing as simultaneously fiction and non-fiction. Bouchard based the story on two statements made by Sarah Bernhardt in response to the Archbishop’s prohibition – one about Quebec’s dogmatic conservatism and one about the role of art in society. Starting from this historical episode, Bouchard drafted the main plot of the play:

two young seminarians, Michaud and Talbot, are given the task of delivering the Archbishop's message to Sarah Bernhardt. She refuses to cancel her performance of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, and causes both awe and uproar in her public response to the Church and in her criticism of Quebec. The world that Bouchard creates appears to be historically accurate, but it is very obviously also intending to read contextually as a 21st century play, producing a shifting temporality and in turn, contexts that are assembled and disassembled on shifting grounds. The choice of Sarah Bernhardt as the central character allowed Bouchard to make the play very local to Quebec, through the story of a well-known icon who herself embodies the complexities of circulating cultural products internationally, and who would be attractive to audiences with no connection to Quebec.

The action of the play circulates in three main spaces: the seminary, the theatre and the factory. The theatre is where we will see Bernhardt and her two assistants, Meyer and Madeleine, prepare for the performance, learn about the Archbishops' prohibition and hear Bernhardt's response to it during the second act of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. At the seminary we see two young seminarians: Michaud, a lover of the theatre from a rich family in search for a moving narrative to capture in his next play; and Talbot, the first of his family to have access to education or to join the clergy, who has mysteriously arrived at the seminar, all expenses covered by the Church. Here we also meet Brother Casgrain, in charge of overseeing every movement at the seminar, who appears at first a bitter and corrupt disciplinarian. As the plot develops, we learn that both Talbot and, many years before, Casgrain himself, were victims of abuse by a high-ranking member of the Church. At the shoe factory, Talbot's mother and 13-year old brother, Leo, work alongside Emma Francoeur and Thérèse Desroyers, where the Boss – left nameless by Bouchard – unapologetically exploits his workers while he is happy to put on a show for the Bernhardt that produces the "illusion" of dignified work conditions. Unfortunately, this performance leads to the death of 13-year old Leo, who the Boss has hidden in an airtight bunker in the ground during Bernhardt's visit. By the end of the play, both the Boss and the clergy are exposed for their crimes. In the spirit of Shaw's social drama, Bouchard deals not only with the tensions between Church and art at the turn of the last century, but uses this historical event to simultaneously expose other incongruities of the global era.

In this way, each space carries with it a profound contradiction: the seminary stages the too well known narratives of child sexual abuse by members of the clergy, and the corruption that enables the systemic impunity that protects those who commit these crimes. Simultaneously, as Bernhardt receives a pair of beautiful red, leather boots from the factory owner, we see how the life of glamour embodied by celebrity relies on the exploitation of the workers that enable it, while so much of the social drama predicated by the theatre attempts to speak against these same injustices. As Kelly J. Nestruck aptly observes in his review of the Shaw production,

Bouchard draws attention to the hypocrisy of an audience paying sharp attention to a theatrical debate over the fictionalized abuse of children in Canada's past by church or business, while largely uncurious about who in foreign countries is making the shoes they are wearing – or the smartphones they turned off before the show began – today.

We need only look at Bernhardt's description of "social drama" in the third scene of Bouchard's play to understand what Nestruck is referring to: "It's a new trend that for the time being only attracts the converted, who, nestled in their velvet seats, delight in seeing onstage the injustices they encounter on every street corner. That doesn't prevent them from enjoying the champagne at intermission." (62)

The English title, *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt*, puts Bernhardt's character at the center, a move that might more easily attract a Shaw Festival audience familiar with Bernhardt's legacy. The choice for the English title was also a way to grant the play a ludic meta-theatrically. As Robert Cushman observed in his *National Post* review of the Shaw production: "Then there's the subtitle: not a play *about* Sarah Bernhardt but a play *for* her. Michaud, one of the two seminarians, is a stage-struck Bernhardt fanatic, and he's writing just such a play. It may even be the play we're watching." Yet in the French, the title, *La divine illusion*, emphasizes the illusions of the divine produced by both the theatre and the Church, a suggestion that gets lost in English, since, as Bouchard expressed in our conversation, "The Divine Illusion (...) sounds more like a magic show." Later in the chapter we will see that in the Mexican Spanish translation, *La divina ilusión*, an extra layer is added to the French, as the Spanish brings forth the meaning of the word *ilusión* as a profound longing for something better – a looking forward to. The title in each language already foregrounds different aspects of the play depending on the context of each production, and foreshadows the different reactions that it produced.

The play premiered in its English version at the Shaw on July 5th 2015 (and ran until October 11th), directed by Jackie Maxwell, and soon after premiered in its French version at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in Montreal, directed by Serge Denoncourt (November 7th to December 5th), followed by a 7-city tour in the francophone province. The critics of the Shaw production seemed particularly interested in the play's commentary on the theatre culture that the festival represents. As Nestruck observed, "In *The Divine*, Bouchard both celebrates and criticizes the type of theatre the Shaw Festival produces – and the type of audiences who flock to see it – even as he provides a moving and entertaining yarn drawn from our own history" (Nestruck). On a similar note, the production was recognized for bringing a certain freshness to the Festival, as John Law expressed in his *Sun Media* review:

For one thing, it's a brand new play, commissioned by the Shaw and written by a guy who's still alive – two things you rarely saw before Maxwell arrived. And while it maintains the spirit of George Bernard Shaw, it has a modern style and sensibility which shows the company has swept away any remaining cobwebs.

The praise acknowledged Bouchard's ability to produce an apparently historical play that was simultaneously contemporary, a play that was temporally and geographically flexible, and that would appeal to a less situated audience at an international festival. This reviewer is also concerned with what the play did for Canada's mainstream theatre scene, and in both cases, the critics acknowledge Bouchard's ability to both criticize Shaw's elitism, while replicating the theatre standards dictated by the English heritage that the Shaw hopes to uphold. As we follow the play's production history we find it inevitably produces a loop of contradictions.

For the Quebec critics what seems to resonate most are the cultural references to Quebec's complicated relationship with Church and class. In her review of the TNM

production in *Le Devoir*, Odile Tremblay pointedly states, “Tout n’est pas si simple avec la religion. Les Québécois le comprennent [Things are not that simple with religion. The Québécois understand that].” Similarly, Élie Castiel reveals the complexity of Quebec’s relationship to its Catholic and anti-Semitic roots in a somewhat problematic review of the same production:

Et devant cette atmosphère tendue, la visite de la Divine Sarah, l’Européenne, la Juive qui a, le temps d’un court séjour, remis en question les valeurs et traditions d’un milieu enfoncé dans la misère et la religion. Un milieu qui crie l’étranger, le différent; un milieu anti-Semite, non pas par conviction, mais par doctrine.

[And in this tense atmosphere, the Divine Sarah’s visit, the European, the Jew who has, during a short stay, questioned the values and traditions of a world sunk in misery and religion. A world that decries the foreigner, the different; an anti-Semitic world, not through conviction, but through doctrine.]

Castiel’s discomfort with Quebec’s problematic past is evident in her review, and the line “not through conviction, but through doctrine,” shows a resistance to admit Quebec’s responsibility for the anti-Semitic sentiments portrayed in the play. By highlighting Quebec’s *misère* – which is no doubt the result of New France having been colonized by Britain – responsibility is deflected. The anti-Semitic tensions that this moment stages goes deep into the ways that *latinité* has been used in the imaginings of national and identity narratives in Quebec. As observed by Mauricio Tenorio-Tello, *l’Amérique latine* “also implied Catholic antimodernism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Protestantism – which were also somehow present in, say, early twentieth-century Mexican, Catalan, French and Spanish nationalisms” (9).

The political and social processes of secularization that took place in Quebec through the *révolution tranquille* also secularized certain cultural narratives that had initially been constructed through religious affiliation. Without a doubt, the complicated relationship to Catholicism – one of Quebec’s differentiating markers – is the most recurring theme in the reviews of the TNM production. Interestingly enough, these references to markers of *latinité* are absent in the reception of the Shaw production, showing that the framing of the play as such took place in Quebec and Mexico, while English-Canada critics did not read *latinité* into the production. As we will see later in the chapter, Catholicism will also be one of the play’s central connectors to its Mexican audience, and similar to Quebec’s critics, Mexican artists and critics will give significant attention to this cultural marker. Castiel’s review shows a resistance to address this historical anti-Semitism, and by acknowledging that religion is a complicated business, the issue is dismissed. Speaking against it might mean speaking against a construct of *latinité* upon which Québécois de souche culture is so powerfully grounded, and it is clear from the rest of the review that Castiel was committed to the ways in which this play recovered and aggrandize those values:

Après Michel Tremblay et ses écrits *documentaires* sur le Québec profond (et parfois bourgeois), Michel Marc Bouchard assume son parcours combatif pour redonner au pays ses lettres de noblesse et son identité moderne finalement retrouvée.

[After Michel Tremblay and his *documentary* writing about deep Quebec (and occasionally bourgeois), Michel Marc Bouchard takes on a combative path in order to return his country its noble letters and modern identity finally found again.]
(Castiel)

In this way, Castiel suggests that Bouchard's dramatic sophistication represents the resurgence of New France's suppressed *haute culture*, repressed for hundreds of years by its British colonizers. Again we find the type of war-like language used to describe the work of the CEAD in earlier chapters – in Bouchard's "parcours combatif" towards the recovery of Quebecois de souche colonized culture. This kind of logic leaves no room to acknowledge how Quebecois de souche culture is itself colonial and oppressive. There is an implication here that Bouchard's work is elevating the values of art and high culture characteristic of *latinité*, in opposition to an Anglo-Saxon, commerce driven culture. The Quebecois critics don't frame the play as a commercial success (which it was and continues to be), but as a cultural success.

Although *The Divine* and *La divine illusion* were received differently at the Shaw and at the TNM, the play was highly successful in both of its premiers. When asked what he thought was different about the two productions, Bouchard said that "the version at the Shaw looked a little bit Downton Abbey (...) It was a little bit British. Sometimes we had to be careful about Sarah because she became too British." Without a doubt, and despite Gaboriau's fantastic translation, translating a Quebec accent, contextually, into English-Canadian is a difficult challenge, especially at the Shaw where period pieces often fall directly into a Shavian, turn of the century, English accent. And yet, this seemed to be part of its appeal as well, even when Bouchard was hoping that the play wouldn't contextually collapse into an English period drama. Although the audience *knew* the action was happening in Quebec, Bouchard's account argues that they probably *felt* like it was happening in England. According to the author, the TNM production was "more French" and there was more "candor" in the performances, especially those of the Michaud and Talbot characters. It *felt* then like it was happening in Quebec, and the stakes of these two characters were much more evident as their context was more palpable to its audience.

These ways of describing a production – as either/or – seem insufficient. As I present the play in detail in the sections that follow, I rely on principles of translation in order to address these contextual shifts. Translation, while also expressing incommensurability, is a process made up of concrete choices – albeit always in a process of becoming, but also always specific. Following the work of theatre translation scholar, David Johnston, I argue that dramatic language cannot be understood simply for what it means or for how it is made to mean – that is, how it is performed – but should instead be understood for what it *does*. Translation for the stage is dependent on language that acts, and this process is all "about how we place contexts around actions" (Johnston, 16). Such a challenge increases when we consider that the contexts of performance are constantly shifting with each production and each run, in addition to the contextually layered character of this particular play. The level of complexity of *The Divine* – in that it is both highly historical and highly contemporary, reference filled, but also very context specific in its criticism, complex characters, plotlines, and spaces, makes the work of translation profoundly challenging. As the following sections will show, in the hyperspace of possibilities, it is the audience who is

doing a good amount of this translation work – adding to the translator’s linguistic translation – and re-signifying the text into a target context.

The process that Johnston describes requires a translator to be deeply familiar with how action is produced (and rendered into and out of text) in each of the contexts at play. In his *Toronto Star* review, Richard Ouzounian describes the English version as having been “muscularly translated by Linda Gaboriau” (Ouzounian). The adjective used by Ouzounian no doubt suggests the magnitude of the task, since it required Gaboriau to have an in depth grasp of a series of temporally and geographically shifting contexts. I believe the success of Gaboriau’s translation is significantly a result of a writing process in which playwright and translator were immersed in constant conversation in a shared space (the writing residency), a condition that allowed for the contextual complexity of the translation to circulate through various texts, bodies (in staged readings) and conversations. I believe the development process led to the creation of a text that benefited aesthetically from its historical specificity as a period drama, but is constructed through characters, social critiques and storylines that did not rely exclusively on the contextual specificities of 1905 Quebec. Based on the production and reception of the two world premiers, Bouchard and Gaboriau, in collaboration, seem to have produced two quite different dramatic texts, despite the illusion that the English (*The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt*) was derived from the French (*La divine illusion*). One of the most interesting things that the following analysis of this play in transit will reveal, is that its translations were highly successful despite them telling considerably different stories.

Reading this play’s production in Mexico as an intercultural performance staged through an international transaction requires one to use the category of Quebecois as a key marker, which as we saw was less prominent in its English-Canadian iteration. As this section has shown, closed national (Québécois/Mexican) or cultural (*latinité*) categories are evidently limited and insufficient in a reading of *The Divine*, especially in an analysis concerned with how it travels precisely because the play was produced across contexts that go beyond the dichotomies of *latinité*. And yet, the traps of this form of categorization remain constant in the meta-narratives staged around the production as it is moved, promoted and explained in various contexts. In many cases, it is often through reductive (yet efficient) meta-narratives that these cultural products are best packaged and circulated across a region.

La Divina Ilusión: A Journey Through Ciudad de México

The production history outlined above is important in understanding the play’s life in Mexico City as it evidences the text’s inherent dialogism, as well as the fact that it was conceived as contextually flexible. In what follows, I suggest that Bouchard might have been writing with more than two audiences in mind, showing that as an author whose work has been widely produced elsewhere, and whose income relies on this success, he writes for many contexts. As the opening quote of the chapter shows, Bouchard, upon seeing the play performed in Mexico City, had the clear realization that it was “a Mexican play.” This statement can be read in several ways – first, that the play was heavily influenced by Bouchard’s own experience of Mexico, and of his plays’ previous successes there; and two, that the style, themes and tone of the play were particularly relevant and well suited to a Mexican theatre production culture. I would argue that a bit of both played

a role in the making of the play, even when this influence is not particularly visible in the creation or reception of the Shaw or the TNM productions. More specifically, I want to argue that the play is not catering to one or another context for its translation, and instead is filled with hypercultural references that facilitate its uptake in diverse contexts. That is, references that work well even while incomplete, but that when circulating between Quebec and Mexico, are framed through ideas of *latinité*. In what follows I explore how the Mexican premier came into being, the specifics of its first production, and how both artists and critics have framed the production and its success around issues of cultural – primarily affective – affinities that in a process of cultural essentializing, readily invoke the dichotomies of *latinité* and often overlook the complexities of translation as well as economic or political explanations.

The play first came to Mexico in one of its earliest drafts. During the second run of Schoemann’s production of Bouchard’s *Tom en la granja* (2014), the Quebecois playwright came to Mexico City and was, at the time, working on *La divine illusion*. During this trip, Bouchard shared the first version of the play with Schoemann: “Estaba aquí sentado (*apunta hacia donde estoy sentada*) y me estaba leyendo *La divina ilusión*, que estaba empezando a escribir [he was sitting here (*points to where I’m sitting*) and was reading *La divine illusion* to me, as he began to write it]” (Schoemann). As had been the case with previous productions of Bouchard’s text, the close friendship between author and translator made Schoemann part of the writing process long before a final draft of *La divine illusion* had been completed.

It is hard to know how much influence Schoemann’s input had on later versions of the play, but what both author and translator confirmed in our conversations is that they knew the play would be translated and produced in Mexico in a near future. The friendship that has arisen from this long-time professional relationship is something that both Bouchard and Schoemann stressed, and I believe it has been a significant factor in the collaborations addressed in this study. Yet the friendship and working relationship between these two artists – both primarily francophone and of the same generation – can hardly be read to represent a kind of inherent cultural affinity between Mexico and Quebec. If anything, the strong friendship that has developed throughout the years evidences that the infrastructures necessary to enable a productive collaborative relationship between Mexico City and Quebec artists have been in place, and have successfully generated strong partnerships. It also evidences that both Bouchard and Schoemann have known how to make the best of these economic opportunities – at a time when cultural institutions and nationalist agendas in Quebec and Mexico were in search of plays that travelled well, and translators to circulate them – Bouchard’s texts and Schoemann, a French theatre maker based in Mexico City, were a great fit.

In the Fall of 2017, two years after *The Divine* opened at the Shaw, it premiered in its Mexican Spanish version at Teatro La Capilla,⁵⁵ produced by Los Endebles and Petit Comité

⁵⁵ Teatro La Capilla was founded by Mexican author, Salvador Novo, in 1953. Novo bought and restored an old chapel – hence the name, La Capilla – into a theater space. The space closed in the 60s, but was reopened by Jesusa Rodríguez and Liliana Felipe in the 80s, who, in addition to La Capilla theater, opened the famous cabaret bar, El Hábito. Since 2001, La

Teatro. It ran from September 4th to November 21st, but since the run coincided with the September 19th earthquake in Mexico City, it had four dark weeks in between those dates.⁵⁶ The first run was voted Best Play by Cartelera de Teatro (the most trafficked theatre online platform in Mexico City), and later runs were nominated in 2018 for four Metros – Mexico City’s theatre awards – winning Best Supporting Actor.⁵⁷ It was also, according to Bouchard, the production that worked best out of the three premiers. In what follows I trace a series of explanations given by artists and critics to account for this success, ones that rely primarily on notions of cultural, aesthetic and often, affective affinities.

Cultural Affinities: Themes and Style

Throughout my interviews with playwrights, directors, actors, public servants and festival directors, I consistently asked the question: what do you think makes Quebecois theatre so successful in Mexico City? Every interviewee had a theory based on one or another factor, such as the language closeness, Catholicism, or the complicated relationships with our Anglophone neighbors and its echoes of *latinité*. Almost every interviewee also explored another kind of explanation – one that they attributed primarily to a strong affective experience. As Boris Schoemann expressed in our conversation: “de alguna manera hay un lado más intelectual en Europa, y en Canadá y en México es una onda más melodramática, corazón, humana. (...) Entonces siento que hay un vínculo cultural emotivo que funciona muy bien entre Quebec y México [In a way there is a more intellectual side in Europe, and in Canada and in Mexico there is a more melodramatic trend, heart, human. (...) So I feel there is an emotional cultural bond that works well between Quebec and Mexico].” The compatibility is expressed by Bouchard through the intellectual/emotional binary, and via a negativity in relation to Europe, where Europe is read as intellectual and the Americas as emotional. Similarly, in her recollection encountering Wadji Mouawad’s *Fôrets*, and later Dominick Parenteau-Lebeau’s work, Mexican actor and translator Violeta Sarmiento described a strong, affective reaction to these Quebecois texts:

Recuerdo lo que me pasó con el texto es, yo decía, no entiendo, diablos, no entiendo nada. Pero seguía avanzando. (...) Entonces yo seguía, seguía y de pronto me vi llorando. Decía, ¿qué es esto? Sentí tal cual como muchas veces Wajdi lo dice, como algo que te atraviesa, como una flecha que te atraviesa. (...) Que dije, no entiendo de qué se está tratando, no entiendo quién es quién, pero sentí. (...) Algo que me pasó cuando leía a Dominick, que algo pasó. Que decía, no, no le entendí pero ah, hubo algo que me atravesó emocionalmente que dije, algo me está hablando.

Capilla is ran by Boris Schoemann and his in-house company, Los Endebles (named after Bouchard’s play *Les Feluettes*).

⁵⁶ The production had a second run in early 2018 at Teatro Helénico (February 12 – April 16), a third run in the Fall of 2018 at Centro Cultural Teatro II (September 12 - November 14), and a fourth run at Teatro Julio Castillo (April 8 – June 4 2019).

⁵⁷ The production was nominated for Best Play, Best Costume Design, Best Supporting Actor (Eugenio Rubio as Talbot) and Best Actress (Pilar Boliver as Sarah Bernhardt).

[I remember what happened to me with the text was, I said, I don't understand, damn, I don't understand anything. But I kept going. (...) So I kept going, kept going and suddenly I found myself crying. I said, what is this? I felt exactly what Wajdi often refers to, when something pierces you, like an arrow that pierces you. (...) I said, I'm not understanding what this is about, I'm not understanding who is who, but I *felt* it. (...) Something that happened to me when I read Dominick's work, *that* something happened. I said, no, I still don't get it, but ah, there was something that pierced me emotionally and I said, something is speaking to me.]

Although Sarmiento was having a hard time understanding the meaning and specificity of the texts in French, her explanation suggests an affect that travelled through the text and was somehow conveyed despite the incomplete encounter with the plays. That is, even when she was unable to understand the text, she still felt it.

Similarly, several times in our conversation Quebecoise playwright and co-director of *Le Carrousel*, Suzanne Lebeau, described a similar reaction: "Entonces, regresé diciéndome tengo que aprender el español. Absolutamente. Algo pasa con México. Algo pasaba por supuesto [So, I came back telling myself, I have to learn Spanish. Absolutely. There's something there with Mexico. And of course there was something there]." And later, when I asked her about Mexican audiences' response to her plays, she recalled: "Hay algo que pasa con este público que pasaba también en las calles. Por eso me enamoré tanto del país. Algo pasaba [There is something about these audiences that happened on the streets as well. That's why I fell in love with the country. There was something there]." She had felt a compatibility or closeness that could not be explained with any specificity, and that took place despite her not speaking Spanish at the time.

Mexican translator Humberto Pérez Mortera had a similar explanation to that expressed by Bouchard, although he attributes the compatibility both to an emotional connection and to a structural, narrative component in Quebecois plays. "Pero más bien es la emoción. Es la evocación. El narrar algo sin irse al construir la estructura fija. Sólida de hielo. Sino hay algo que nos conecta [But it is more so the emotion. It is evocation. Narrating something without falling into the fixed structure. Solid, made of ice. Instead, there is something that connects us]." So even though these plays have a legible structure, there is something that has to do with affect that connects Mexico and Quebec – plays that are structurally solid, without – using Pérez Mortera's words – being fixed or frozen. There is a notion here of an emotional component that travels through the texts and that Mexican audiences are predisposed to read despite other aspects of translation remaining incomplete. According to these testimonies, this inexplicable affective connection is there, and these dramatic texts, even when they don't refer to it explicitly, are the objects through which it travels and is activated.

As vague as these responses seem, they all reproduce a similar narrative, one of a powerful affective connection between the two communities, an emotional experience that is not fully determined by an intellectual understanding of the exchanges. Importantly, this affective connection is not attributed to a translation process per se, since all of these encounters describe strong affective reactions *despite* a lack of translation or linguistic understanding, as with Sarmiento and Lebeau's testimonies. Although the geographies are equally vague (as in this case, the affective connection is explained in opposition to Europe), dichotomies produced by *latinidad* are used to explain a collaborative relationship

expressed in terms of a negativity – an opposition to the intellect – that as a result, is impossible to explain. These testimonies too often fall into the trope of the *je ne sais quoi*, associated to some kind of inexplicable affective component. And the fact that they remain unexplained seems important, as bypassing the semantics of translation is a way of remaining in the realm of affect and far from the intellectual specificities of linguistic translation.

When pushing further, I found that this affective compatibility would be described though what is perceived as a shared social experience and cultural reference (Catholicism or child labor), or through a genre or style described as suiting a Mexican “sensitivity” or “temperament.” Interestingly enough, Mexican Spanish and Quebecois French were thought of as culturally close, but not necessarily structurally close as Romance languages, even when this does facilitate linguistic translation between the two. A series of cultural affinities – particularly well exemplified by *La divina ilusión* – are used to explain the performances of Quebec plays in Mexico City in terms of their inter-culturality, that is, as cultural transactions. This logic explains cultural transaction as a series of points of encounter where culture A and culture B converge – an understanding of the intercultural performances that, as was discussed in the introduction, has proved to be insufficient as it stems from the premise that the two cultures are closed and contained prior to contact. My research shows this to be how many of these circulations are both explained and publicized, and in what follows I lay out the specifics of these narratives. In order to do so, I divide these cultural affinities into two rubrics – thematic and stylistic. By thematic affinities I refer to themes that are said to resonate both with a Quebec and a Mexico City audience – be it the result of their colonial histories, of their nationalist aspirations or of specific cultural or social practices. This is the case with themes of labor exploitation, abuses by members of the Catholic Church, or the role of an imagined youth in nationalist formations. Under stylistic affinities I consider elements in the construction of Bouchard’s play such as character construction and acting style, a specific kind of storytelling or the presence of the body in the text. In what follows, I use the voices of artists and critics to lay out these explanations, where Quebec and Mexico City are found to converge.

Themes

One of the ways in which Bouchard explains the closeness of a Mexican public to his text relies on the idea that in Mexico, “they know what it is – right now children are abused sexually or by work. They know what poverty means. Here [in Quebec] we don’t know really.” In this statement, Bouchard alludes to a thematic proximity that the audience has in their every day experience to the issues of the play. So although there is a temporal and spatial distance between the Mexican audience and the world of the play, the situations that unfold are close to contemporary Mexico. Under this logic, if the Shaw production *felt* like it was happening in early 20th Century England, and the TNM production *felt* like it was happening in early 20th Century Quebec, it would appear that the Mexico City production *felt* like it was happening in 2018 Mexico City, even when the audience *knew* the play was set in a different time and place. I argue that this thematic proximity was equally important to the play’s success in Mexico City as the temporal and geographic distance of the play’s setting. Given the fact that issues such as labor exploitation or sexual abuse by members of the Catholic Church are very much alive in Mexico City’s public spheres, a play that, at first

sight, is set in a very different time and place, might make audiences more predisposed to engage with it in the first place.

On this point I want to argue that Bouchard's play, although at first sight it appears to be contextually very specific to 1905 Quebec, in practice its storylines are written in a way that when translated, can tell very different stories in different contexts without feeling incomplete. That is, in order for certain themes to land in Mexico City, a re-contextualization that distances them from the cultural specificity of Quebec is necessary, even when the play is not adapted into a different context (in its Mexican Spanish version the story is still taking place in 1905 Quebec City). What I am arguing here is that in order for certain themes to perform the work expected of this Quebecois "social drama" in the context of a Mexican Spanish production, certain forms of mis-translation become necessary. The play in translation may appear to be about the same thing, but the stories that it tells differ in a new context precisely because in the hypercultural space where the audience does the work of filling in gaps and providing the narrative connectors that give the story depth, new stories are produced.

Let us stop a moment at two events in Mexico's 21st Century to exemplify this: the 2016 controversy of Puebla's maquiladoras and the case of Marcel Maciel. Bouchard is right in that poverty is, in numbers, closer to Mexican publics than it might be to Quebec's. According to CONADE (National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy), in 2016 43.6% of Mexico's population was living under the poverty line – which translates into 53.4 million people, almost 20 million over Canada's entire population (36.26) ("Medición de pobreza"). And while this is true, Bouchard's explanation is quick to rely on the binary of a modern North and an always-late-to-modernity South, a binary that is structural to the conflict of the play: where Quebec City stands in for this late-to-modernity South (associated to the values of *latinité*), in contrast to the modern Europe embodied by Bernhardt's celebrity.

And yet it is true that around the time of the first run of Schoemann's production (Fall 2017), controversies around labor exploitation were circulating Mexican media. In 2016, two important studies came out revealing a range of abuses taking place in the state of Puebla's extensive maquila facilities. One of these studies made by the Colegio de Posgrados in Puebla focuses on the maquilas in the town of Tehuacán, where Tommy Hilfiger, Guess, Calvin Klein, Wrangler, Levi Strauss, Farah, Gap, VF Corporation, Polo and Ralph Lauren have assembly plants. Amongst other things, this study revealed that 60% of the women who work in these facilities have suffered sexual abuse, and that the victims are, for the most part, girls between the ages of 15 and 17. Minors working at these maquilas make on average \$300 pesos a week (\$20 USD), working 9.5 hour shifts in low demand season, and 12 to 16 hours during high demand periods (Montero et al). That same year, another study coming out of PUIC – the center for diversity and intercultural studies at UNAM – revealed that by 2016, 2.5 million children were working under similar conditions across Mexico (Cortés). The coverage of these studies made it so that, by the time *La divina ilusión* premiered in Mexico City in 2017, issues of labor exploitation involving children were very much a part of Mexico's on-going conversation. But maquilas are also one of the ways in which we are globally connected today – in Quebec and Mexico, but also in English-Canada, in the U.S. and many other places where this play was successful. This specific thematic line of the play is relevant everywhere, and is legible in almost any context, especially since it is not only an imagined thematic connection, but a material one. That

being said, the story that this thematic line tells will be in line with the contextual specificities of any given audience, and will differ from place to place.

Issues of labor exploitation and abuses by the Catholic Church showcase material systems through which many places are connected – either in terms of globalized industries, or through a global religious institution. The play’s focus on pederasty in the Catholic Church loudly resonated with the horrifying scandals in Mexico in the last fifteen years. In 2008, a man by the name of Marcial Maciel died at age 87. Maciel, originally from Michoacán, Mexico, was the founder of the Catholic congregation Legion of Christ and the Regnum Christi movement, and was one of the greatest fundraisers and recruiters to the Catholic Church. He directed the Legion of Christ from 1941 until 2005, when he was removed from active ministry by Pope Benedict XVI. Although there were hundreds of accusations of pederasty against him since the 1970s, it wasn’t until 1997 that nine high-profile men filed formal charges against him, accusing him of sexual abuse in the 1940s and 1950s. The controversy also revealed the complicity of Mexico’s Primate Archbishop, Norberto Rivera, and of Pope John Paul II, to whom Maciel was close. Neither Rivera nor Pope John Paul II prosecuted Maciel during their tenures, and although Pope Benedict XVI did remove him from active ministry, he neither excommunicated nor legally persecuted Maciel. The magnitude of the abuse and corruption of this case divided Mexican society (89.3% Catholic)⁵⁸ as it was no longer possible to turn a blind eye to these cases of abuse. It revealed the Church’s hypocrisy and abuses of power, but also, the community’s complicity and responsibility in these abuses.

At the same time, and although this case is very well known internationally, Church abuses in Canada today are mostly associated to the abuses suffered by children in Residential Schools⁵⁹ and that have circulated the media’s discourse as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008-2015). So while in Mexico City the story of Talbot’s abuse and the way the Church officials in the play respond to this brings Maciel to mind, in English Canada and Quebec, a story of reconciliation with the first peoples foregrounds this narrative. Still, Catholicism – as was seen in the mid-century exchanges discussed in Chapter 2 – represents not only an imagined closeness between Mexico and Quebec, but also connected network, sustained globally and, in the history of these two places, an institution with considerable economic and political power. These connections, even when the stories told differ greatly from context to context, suggest a shared complicity as with the case of labor abuses at the maquilas.

In conversations with a theatre study group⁶⁰ I led during the second run of the show in February 2018, the issue of sexual abuses by members of the Catholic Church was

⁵⁸ “Religión.” Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/temas/religion/>. Accessed 12/20/2018.

⁵⁹ Government sponsored religious schools intended to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian culture established after 1880. The last one closed in 1996. The damage inflicted upon these children was recognized in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement of 2007.

⁶⁰ The group was made up of thirty-four upper-class women living in Mexico City. All of them practicing Catholics, and none of them working in the theater or the arts. The four-week private course I taught was meant to give them an overview of Mexico City’s theater

particularly fraught. Some of the discussants revealed not wanting to see the show as soon as they learned what it was about, and others expressed that although it was one of the best shows they had ever seen, they found the whole thing horrifying. Others – only three out of the thirty-four – were completely enamored by the play. But for the most part, the group seemed to struggle between having been moved by the production, and their strong opinions and personal positionalities in relation both to the Catholic Church and to issues of class and labor exploitation. Those who had decided not to see the play were all at our discussion, keen to hear what the others had to say about the production. No one had a neutral or indifferent reaction to the play, which shows the extent to which these themes are very much a part of Mexico City's complicated conversations about itself.

The discussion with this group was particularly revealing because their relationship to the theatre is certainly very different to that of theatre critics cited throughout this chapter. When it comes to a theatre crowd, this play very much preaches to the converted – at least in relation to these topics, even when it questions the internal contradictions and elitist pretensions of the theatre industry. But the women who made up the group I'm referring to are certainly not the converted, theatre crowd. If anything, they represent the Quebec City crowds of 1905 that so vehemently criticized Bernhardt's nerve, the arrogance of the outsider quick to stir the pot and bring up these delicate issues. Without the temporal, geographic and linguistic distance, it could be argued that *La divina ilusión* would have met much more resistance by Mexican publics, and by the Mexican powers that be. Yet what is interesting about how these issues were taken up in conversation in the context of Mexico City is that they were not framed around Quebec anymore. The play proved to be particularly powerful precisely because certain references are activated very differently in each context, producing, as we saw in the case of the TNM and the Shaw productions, a play that turned out to be about very different things. At the same time, these themes appealed to global institutions or networks that connect different communities in both material and imagined ways, making it so that the play in translation can be successfully reinterpreted in different contexts as long as these key connectors are highlighted.

Another central theme of the play – certainly connected to this last anecdote – is the power of the arts and their role in society. The most interesting thing about how this particular aspect of the play was re-contextualized in Mexico City is that it was re-signified through an unforeseeable and exceptional event: an earthquake. Impossible to foresee, the first run of *La Divina Ilusión* was cut short by the September 19th earthquake in Mexico City. The company decided to continue the run, despite the tragedy, four weeks after the earthquake hit. The ticket price was reduced in half (down to \$100 MXN – approximately \$5 USD), or one could pay with in kind donations that went towards relief efforts. In this gesture, the role of the arts in providing relief became material. In this context, one particular moment of the play resonated powerfully with Mexican reviewers. Near the end of the play, Sarah Bernhardt delivers a monologue that Bouchard based on the actress's historical response to the Archbishop in 1905, during the second act of her performance of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. The monologue, in Gaboriau's translation, reads:

scene, and consisted of weekly two-hour discussion sessions, and attendance to four shows. Amongst these was *La divina ilusión* at Teatro Cultural Helénico.

Theatre is the sister of History and Philosophy, of Politics and Justice. It is the love of everything good and beautiful. What would life be without art? Eating, drinking, sleeping, praying, dying? Why go on living? Theatre gently preaches what you preach so harshly. When it portrays vices, it's so we can better overcome them. Theatre reveals turpitude and excess. It denounces tyrants by portraying their tyranny. It educates the ignorant without their realizing it. It opens out minds. It touches our hearts. It punishes. It pardons. It seeks the truth.

(...)

Through the theatre, we can become a father who sacrifices his daughter to appease the gods. We become the young lovers in Verona who love each other despite their difference. We become a man with a long nose who is pining for his beautiful cousin. We become the young man who, imprisoned in the solitude of a dormitory, imagines his unlikely meeting with a famous actress. The young man who, touched by the fate of his friend, dares to portray the harshness of his times. (*resuming the text of the play Adrienne Lecouvreur*) "Farewell, glorious triumphs, farewell, divine art. My heart will beat no more with these ardent emotions! Farewell, my dear friends...!" (140-1)

One hundred and thirteen years after Bernhardt declaimed similar words on a Quebec City stage, this monologue had a clear effect on a Mexican audience in need of its own reasons, as Bernhardt asks, to go on living. Similar to how Bouchard frames it in the play, several critics reproduced this affect in their reviews of the production. In his theatre blog, *Hoja de Arena*, Adrián Chávez writes of seeing the production after the earthquake: "El teatro, decía, sana. Sana de prejuicios, de educaciones dogmáticas, y sana también después del desastre. Vayamos, pues, al teatro [Theater, it said, heals. It heals prejudices, dogmatic education, and it heals, also, after the storm. Let us, then, go to the theatre]." Although it is true that at no point does Bernhardt, or Bouchard, explicitly say that theatre *heals*, Chávez recovers the tone of the monologue in as much as art provides a path towards transformation or rebirth. In his review in *El Semanario*, Mauricio Montesinos offered a detailed recollection of his experience of this same performance:

Después del 19 de septiembre la vida en el país se convirtió en una nebulosa. El transcurrir del tiempo había perdido su ritmo. (...) *La Divina Ilusión* fue mi primera obra que vi después del 19 de septiembre. (...) A pesar del origen canadiense de Michel, siempre le viene muy bien el temperamento latinoamericano (en este caso mexicano) a la interpretación de sus textos. Los diálogos permiten un desborde de energía por parte de las actrices y actores. Amén de un impecable soporte literario en cuanto a la síntesis y efectividad dramática. (...) Estaba comiendo una sopa a los tres días de haber visto *La Divina Ilusión* y fue ahí cuando sentí el verdadero efecto del montaje, del texto, de las interpretaciones, de estar con los otrxs: un permiso de volver a creer. En los sueños. En la belleza. En el amor. A pesar de todo y en contra de todo. (...) Y en mi cabeza sólo escuchaba las palabras de uno de mis personajes favoritos del teatro, Harper de *Ángeles en América*, que me hacían volcarme en mi sopa: "Nada está perdido para siempre."

[After September 19th life in the country became nebulous. The passing of time had lost its rhythm. (...) *The Divine* was the first play I saw after September 19th. (...) Despite Michel's Canadian origins, Latin American temperament (in this case, Mexican) always suits his texts well. His dialogues allow an overflow of energy in the actors and actresses. In addition to an impeccable literary foundation in terms of dramatic synthesis and efficacy. (...) I was eating soup three days after seeing *The Divine* and it was then that I felt the true effect of the production, of the text, of the interpretations, of being with other people: I was granted permission to believe once again. In dreams. In beauty. In love. Despite everything and against everything. (...) And in my head all I could hear were the words of one of my favorite characters of the theatre, Harper of *Angels in America*, words that made me dive into my soup: "Nothing is lost forever."]

The two reviews cited here (and others written after the earthquake) emulate the tone of Bernhardt's voice. Montesinos even replicates Bouchard's trope of citing well-known, contemporary theatre references – in this case, *Angels in America* – taking his reader into the hyperspace where these references are de-spatialized and reactivated in different contexts. These reviews, while they both provide a fact-based analysis of the production, don't hold back the intense affective milieu in which these performances unfolded. At the same time, Montesinos' review is an excellent example of the limitations and contradictions of the Latin/Anglo-Saxon binaries through which North America continues to be expressed. In it, the critic awkwardly attempts to accommodate the production, his reaction and Bouchard's work within the binaries of our Latin North American imaginings – ones that map a "Latin American temperament" in opposition to Bouchard's "Canadian origins," while relying on a canonical U.S. play, *Angels in America*, to explain this intense affective experience. At the same time, in this first run *La divina ilusión* performed the very narrative that it staged: in the face of tragic circumstances, art provides something indispensable, a connection to the deep and complex emotions that tragedy evokes. Schoemann's production in October and November of 2017 did not only say this, it performed it.

The first run of *La divina ilusión* and the reactions it produced are a good reminder that dramatic texts and their productions need be read in context and in transit, not as stable objects, but as dynamic and embodied, always on the move, always in performance. Instead of reading these shared thematic references as derived from similar genealogies of colonial histories (a Catholic heritage being the clearest example of this), I urge us to look at how these references are *not* shared in both places, since I believe that this is where their power lays. Because the relationship to the Catholic Church is so different in Mexico City than it is in Quebec, the play both performs very differently in both places, even as it created the illusion of a profound understanding. This masked sense of understanding makes it easier to read the play as having achieved a fuller translation in its Mexico iteration, since certain references resonated so much in that context. In how the experience of the play's production in Mexico City is framed both by Bouchard and by Mexican critics around these thematic affinities, it doesn't matter how different those specific contexts and their histories may be – what matters is that the performance be explained as a highly successful translation, even when the meaning produced may be so different. What is being valued is how deep the references go in each context, and not that they are performed to

mean the same. The way that Bouchard incorporates these themes is done in a way that is strategically legible to global structures and awakens a notion of global complicity, and relies on a hypercultural dynamic where artists and audiences rearrange these to re-make the play's meaning.

Style

A recurrent explanation of the play's success, then, relies on the idea that the three thematic lines of the play discussed so far – sexual abuse by members of the Catholic Church, labor exploitation, and the role of art in our everyday lives – resonated particularly well in Mexico City since audiences members had strong opinions about and/or affective and material connections to these issues. This section shows how thematic affinities are not the only elements used to explain this success the play, or more specifically, that these themes require certain performance forms in order to be activated successfully. That is, *how* Bouchard dramatizes these issues is as important as the issues themselves. Theater requires certain things to be detonated in performance in order for themes to resonate, and this process is activated through a series of stylistic choices made by creative teams, starting with the playwright. In what follows, I analyze these themes in conversation with perceived stylistic affinities shared by a Quebecois and a Mexican way of making and consuming theater. These interviews reveal a tendency to read Quebecois and Mexican theater as mono performance cultures with specific national predisposition towards certain aesthetic and affective characteristics, and hence, more aesthetically compatible.

When I asked Bouchard why he thought his plays were so often produced by Mexican directors with success, he did not focus on the cultural policies or exchange initiatives mentioned in previous chapters. Instead, the reasons he gave were stylistic, referencing three aspects of his playwriting: “A mix of, I must say, you know, humor, story, and I’m a bit melodramatic too. So it’s these three ingredients – the Mexican really like it” (Bouchard, 2018). As this section will examine, the elements that Bouchard describes as being liked by Mexican audiences – a melodramatic style, a predisposition towards a certain type of story-telling, and a specific comedic tendency – activate certain narratives of *latinité* by which performance cultures are explained. Although I agree with the idea that affinities in performance cultures – especially in regards to modes of production – can facilitate the translation and transportation of a dramatic text into a different language and a new context, the stylistic affinities expressed by the artists and critics in this section seem limited in explaining this success. That is, these fail to evidence fully that the stylistic elements that might facilitate this translation are not also operating in the translation of Bouchard’s works elsewhere, or in the translation of other, non-Quebecois authors into Mexican Spanish. And that this specific text and the performance cultures discussed here are also heavily influenced by styles and aesthetics that exist beyond the arbitrary borders of a province.

An important stylistic affinity used to explain the success of Bouchard’s play in Mexico, and that of many other Quebecois authors, is a predisposition to story telling. In our conversation, Humberto Pérez Mortera explained it thus:

Europa lleva cincuenta años con el teatro posdramático, es lo que dice Lehmann, el teatro posdramático, deconstrucción, olvidémonos de la fábula, olvidémonos del relato. Pero los mexicanos no pasamos por eso directamente. No tenemos por qué pasar por eso si nuestra fuerza ha sido *el relato*. Sentarnos uno a uno. El sentimiento. O sea, somos sentimentales, a veces en exceso. Pero los quebequeses también tienen ese lado. Primero pasa el sentimiento, y después la razón. Y la narración. Nos encanta la narración como a los quebequeses. A mí me fascina que me narren, que me narren en el escenario. Por eso entramos. Es muy fácil. Es – apuntamos al mismo lado.

[Europe has been doing post-dramatic theater for fifty years, that's what Lehmann says, post-dramatic theater, deconstruction, let us forget the fable, let us forget the story. But Mexicans, we didn't go through that directly. We don't need to go through that when our strength has been in *the story*. Sitting one on one. Emotion. I mean, we are emotional, sometimes in excess. But the Quebecois also have that side. First comes emotion, and then reason. And narrative. We love narrative like the Quebecois. I love being told a story, being told a story on stage. That's the entry point. It's very easy. We point in the same direction.]

Two points made by Perez Mortera help understand the argument of a narrative affinity – first, that Mexicans have a different historical temporality to Europe, and that this temporality is shared with Quebec. And two, that we share a tendency towards an emotional overflow. The first connects to an idea that after its independence in 1810, Mexico, as a young nation, felt it had to quickly catch up with its European counterparts. And after its revolution in 1920, this same feeling produced the urgency for a literary canon, one that would ground nationhood in its letters, as Mexico felt it came late to modernity. Quebec, in its *revolution tranquille*, shared similar impulses, and found in its literature – including its theatre – a place to articulate national narratives. Mexico and Quebec were in need of constructing stories about themselves, and not, as many European countries might have found, in need of deconstructing old narratives. Under this logic, as soon as these places had access to telling their own stories, Europe had decided stories were old news. And Pérez-Mortera expresses that this story-telling culture is one of the binding elements between Mexico and Quebec's performance culture, and that the two places must recognize themselves as being connected in this way and distinct from Europe – through their temporalities, but more importantly, in their post-revolution needs for national narratives. On this front, I agree with Perez-Mortera – generating these narratives has been essential to the nation building projects of both Mexico and Quebec, and the cultural policies that have enabled the relationship between the two places are evidence of this.

On the other hand, I disagree with his suggestion that behind this there is a particular tendency towards emotion that binds the two places. This recurring explanation is perhaps the most common between artists and critics, relying on the vague and essentializing logics of *latinité*. As we saw earlier in Montesinos' review of *La divina*, who argued that “A *pesar* del origen canadiense de Michel, siempre le viene muy bien el *temperamento* latinoamericano (en este caso mexicano) a la interpretación de sus textos [Despite Michel's Canadian origins, Latin American *temperament* (in this case, Mexican)

always suits his texts well]” (my emphasis), it is often argued that Bouchard’s texts suit Mexican *temperament* well, in as much as they accommodate what might appear to be a tendency towards certain emotional overflows. The assumption here is that Latin America has a specific temperament, and that as a rule, Canadian (whatever that may represent) artists would be unable to tap into this particular sensibility. This is a clear example of how national culture is often essentialized in order to explain it in relation to other cultures (the frame of the *inter-*), and how the gesture of reading Mexican temperament through the success of this play, materializes the imagined *latinité* of a 21st Century North America.

The temperament of emotional overflow described above is often associated to the melodramatic as performed through *telenovela* culture, developed in the 20th Century as a way to contain the types and traits of *mexicaness*, and the post-revolution nationalist narratives that went hand in hand with these constructs. This refers to a culture that is unafraid of expressing deep emotion, a depth that is often expressed through an overflow (as Montesinos describes it) and that is often associated to the trope of the *fiesta* as going hand in hand with humor. As many of the 20th century Mexican essayists evidence⁶¹, these narratives rely on the conception that to “be Mexican” is to navigate the duality between light and dark, death and life, humor and sadness, *fiesta* and violence. In the modernization quest set in motion after the revolution, Televisa and its *telenovelas* have been an important venue where nationalist narratives are cultivated in the form of legible types and emotion-driven plots. Under this logic, these structures of feeling are processed through performances that allow for an emotional overflow while they sustain stereotypes of social order in a world that is often experienced as chaotic. Interestingly, the same essayists who in the mid-20th Century were generating these narratives, were also the first generation of screenwriters for Televisa – including Salvador Novo, founder of La Capilla in the 1950s, and Octavio Paz.

The *lugares comunes* upon which both *telenovelas* and national narratives are built on are undoubtedly insufficient and reductive in their representation of any experience of Mexico, let alone one that represents an all-encompassing *mexicaness*. And yet, in my interviews I found that Bouchard’s work – and that of other Quebec dramatists – is often explained through references to affective experiences associated to melodrama. Yet Bouchard’s plays are, generically, not melodramas. Here, I understand melodrama as the 19th century popular genre first developed by Guilbert Pixérécourt in post-revolution France, using characters that are clearly drawn as being either good or bad, repeated plotlines and a heightened sentimentality, that relied heavily on the use of music to produce these specific sentimentalities, especially once they were taken up in Italy as operettas. In many ways, Bouchard’s plays deviate significantly from melodrama as a genre, especially in the complexity of character and plot. And yet what both Schoemann and Bouchard express is that his plays, particularly *La divine illusion*, are melodramatic *in style*, in as much as they retain certain qualities of the genre – specifically, the mix between

⁶¹ In *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Paz tell us that “the solitary Mexican loves fiestas and public gatherings” (my emphasis, 47) and later, that “the Mexican does not seek amusement: he seeks to escape from himself, to leap over the wall of solitude that confines him during the rest of the year” (49). Our subject here – the solitary, silent Mexican – needs the fiesta in order to survive the melancholic depression, inherent to his character, derived from and expressed as uncontained violence.

tragedy and comedy, a heightened sentimentality (albeit only at times) and the use of rhetorical constructions and affected speech in the dialogue.

Boris Schoemann explained to me how he came to terms with this style and understood it was best activated with Mexican actors and audiences:

Yo, por ejemplo, llegué a México aborreciendo el melodrama, como buen francés. Y descubrí que no es el problema del melodrama. Adoro ahora el melodrama, bien hecho, obviamente. El problema es el tono melodramático que tenemos en México a partir de ver demasiadas telenovelas y demasiadas cosas chafas de melodrama. De cómo exteriorizar demasiado las emociones. Pero que eso es algo muy de aquí. Ahora hay muy buenos melodramas, yo he descubierto con Michel Marc Bouchard, pero esto mezclado con sentido del humor, que todos esos autores que traduzco tienen un sentido del humor maravilloso, sino no me gustaría, y sino no los traduciría, y eso es lo que permite que te tragues cosas duras de la vida a partir del amor. Esto, esta línea delgada entre el humor y el drama, la comedia y el drama, que tienen muchos de esos autores, cada uno con su poética muy distinta obviamente, es lo que funciona.

[I, for example, arrived in Mexico detesting melodrama, like any good French person. And I discovered that the problem is not melodrama. Now I love melodrama, well done, of course. The problem is the melodramatic tone that we have in Mexico that comes from watching too many *telenovelas* and too many cheap melodrama stuff. Of how to over-express emotions. But it's something that is very much from this place. There are very good melodramas, I've discovered this with Michel Marc Bouchard, but this, mixed with humor - all of those authors I translate have a wonderful sense of humor, without which I wouldn't like it and I wouldn't translate them - it allows you to digest hard things about life from a place of love. This, that thin line between humor and drama, comedy and drama that many of these authors have, each one with their very distinct poetics, obviously, that is what works.]

From the top, Bouchard frames his response through essentialist presuppositions, positioning himself as "any good French person." In this statement Bouchard associates a melodramatic style with an overflow of emotion that expresses both humor *and* drama. It suggests a style that takes itself very seriously at the same time that it mocks itself, a style that allows for a constant flow between comedy and drama that is performed in a vast emotional range. What is interesting about this account is how Schoemann collapses this description of a dramatic style with melodrama as genre, and how this is done through a logic where the European is read as intellectual (and understood to "repulse" emotion), whereas *l'Amerique Latine* (in this case, both the Mexican and the Quebecois), is read as over-emotional. It would appear that according to Schoemann, the Quebec-Mexico formula works because Quebec has figured out the right way to write contemporary melodrama, while Mexico has a predisposition to the emotional overflow that his genre requires.

Following this logic, this type of dramatic writing requires a specific acting style - one that can go both big and deep, combined with quick wit and comedic timing. The majority of stage actors in Mexico City are also television and film actors, since all three industries are centralized in the capital city. Legendary stage actors in Mexico often have

starred in *telenovelas* for decades, and their stage work is inevitably, as Marvin Carlson would have it, “ghosted” by their on-screen careers. In our conversation, Bouchard described Pilar Boliver, the Mexican actress who played Bernhardt, as achieving the balance between comedy and drama more than any other actor in all three productions: “First of all, Pilar! She is a comic machine. And as people like her and know her already, she just shows her face and (*applause*). And I say, okay, my God! And she’s a real punch-liner machine. But she became really deep sometimes in the parts of the story.” The reaction that Boliver produces with Mexican audiences – who recognize her for her stage and television work, for her talent and her famous humility, and for her biography as a daughter of refugees – was in some ways scripted into the text. Bernhardt’s entrance must set the tone and carry the legacy of the powerful Diva – it requires a very particular kind of actor. Replicating the Tartuffe trope, we see Bernhardt for the first time after having heard plenty about her character. In Gaboriau’s translation:

Sarah: No. (*waving a manuscript*) My character doesn’t appear until Act 3! The audience came for me, they came to see ME. And here I am entering like a notary in the middle of the play, like a soubrette who’s lost her way in the story. What was I doing for the first half of the performance? Pining away in the dressing room? Redoing my makeup to the point of embalment? The author says: “Like Tartuffe, this character is the subject of every conversation from the beginning of the play.” If actors are brilliant in the role of Tartuffe, it’s because they’re riding the frustration of waiting so long in the wings. (51)

The comedic, over the top tone is set from the first moment, and yet throughout the play it becomes clear that the construction of this character requires much more nuance. In her review of the Mexican production, Susana Fernández said of Boliver’s performance:

Dueña del escenario, Boliver se apodera del personaje para hacer y decir lo que motiva el oficio del verdadero teatrero, con un excelente manejo de los rangos de la comedia y el drama pasa de uno a otro género sin problema alguno, llevando al público por ese recorrido de emociones que se suscriben en *La divina ilusión*.

[Owning the stage, Boliver takes over the character and makes it do and say what motivates the profession of the true theatre-maker, with an excellent domain of the range of comedy and drama, flawlessly moving from one genre to the other, taking the audience through the emotional journey that makes up *La divina ilusión*.]

This review confirms Schoemann’s observation that the play requires a versatility of its actors, especially of Bernhardt’s character, but it is not clear anywhere in the text that this is specifically melodramatic. Melodrama and the melodramatic are being associated with an emotional overflow inherent to *l’Amérique latine*, and I argue that this explanation of the play’s success in Mexico is not only generically imprecise, but it ignores the many other influences in the play – such as Moliere’s comedic style, or Shaw’s social drama – both which are also legible in Mexico City, and not only at the Shaw Festival. These explanations based on an idea of the melodramatic are clear examples of how the two places are imagined together through these performances – as being connected by an affective affinity

that is performed in specific ways. They also avoid addressing the complicated hyperculturality of the production, in which any resonance of melodrama is but one in many connectors, itself made up of a web of historical and aesthetics movements.

Another way in which the compatibility between Quebec plays and Mexican theatre is explained is in the way that the body is made to perform, associating once again a more intellectual theater style to countries of the North, and are more sensual, physical style to the South. According to Bouchard, the body is very much present in his texts, albeit not in explicit ways. In the following excerpt of our conversation, the author describes how he came to be aware of this during his visit to Mexico City in the early 2000s, when he saw the Mexican production of *Les Feluettes* for the first time:

I think I truly believe that I have a relationship with the body in my work. I truly believe, you know, in that you have to be involved not just with your mind, not just with your intellect, but with your body too. And that's interesting. The first time I saw *Los Endebles* in Mexico because I went back, I said, oh my God, they're all moving, they're all moving. Because here, our tradition, you speak, the other one moves. It's a kind of really French something. It's like we don't have any – We don't have a body. Like the body is just to move your head, it's there to put your head in another place. And in Mexico, I said – and I experienced the same thing in *Las Musas Huérfanas*. It was moving. It was all moving. And it worked. It worked. We don't lose the focus. And I said, oh my God, that's amazing because – and I discovered that after with other productions in South America. The sensuality of the body, the relationship with the space of the body really, really works with my material.

Bouchard's description of a French acting style – and here it is unclear if he means Quebecois and French from France, or only the latter – privileges the intellect, the ideas that are conveyed by the dialogue. There is a stasis in the body that foregrounds utterance, as if any movement beyond the lips was a distraction and so it must be avoided. On the other hand, Bouchard describes the bodies of Mexican performers as being in constant movement, and this movement signified the text as much as utterances did. In this explanation, the movement of the body is seen to produce the emotional depth that the dialogue indicates, so that it is in the body where the portrayal of an emotional depth is staged. Bouchard argues that this physicality is written into his texts, although it is not always achieved in the uptake. Going back to Violeta Sarmiento's recollection of her reaction to Mouawad's play, it seems that the physical reaction that these dramatic texts produce, what she described as "feeling pierced," can only be portrayed through the body. Without the full use of the body, the text can fall flat, which, in the case of *The Divine*, means the show can drag on. In its Mexican production it ran for almost three hours – and it certainly did not feel it. It had a flow that I believe was in part achieved by this movement work, as the bodies, as much as the words, carried the play forward. An example of this is the first scene at the factory, that Bouchard sets up as follows:

The women factory workers enter and turn the dormitory into a workshop. The beds become tables with sewing machines and piles of shoes.

MRS. TALBOT and the other women, EMMA Francoeur and THÉRÈSE Desnoyers, are lined up at the machines, stitching red leather for women's boots. LEO is gluing leather soles. Through the windows, spinning machinery and conveyor belts and the silhouettes of dozens of women factory workers can be seen. The noise is deafening. The women work to the rhythm of the Ave Maria recited mechanically in Latin, at rapid-fire speed. Their conversation is woven in and out of this litany. (2015:34)

For the first half of this scene – before the worker's take their break – the four characters speak in quick one-liners, interspersed with the recitation of the Hail Marys. In this scene and many others, the body is thematically central to the issues of abuse addressed by the play, and we see the playwright has foregrounded movement and the soundscape produced by the body (not only voice) over dialogue. In Schoemann's production, this scene – the first time we see the workers at the factory – had an extraordinary rhythm where the women sang, worked, spoke and drummed in perfect unison, with no physical or sonic pause. If something of the dialogue got lost amidst the movement and the soundscape, all the better. Throughout the play, the characters' journeys take place in constantly moving bodies, and thus require an acting style that reads at that level. In this respect, I refer not only to the body having a certain physicality that expresses its condition or biography – for example, a factory worker that walks a certain way or has a fixed physicality. What I refer to is an acting style concerned with a constant flow of movement, where the text (and its action) flows through the body, changing it, at the same time that it is changed by the body's movement. A Mexican acting tradition based on principles of rigorous, physical work certainly comes through in Bouchard's observations. But his stage directions in this scene show that the physical work is scripted into the text, and I don't believe that this is something that should be read as inherent to Mexican culture. That is, "Mexican" bodies are not essentially more sensual than any other bodies. Instead, I would argue that some of this physical work is possible because Mexican seasons are set up to have longer rehearsal times and generally longer (and repeated) runs than seasons in places both the U.S. and Canada, where union regulations amongst other factors call for shorter rehearsal periods and runs.

This rehearsal culture also allows for a good part of the translation work to be done by the company in rehearsal. One of the most interesting things I noticed after having read three versions of the play closely – *The Divine*, *La Divine Illusion* and *La divina ilusión* – is that Gaboriau's "muscular translation" is, for lack of a better word, better achieved than Schoemann's translation of the text. In the same review cited earlier, Adrián Chavez observes:

Boris Schoemann, que hace de director y de traductor, logra como siempre un gran trabajo en lo primero, aunque no tanto en lo segundo — si bien la traducción en su conjunto funciona, el texto en español está plagado de frases y modulaciones que recuerdan al francés.

[Boris Schoemann, director and translator, achieves as always great work as the former, but less so as the latter – although the translation as a whole works, the Spanish text is full of phrases and modulations that summon the French.]

I agree with Chávez in as much as the translation of the text does at times reveal itself a translation, although the published version was revised further after the 2017 run that Chávez responded to. Still, during the performance, several moments stood out where the translator's work made itself visible, revealing choices that, ideally, would remain unseen. A very simple example of this is in scene two of act one, when Bernhardt tells of a woman who gave her, in the French, "un bouquet des fleurs rares" (51). Gaboriau translates this as "a bouquet of rare flowers" (52), and Schoemann as "un ramo de flores raras" (48). The word *rare* in English and in French has the same meaning of being infrequent or difficult to come across, and can have the connotation of them being particularly valuable as a result. In Mexican Spanish, the word *rara/o* can mean this, but its more common use expresses a thing's strangeness, what would be translated into French as *bizarre*, and does not carry with it the connotation of being precious. If the director is the translator, as is Schoemann's case, these nuances can be addressed in performance, but that's not necessarily the case when the production team engages with the text primarily through a published translation.

So although I agree that the textual translation into Mexican Spanish is less "muscular" than Gaboriau's (who, we must remember, translated in residence with the playwright and the company during a long translation/writing process), I argue that Schoemann's *mise-en-scène* successfully translates other aspects of the script, such as the physical work indicated by stage directions or the contextual flexibility of some of the major themes. It's important to note that Schoemann's process of translation went considerably beyond the translation of the text, and a long rehearsal period with a cast of Mexican actors who, with Spanish as their first and primary language, would help with necessary adjustments, both physical and contextual. And still, translation glitches are a reminder of the complexity of reading translation as a full transaction, and this production of *La divina ilusión* is a good example of how translation often goes beyond the linguistic, especially in a multi-modal and collaborative context such as theatre.

This reading of *La divine illusion's* journey through Mexico City shows the complicated moves required of translation as theatre travels. It also shows that even the artists engaging in this complex and nuanced work often explain these performances using the same binaries analyzed in other parts of the dissertation: notions of *latinité* that essentialize Mexican culture as inherently emotional or sensual, recurring to vague markers associated to this – such as the melodramatic – even when they rely on a range of hypercultural dynamics in order to activate these performances in different contexts. In this way, explanations based on a notion of *latinité* fail to account for the density of accumulated cultural expressions that inhabit these hypercultural spaces, while they remain central to the narratives that enable their funding and frame their publicity.

Infrastructures, Nationalisms and Markets

One thing that has been clear throughout this study is that the strong collaborations that Quebec has had with Mexico generally, and with Mexico City specifically, have been deeply determined by ideas of Nation. NAFTA – an economic and political treaty signed amongst the three Nation-States of North America – catalyzed the formation of a strong and diverse cultural network across the region based on a premise of inter-National collaboration and regional alliances. Quebec's interest in pursuing its alliance with Mexico is no doubt tied to its own conception of itself as nation without a state, and is marked by a nationalist agenda

that dates back to its *revolution tranquille*. For Mexico, making of its capital city the cultural node of a network that extends North, South and transatlantically is part of an agenda to assert itself as an important regional actor – a modern nation in global times. But the nation as a concept and as a struggle is also very much part of the content of the performances that circulate through the network. The complexity of the national narratives that these communities elaborate as a result of their complicated histories is a recurrent aspect of these plays, and I believe, an important point upon which Quebec and Mexico converse through these performances.

Quebec's literature is often concerned with the figure of the adolescent, of the young character that doesn't quite yet have full access to their power, but who embodies the promise of a bright or different future. Stories usually revolve around issues of family, and tight knit communities held together by the Catholic faith. Bouchard's plays are no exception – children and young people are the most important figures in his plays, represented in *The Divine* by the young seminarians, Talbot and Michaud, and Talbot's younger brother, Leo. This makes Quebecois theatre hopeful and playful, while it echoes a nation's frustration of not having access to their full power as a country – of always lagging behind in the face of a condescending Europe (in the case of Canada represented by Britain and later by English Canada). Mexico, that as a young nation has struggled since the 19th century to reach the standards of modernity set by its colonial counterparts, and that today finds itself in a similarly infantilizing relationship with its neighbor to the North, finds plenty in common with Quebec's own sentiments of national youth. In a re-imagining of North America as a region, it might not be surprising that these two places would take the opportunity to redefine themselves as nations, using each other to ground themselves politically as full-grown nations through cultural performances.

And yet despite these points in common, the logics of Nation inevitably fall into the traps of cultural essentializing, which as we have seen so far, are readily activated under the frame of the inter-cultural when read inter-nationally. Even when those Nations relate to each other – politically and economically – in very specific ways, they are usually explained primarily through the cultural lens of *latinité*. Imagining regions through these simplified dichotomies is an important part of nationalist projects since, as Han argues, fixing a sense of nation and culture stabilizes and legitimizes formations of power. The juxtaposition of cultural expressions staged in a hypercultural space is detrimental to power and government, since, “en un espacio discontinuo o en un espacio que transforma constantemente su estructura, el poder solo se puede establecer con mucho trabajo. De este modo, la mezcla inquieta a aquel poder que construye una pureza de la cultura o de la raza para su propia estabilización o legitimización [in a discontinuous space or in a space that is constantly transforming its structure, power can only be established through a lot of work. In this way, the mix disquiets power that builds cultural or racial purity for its own stabilization or legitimation]” (94). Here Han identifies an inherent tension between the inter-National and a global hyperculture where space and power are constantly transformed. The essentializing moves constituent of *latinité* have proven useful in framing and packaging the cultural products studied in this dissertation, as well as their international circulation. But as this study shows, cultural dichotomies and their categorization through ideas of bounded nations are insufficient in explaining what is contained inside these packages and beyond their labels. We find that these performances are constituted in a network of connected and disconnected references, hypercultural in

the sense that they are not culturally rooted in a connection to land or blood. As they are made to circulate through different contexts, these products are re-signified through hypercultural dynamics.

Since the explanations presented in this chapter by artists and critics continue to rely on stable notions of nation and culture, obscuring the complex dynamics that enable these performances, one of the central impulses of this project is to stress the political and economic junctures that sustain those narratives. This is how I suggest we address the question posed by the 2007 *Jeu* Special Issue – why have these cultural exchanges operated primarily in one direction? As soon as we focus on the chains of production that shape this network, instead of reading these performances semiotically or essentially, it is easier to see how markets and political agendas are shaping these cultural networks in specific ways that privilege certain forms of performing nation and obscure many others.⁶² This one-way reality evidences that as an imaginative tool, *latinité*, and its association to a *fraternité* between cultural nations is being activated only at the level of ideas where the region is re-imagined. The material implications of the relationship show that it is not dictated by an equitable principle of exchange, since it is designed to sustain national projects over ideas of regional fraternity.

As we saw in chapter two of the dissertation, Quebec's cultural policies since the 1960s have been focused on supporting the development and exportation of Quebec theatre. This is both a result of Quebec's nationalist agenda, and a result of its demographics – since the Francophone province is relatively small, with a population of 8.2 million (four of which live in the greater Montreal area and half a million in Quebec City) its theatre publics are not vast. Thus, Quebecois dramatists depend on the revenue of plays in translation in order to make a living – and this requires exporting the plays to English Canada and to the rest of the world. Quebec's cultural initiatives aimed at exportation – such as translation grants

⁶² Here I'm more referring to collaborations across the region led by indigenous theater companies, specifically, Ondinnok. Created in 1984 by Yves Sioui Durand (Huron-Wendat), John Blondin and Catherine Joncas, "it is founded on the quest for a truly Aboriginal theatre rooted in the myths and history of First Nations here and elsewhere around the world" ("The Founders"). As its mission suggests, Ondinnok has established a network with indigenous creators across the hemisphere, some of which reside in what is now Mexico. In 1991 the company created *La conquista de México*, based on a nahua testimony of Hernan Cortes' arrival in Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1520. Rendered in Spanish by Bernardino de Sahagun and into French by Tzvetan Todorov, the text was adapted by Durand after a long research process in Mexico City and Yucatán, and performers from different parts of Mexico were invited to participate. Although Ondinnok continue to collaborate with indigenous groups of the Americas for the following decades, it is not until 2014 that the group partners with nahua choreographer Leticia Vera, in the creation of *A World that comes to an End – Lola*, a story set in Tierra del fuego, today Patagonia, Argentina. And in 2017, Leticia Vera and Carlos Rivera collaborated with Ondinnok once again in the creation of *El Buen Vestir*, a story of indigenous immigration North told through dance and song. In this co-production, both nahua and zapoteco artists from Mexico participated. These collaborations represent an alternate network, except in that they share some funding sources although primarily under different categories of eligibility, and at times appear simultaneously at Montreal festivals.

and residencies – have found a niche of Mexican translators and directors who have taken great advantage of these opportunities. To these Mexican artists, Quebec support has provided sustainable models for the production of contemporary theatre in Mexico City.

At the same time, these translations offer an economic opportunity to Quebec theatre, since it connects this cultural production to the Latin American and Iberian markets. Mexico City has proven to be a great node in this process, providing Quebec with an established network in Spanish-speaking countries, a strong publishing culture, as well as Mexico City's many theatres and publics. As has been suggested, central in understanding the direction of this cultural exchange is the issue of scale. Mexico City has a metro population of 8.9 million (greater population of 22 million), and a performing arts infrastructure that covers the city. There are approximately 157 theatres in Mexico City,⁶³ and only in the central area of the city there are four large, public performing arts centers.⁶⁴ Population and public investment in performing arts infrastructure are important factors in explaining the density of publics in Mexico City. As we saw in the previous chapters, after NAFTA came into effect and at the turn of the century, Mexico City invested significant efforts towards an internationalization of its cultural scene. These efforts were framed around a strategy that complemented Quebec's efforts nicely – that is, being a stop on the map for cultural production from around the world, the cosmopolitan hub that cultures traffic through. As part of a process of regional imagining, the Mexican capital was seen by these initiatives as the door that connected Latin America to the rest of North America, and the theatre collaborations between Mexico and Quebec were central actants in opening these doors. What made the relationship so successful was precisely the fact that the two agendas complemented, and not replicated, each other. We seen how although *latinité* suggests a *fraternité* on a basis of equality or equal conditions, once activated in the material realm the asymmetries of these material systems dictate the shape that these cultural circulations take.

This also helps explain why the collaboration model analyzed in this chapter through the example of *La divina ilusión* – the translation of a Quebecois dramatic text into Mexican Spanish and its consequent productions in Mexico City – is the most common. A co-production model like that of the previous chapters requires much more investment from cultural agencies – both in quantity and in type – that is, long-term funding that covers extensive travel, at least two productions in different cities, in addition to any additional touring costs. More importantly, co-productions require a particular kind of trust, since money is usually shared, as well as extensive translation labor in maintaining open communication lines that will sustain this trust. Festival presence, although much

⁶³ According to SIC (Sistema de Información Cultural) 131 of the 157 theaters in Mexico City are in the four richest municipalities or *delegaciones*, all of them located in the center of the city (65 in Cuauhtémoc, 29 in Coyoacán, 19 in Miguel Hidalgo and 18 in Benito Juárez). The remaining 26 theaters are spread out amongst the six *delegaciones* that surround the city. See “Teatros.” After the conquest, Spanish settlers established their city in this central area, and the indigenous communities once living there were relocated to the periphery of the city. Certainly, the majority of the theater infrastructure is still primarily serving a middle and upper class demographic.

⁶⁴ Centro Cultural del Bosque, Centro Nacional de las Artes, Centro Cultural Helénico and Centro Cultural Universitario.

more narrow in time-scale, also requires back and forth of bodies and objects, and involve immigration and import considerations. These are usually supported by diplomatic institutions since they are highly visible and involve already made products, but since festivals only run for a short time, and invited artists offer at most a handful of performances, audience reach is much more limited and considerably less diverse than for a co-production or a text in translation.

In a collaboration like the one between Bouchard and Schoemann discussed in this chapter, the extensive back and forth is primarily of text, even though Bouchard did visit Mexico City a couple of times in the process. It is the cheapest and least logistically complicated of the collaboration models, and given the fact that Mexican productions usually run for extended periods, with expected additional runs, it is very viable that playwright and director will make money from their investment. Theater is already very expensive to produce, and generally not the most profitable endeavor, so these cheaper models will logically be the preferred format when producing theater across a region. Both cultural agendas recognize that collaborations are important investments as they generate political capital that strengthens Mexico City and Quebec as regional actors, at the same time that they expand domestic markets. What this dissertation reveals is that regardless of the complexity of the cultural products themselves, in order for these gains to be achieved, performances need be framed through ideas of Nation and culture often based on oversimplified essentializations.

Reflections

Latinité as an imaginative tool and its momentum is used to make room for the “Latin” players of North America – invoking the geographical and historical weight of the “Latin America.” It is also used to produce North America as a region – to imagine it as the battleground for this Century-old cultural dichotomy, where it is more fitting than perhaps in any other region given the strength of the U.S., the large presence of latinxs in the U.S., the role of Mexico as the “door to the Americas,” and English-French Canadian tensions. Looking deeper, what both Mexico City and Quebec want is to be active players in the region, and they are using each other to achieve this – by relying on each other through this narrative of cultural affinity, they ascertain themselves as economic regional players and as political players domestically. Because when analyzed closely and through translation, it is clear that these “cultural affinities,” this supposed shared *latinité*, doesn’t hold as the determining factor that sustains the relationship. It remains unclear to me if this would exist without the economic affinities and shared modes of production, and without the interdependence of these international agendas. But what is clear is that the *discourse* is essential if these initiatives are going to be made to operate materially. These two places must be *imagined* as affectively compatible in order to get grant money, to be programmed in a theatre, to put concrete exchange programs into place, or to promote plays, productions and festivals. And not only that, but they must be *imagined* as more affectively compatible than other (Anglo-Saxon) players of the region. This discourse is what implants the *idea* of the Latin North America and enacts it into being.

This project addresses how cultures are transported, adapted and pushed into arrangement through theater products. By framing the questions around a Mexico City-Quebec relationship, my initial findings and the responses of many of the people I

interviewed, rely on the dichotomies of *latinité* to explain these performances. Through this imaginative tool, North America as a region is made to exist in a binary, where Quebec and Mexico find each other in a series of affective and cultural affinities (unavailable to their Anglo-Saxon protestant neighbors) that result in a productive theater network. Without denying that many of these points in common exists, this dissertation also shows that these collaborations are primarily made possible through economic incentives where cultural production is used as political capital and as a way to expand domestic markets. Even when – and precisely because – shared production strategies exist and are necessary, a reading of these collaborations should not predispose affective or deep understandings across culture.

Quebec audiences don't seem particularly in-tune to theatre brought from Mexico because it *is* from Mexico. It could be argued that Mexican audiences have received well the works of Quebec authors, such as Mouawad and Bouchard, but so have many other countries. There is high demand for new theatre in Mexico, and these plays, with the investment that Quebec has made in play development and export structures, have succeeded. Mexico and Quebec are good business partners, and important regional allies not only because of the cultural affinities that may exist, but because they deal in the same currency: culture. So although initially the question of why Mexico City and Quebec have collaborated so much through theatre appears to be a problem primarily resolved through cultural aspects as they may be expressed in the semantics of theatre aesthetics, it can best be explained by how the two places have strategically positioned themselves as regional players.

And yet, an intercultural reading of the networks remains insufficient when studying these productions in their full density as cultural expressions. The cases studied here have shown that these performances are in a constant process of translation that is never fully achieved, even when two languages, such as Quebecois French and Mexican Spanish may be structurally similar in many aspects. Theater in translation reveals that this is never a closed transaction – which is why the inter- again falls short – since translation is less concerned with solving problems or producing closed narratives, than it is about problems being constantly reassembled as they circulate in different contexts. This process is never fixed and is constantly producing its own remainder, that is, its inevitable exclusions.

In his critique of the intercultural, Han argues that it presupposes the idea of a cultural essence, where the inter- positions two essentialized cultures in a dialogical relationship. Since both the intercultural and the multicultural are developed theoretically within the context of colonialism, they also presuppose violent forms of appropriation: “Se considera que la apropiación reduce lo otro a lo propio. Incluso comprender se vuelve sospechoso. Lo otro es introducido por la fuerza en las categorías de pensamiento propias [It is considered that appropriation reduces the other into the self. Even understanding becomes suspicious. The other is introduced by force into one's own categories of thought].” Han's description of appropriation as introducing the other into one's own categories of thought could be applicable to translation, in as much as translation requires that cultural expression be made to fit new categories of thought in order to be rendered in another language/contexts. And yet Han insists that appropriation as a concept must be separated from the idea of colonial exploitation since it is not, in and of itself, violent. I argue that translation in the cases studied here is doing this type of hypercultural work, where appropriation is not necessarily grounded on a colonial or violent history, but is instead the

result of a desire for something new, a curiosity that Han explains is not associated to fear or repulsion, but to an impulse to transform oneself through a process of constant and intense appropriation.

The rhizomatic space of the hypercultural makes room for the mistranslations produced through these performances, and we see how theater texts exist in a rich hyperspace, activating different narratives as they travel through different contexts. As in the material implications of many of the production chains discussed in this study, the work of imagining a region through this accumulation of culture performs region as the shifting juxtaposition of cultural expressions that need not be negotiated or conciliated, but instead that exist dialogically and juxtaposed in this hypercultural density, shifting meaning as they move through context. Under this logic, deep understanding of your collaborator – regardless of nationality, race or ethnicity – is neither here nor there. Nor is the question of whether a play is more Mexican than Quebecois or Canadian. These questions remain, as in translation, a problem to be (un)solved.

CODA

Just as with the inner workings of translation, this project remains an ongoing and open process that refuses fixed answers or conclusions. One need only look at the turns that NAFTA has taken in the last three years – during which this dissertation was written – to find oneself with new sets of questions.

On August 16th 2017 the renegotiation of NAFTA began. Given the narrative of his campaign, a disparaging of NAFTA was an important part of President Trump's economic nationalism, who famously called the agreement "one of the worst trade deals ever made." As expressed by Luz María de la Mora, Trump's Make America Great Again slogan "has translated into an isolationist and populist trade agenda" (1), most clearly legible in the renegotiation process of the last few years. Since the agreement had made the three countries priority trade partners for one another, the renegotiation under the current U.S. agenda has meant that international trade models have had to be reevaluated at the level of nation-state both in Mexico and in Canada. For Mexico in particular – for whom until 2016 NAFTA represented 84% of its export destination – this has meant not only looking to strengthen the integrating model of North America through these negotiations, but also to broaden trade agreements with partners outside the region, that is, Latin America, Europe and Asia. For theater collaborations moving forward, this means that artists and other cultural actors will have to work within the asymmetric domestic structures that this dissertation has evidenced, but without the political incentives that previously produced successful infrastructures of cultural exchange within the region. It means finding partners elsewhere, certainly, but also redrafting the shape of the current partnerships that are no longer sustained by official cultural policy, and working towards producing alternative networks.

The renegotiation of NAFTA ended on Nov. 30 2018, when Prime Minister Trudeau, President Trump and President Peña Nieto signed what is informally referred to as the New NAFTA, but significantly re-named the The United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA). Two key words of the original name, "free trade" and "North American" had been left out from the new agreement. What is most significant to this project regarding the new agreement – signed but yet to be ratified – is precisely this re-naming. If it was argued in the first chapter that, beyond its international trade objectives, NAFTA had been successful in creating an *idea* of North America as a region, the USMCA is an explicit undoing of this imaginative work, as it hopes to re-configure these nation-states as distinctly separate, effacing from the name its geographic proximity and hence, its regional connotations. The decision to keep the name of the original agreement in the title of this dissertation despite these developments, is intended to frame the object of study in space and time, while it sets up the argument that the trade agreement was essential in generating North America as an idea that included Mexico and Quebec as much as it did the United States and English-Canada. Again, as has been shown to be the case in Quebec's history, the renaming of NAFTA shows language to be a powerful tool towards building walls in the name of protective, nationalist agendas.

Even with the renegotiation of the treaty, I suspect that the power (and tensions) of the idea of North America will transcend the now defunct treaty of the 1990s. And yet, Trump's efforts towards the dissolution of North America as an imagined region generate a new set of questions: How will these new conditions of contact shift these imaginings? How

do these new narratives dialogue with the dichotomies of *latinité* set forth in the project? Will those who have benefited from the imaginative tools set forth by NAFTA – many of them discussed in this dissertation – continue to activate regional links in order to expand their cultural markets and hence, their domestic and international political capital? And to what extents do these shifts in official policies of regional imaginings enacted through trade agreements affect hypercultural dynamics? When it seems a dire time for the growth of arts infrastructure both domestically and internationally, it is fundamental to understand the inner workings of the mis/translations that produce a region, and of the global dynamics that generate a superabundance of culture that circulates despite official leadership and closing borders. The imaginative labor of producing shared spaces continues and will continue via the hypercultural dynamics that connect us. I argue that it is in understanding these dynamics and investing in our practice as deep translators, that we may begin to counter the corrosion of our international relations.

By looking not at trade agreements, but at theater collaborations and exchanges, the project reveals how a region is imagined and enacted through the constant negotiation of pieces that don't quite fit together. It shows the importance of zoning in on what is missed – the mis/understanding and mis/translations that constitute the mis/encounters across the region. In the reading of these theater mis/encounters between Mexico City and Quebec in the last three decades, it becomes clear that the premise of the intercultural as network – where this dissertation began – is productive in as much as it invites us to think relationally. And yet its genealogy of hybridity, binary and cultural essentialization is ghosted in the insufficient dichotomies pre-supposed by powerful imaginative tools such *latinité*, making the work of reassembling these networks harder to do through the lens of the intercultural. Hence, a theoretical shift towards the hypercultural allowed us to account for the mobility of the radigrant in a global era of culture, constituted by processes of translation.

By contrasting the presuppositions of *latinité* with the work of staging and circulating these cultural products – from securing funds, to translation and publicity – the project reveals the distances between regional cultural discourses and regional cultural practices. Most significantly, the project puts forth the argument that these distances are being compensated for by the narratives of affective closeness represented by *latinité*. Now, these narratives have also been of important value to the artists since it is through their activation that, in many cases, funding and visibility are secured. And yet, the power of *latinité* is only available to some, as this imaginative tool continues, since its inception in the 19th century, to benefit certain creole elites of the Americas.

The dissertation has explored the ways in which translation as an analytical tool allows us to read these performances in transit, while it grounds in the specificity of context, even when much is missed in the process. In the third chapter I invoked George Steiner's invitation to stop seeing falsity as a negative, since it is precisely our ability to "un-say the world" that allows us to "imagine and speak it otherwise" (228). On these same lines, I invite us to think of translation (and its falsities) less as failures, or as something not achieved, and instead to yield to translation's impetus to keep (a text) moving. Translation, as was shown in the two case studies, paves open roads that invite us to talk it over, to continue translating and re-signifying, what ideologies like *latinité* tend to foreclose by defining and fixing in advance the terms of belonging. While again, I recognize that the work of foreclosing, defining and fixing in advance has been central to artists securing

funds or partaking in certain markets, these hypercultural performances show that regional belonging is far from a closed deal.

One of the most controversial proposals made by President Trump in the renegotiation of the trade agreement – the “sunset clause” – requires NAFTA be reviewed and ratified every five years. This proposal has caused such controversy since it represents “putting an end to the certainty, one of the essential qualities of the agreement” (de la Mora 2). It was on the illusion of certainty, in an eagerness to ground North America as a digestible idea, that the NAFTA of the 1990s was drafted and staged through essentializing cultural narratives. If Trump’s controversial clause does one thing, is promise the inevitable uncertainty and indefinability of region, setting us up for the constant work of renegotiation and re-processing for which nothing can train us like translation. Performing, and thus narrating the region through translation, provides a powerful strategy towards experiencing its constant becomings in the face of uncertain futures.

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