

LANGUAGE, TRANSLATION, AND THE IRISH THEATRE DIASPORA IN QUEBEC

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Abstract

This article argues for the inclusion of Québécois translations of Irish plays as part of the Irish theatrical diaspora. The presence of an Irish diaspora in North America was mainly the result of massive waves of immigration, in large part due to the Great Famine, peaking during the mid-nineteenth century before gradually abating. This diaspora was integrated into Quebec society, undoubtedly facilitated by similar political, religious, and even linguistic elements. Interest in Irish culture, especially in its theatrical output, remains high, with many theatre companies, for example Théâtre La Licorne in Montreal, in the province commissioning seasons based on Celtic Tiger-era dramas, translated by Québécois playwrights. In tracing the reason for this interest, despite diminished recent immigration, this article provides the basis for continued research into the performative force of proactive translations across varying diasporic traditions.

Keywords: Irish Theatre; Translation; Diaspora; French; Quebec

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The presence of the Irish diaspora in the eastern Canadian province of Quebec reveals a salient opportunity to examine the role played by language in staging and communicating such a diaspora through theatrical performance. In other words, the theatre's performative aspects problematise the staging of the Irish diaspora when it is filtered through translation. More than any other cultural facet of the Irish diaspora, the theatre is the lens through which that diaspora reconstructs, rather than simply re-presents, the identities that members of the Irish diaspora aspire to valorise, critique, or expose. Ireland's immigration history to Canada through the province of Quebec provides the basis for Quebec's perception of Ireland as more than a spiritual compatriot, sometimes seeing in it, and seeking from it, aspirational qualities pertaining to nation and culture. Québécois¹ authors such as Jacques Ferron saw in Ireland a kindred spirit through a shared heritage of cultural, religious, and linguistic persecution (Ó Gormaille, *Le Salut* 2014, 11). This perception of Ireland is complicated by language, the full assimilation of which initial waves of Irish immigrants have resisted, and the Québécois regard with historical and contemporary importance.

In the concluding chapter of his unique look at the history of theatre in Ireland, Christopher Morash writes:

Ever since Lord Mountjoy and Neale Moore watched *Gorboduc* in Dublin Castle in the months before the Battle of Kinsale in 1601, Irish audiences have brought into the theatre a concern with what it means to be Irish (or to be in Ireland, which is not necessarily the same thing). And yet, the theatre's relationship to an Irish identity has never been simple for a number of reasons. (2002, 274)

By pointing out the fact that Irish audiences have habitually been concerned with their identity and the physical space of Ireland, and the fact that these twin concerns are not always mutually exclusive, Morash gestures towards the role played by theatre in the diaspora, as being not in Ireland, yet concerning Irish identity. Given the significance of theatre as a cultural form of expression in Ireland, one for which the Irish have garnered a certain level of acclaim, its consistent presence in Irish diaspora communities reveals the need for further analysis as to how theatre plays a role in shaping diasporic identity. As part of the larger diasporic movement, the Irish theatre diaspora in Quebec has the potential to demonstrate the values, preoccupations, and artistry of Irish immigrants. This theatrical presence problematises the use of language through translation, an idea that will be central to this essay.

Yet, as Ó Gormaille (2000) goes on to observe, the problems caused by resistance to linguistic assimilation contrast with the overall positive view of Irishness in Québécois literature. While other scholars such as Ramon Hathorn (1977) dispute Ó Gormaille's claim that representations of the Irish in Québécois novels demonstrate solidarity and optimism towards the Irish, such a claim does raise questions regarding the extent to which language represents identity.² For

instance, the fact that these translated forms of theatre also manifest different versions of the French language as it is spoken in Quebec acts as a reminder that this diasporic presence is itself a temporally and territorially mediated construction. These different forms of French are filtered through to the stage in function of the perspectives of their translators and the theatres that commission the adaptations of particular Irish dramatists. This is evident through linguistic choices made by the translators, ostensibly to mirror the linguistic virtuosity for which the source plays are often lauded.

Since Ireland represents a “familiar” alterity in the context of Québécois literature—its presence being known through intersecting historical events, but speaking a different language—translational perspectives or strategies, such as othering as described by Lawrence Venuti (1995) or distancing and furthering as described by Sherry Simon (2012), serve to account for mainly how the dramatic text is translated. The alterity of Irishness as a facet of the written word provides translators with an important task on one level, demanding illocutionary strategies that highlight the virtuosity of Hiberno-English and express the linguistic nuances in Québécois-French. Nevertheless, as late twentieth-century Irish theatre is often regarded as attempting to subvert the perception that it is based solely on the written word, the place reserved for linguistically rich playscripts is increasingly being called into question especially as they pertain to the perception of Irish theatre in the diaspora.

In spite of a rich theatrical history that included plays created to stage the Irish nation, Irish theatre from the Celtic Tiger period onward is of particular interest in Quebec—a cursory search through the archives of past seasons at major Québécois theatre companies in Montreal and Quebec City reveals very few productions of translated Irish plays from before the 1990s (see Tard, 1971).³ Indeed, rather than translating dramatic texts from the founding of the Abbey theatre, for example, Québécois playwrights and dramatists are attracted to plays from the late twentieth century. Given the fact that this period is far removed from the initial waves of immigration that brought the Irish to Quebec in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is a need to understand how and why a theatrical diasporic presence is able to reach back to those historical ties, appeal to similar desires, and point towards transformation, without necessarily appealing to fixed representations of Irishness.

Understanding the importance of the Irish theatre diaspora in Quebec thus necessitates a brief overview of the two nations⁴ linguistic and historical affinities, especially as presented in the theatre. The presence of the Irish theatrical diaspora in twenty-first century Quebec reveals and is constructed mainly through translation, which leads to new considerations of the diasporic experience in non-Anglophone environments. The concept of performativity favours theatre as significant due to its communitarian aspects and its role in staging identities. In particular, it accounts for how translation constructs and transforms those identities. Through a comparative approach that emphasises the historical presence of the Irish diaspora in Quebec, this essay seeks to lay the

groundwork for the importance and inclusion of translated Irish theatre as part of its theatrical diaspora.

Historical Relationships and Converging Interests

As Pádraig Ó Gormáil (*Le Salut*) points out, the presence of the Irish in Quebec was often paradoxical, sharing the majority's religion, but the minority's language (12). Having been colonised by France in the early seventeenth century as "New France," the province of Quebec is predominantly Roman Catholic, thus allowing the Irish who would eventually find a home there to be its *coreligionnaires*. French remains the language of the majority, despite the shift in power to British rule following France's defeat at the battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759, thus introducing a minority English-speaking community prior to the larger waves of Irish immigration in the nineteenth century.

According to Simon Jolivet, the Irish diaspora became a significant presence in Quebec in 1820 (2008: 82), but even prior to that, Irish immigration to Canada found a foothold in places like Newfoundland, on the eastern coast of the country, before working its way westward (Miller 1985, 140). While it is far beyond the scope of this essay to delve into all of the details surrounding the lengthy history of an Irish presence in Quebec, (see Guérin, 1946)⁵ some historical and political contextualisation of Irish and Québécois experiences of immigration and colonisation are useful for fleshing out the reasons for a sustained interest in Irish theatre on the part of Québécois translators. In his landmark study, Robert J. Grace (1993) cites the earliest presence of the Irish in New France as being long after the Norman conquest of Ireland in the twelfth century, when Irish soldiers came to North America with the French after having settled in France. Still others came to New France from the New England region as a result of having already immigrated to the colonies with the English settlers (21).

The presence of the Irish diaspora also brings to light questions regarding language, specifically, how the Irish assimilated into the colonial French settlers' society by either adopting French or maintaining their own language. With regards to the latter, Raymond Hickey writes that Irish English⁶ in North America in the nineteenth century contributed to the overall development of English internationally (*Irish English* 2007, 1). Linda Cardinal, Isabelle Matte, and Simon Jolivet point:

La question linguistique joue depuis toujours un rôle fondamental dans l'accueil et l'intégration des immigrants au Québec. Ainsi, lorsque ceux-ci sont anglophones, comme c'était probablement le cas pour une majorité d'immigrants irlandais, ils se trouvent devant deux options: s'intégrer éventuellement à la majorité francophone ou fonder des communautés anglophones. (8)⁷

In either assimilating into the Francophone majority or creating minority Anglophone communities, the Irish diaspora transgresses preoccupations on the

part of the Québécois of linguistic boundaries, which Sherry Simon describes as being either in confrontation or in conversation with English as a linguistic pollutant (*Le Trafic* 29). It is logical, then, that in assimilating only the exterior signs of Irishness, such as surnames, would remain visible. Indeed, Ó Gormaille argues:

La réalité historique des Irlandais au Québec est indéniable bien que leur assimilation par la société québécoise ait tendance à faire disparaître les signes de la différence culturelle, surtout une fois accomplie l'assimilation linguistique. Ainsi un Irlandais 'enquébécoisé' tend-il à disparaître, ne laissant de trace que le patronyme. (*Le Salut* 11).⁸

The Irish had already experienced the confrontation aspects of their relationship with English, on the other hand, prior to the mass waves of immigration in the nineteenth century. Hickey claims that “the ultimate consequence [of the Famine] was of course the shift from Irish to English which by the second half of the nineteenth century had taken place for the majority of the Irish population” (*Irish English* 21).

If Irish culture is globalised through the diaspora, then reterritorialising theatre through translation problematises notions of how space and place are staged (see Cauvet, 2011).⁹ In order to effectively familiarise the abstract space of Ireland so as to render it a specific place in the target culture, this would necessarily implicate an authoritative process of reterritorialisation. The notion of reterritorialisation represents a process by which a culture is effectively resettled in space and place. Indeed, Matthew Ryan claims that reterritorialisation in literature reworks or reconstructs familiar cultural concepts (family, religion, home, for example) “to accommodate the assertion of late twentieth-century fluidity of self-formation” (2008, 23). This notion is particularly relevant to this study due to the fact that the Irish influence in Quebec is the result of a diaspora movement. Indeed, Andrew Smith argues against Ó Tuathail’s (2007) position on reterritorialisation when he writes that “because diaspora formations cross national borders, they reveal precisely the fact that cultural practices are *not tied to place*. They show culture, in other words, as *detrterritorialized*” (2004, 256). As an intercultural practice that expresses the hybridity of identity, detrterritorialisation occurs when a cultural element is removed from the physical space associated with it. Seen through the lens of performativity, which posits identity as a succession of internalised, iterated acts, then the Irish theatrical diaspora, too, can be detrterritorialised and reconstructed, thus reterritorialised, in the context of the target culture.

Even though it is outside of the purview of this essay to argue for or against the inclusion of Quebec or Ireland in the realm of postcolonial studies, it would be remiss to ignore the perceived condition of postcoloniality attributed to either community with regards to their relationships with the political bodies around them (see Cleary, 2002; Coursil, 2005; Graham, 2001; Merriman, 2009).¹⁰ A notion of national consciousness, per Joe Cleary, serves as a basis for considering Ireland’s postcolonial status. With regards to the controversial issue of Ireland’s colonial relationship to Great Britain, Cleary notes:

It is imperative to understand that the issue about whether Ireland can be considered a colony can be posed on two analytically discrete levels that require different methods of investigation: one that has to do essentially with matters of consciousness, systems of representation and discursive regimes; the other with 'objective' structural and socio-cultural correspondences – though of course ultimately the relationship between these two 'levels' also needs to be theorized. (*Outrageous Fortune* 2007, 25)

Alluding to this condition, Ó Gormaille points out that “Le roman associe l’Irlande, plus précisément une version québécoise de l’Irlande, à ce que le Québec n’est pas encore devenu” (*Le Salut* 9).¹¹ This observation is significant because it posits that the Irish diasporic presence in Quebec, especially for artists and theatrical practitioners, is far from innocent in terms of how it was handled. Indeed, this attitude of postcoloniality contributes to the affinities between Quebec and Ireland. Katie Trumpener (1997) attributes this to “transcolonial consciousness”, which stems from “transperipheral circuits of influence to which empire gives rise, as disparate cultures find themselves connected not only by parallel modes of subordination within the empire but also by a constant flow of people. . . back and forth between imperial holdings” (xiii). Kelleher and Kenneally also argue that this type of consciousness tends to be one-sided, with more emphasis placed on Ireland’s influence in Quebec, and thus points to an impression of Quebec created and maintained by its own gaze (2016, 11).

In a “translational culture”¹² such as that of Quebec, the task of discerning and integrating the presence of a particular diasporic culture takes on an added level of meaning due to attitudes towards safeguarding the French language against too much interference from English and other languages within and around the province. According to Sherry Simon, a translational culture, “arise[s] out of the displacements of immigration and diasporic culture, or out of the double consciousness imposed by forced dialogues between the global and the local, the margins and the metropolitan centres” (*Cities* 17). The Québécois experience of *postcoloniality*, understood here as the condition following decolonisation and featuring neo-colonial interactions, (see Bhabha, Homi; 1997; pp. 107-109) has resulted in efforts to protect and maintain the French language, which is the co-official language of Canada, and the only official language in the province of Quebec. Efforts are therefore made to counter the encroachment of English through francisation programmes, financed through the provincial government, to help newly arrived immigrants to acculturate.¹³ What renders Quebec’s francisation programmes unique in Canada is the attention specifically paid to their Québécois environments.

André Lefevere argues that translation is the most recognisable and accessible form of rewriting, which educes its significance in the national and international contexts of audience reception (1992, 9). “Rewriting” is important for understanding the impact of translation in this case, because it appeals to creativity and potential, mitigating the distance between source and target cultures. Additionally, as this is a form of rewriting that seeks to variously “domesticate” and alterise a source text, the translation of Irish plays in Quebec serves in principle as a kind of intercultural performance, based on this history

of immigration as well as shared cultural and linguistic parallels. The combined impact of contemporary Irish playtexts that rely increasingly less on language tied to territorialisation, and the geo-spatial temporalisation still associated with those texts, serves to problematise the appropriation of globalised Irish theatre. In fact, as Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally point out, “Over the past six decades national consciousness in Quebec has been increasingly invested in issues of language, place and ethnic affiliation” (2016, 12).

The Irish Presence in the Québécois Literary Imagination

Beyond historical and social studies of Ireland and Quebec, other studies analyse Ireland’s presence in Québécois literature. These studies reflect a more nuanced view of the role of the Irish in Québécois literary culture via appeals to similarities in terms of aesthetics, themes, and language use. However, these studies all address the Irish as represented in Québécois literature. Indeed, the Irish diaspora has exerted influence in Québécois fiction since the *écrits de la Nouvelle France*.¹⁴ From novels such as *Maria Chapdelaine* (1914, but appeared in Quebec in 1916) to *Le Salut de l’Irlande* (1970), Irish characters appear regularly in the Québécois literary field (Biron et al. 2007, 639), pointing to the “esprit irlandais qui existe dans l’identité québécoise” (White 2014, 239).¹⁵

This spirit takes the form of linguistic interference, anglicisms, that influence Québécois-French. As Jerry White notes in his analysis of the novel *Le Salut de l’Irlande*,¹⁶ the presence of English and Anglicisms in Québécois texts does not truly demonstrate a universally negative attitude towards English. Instead, there is the recognition of the fact that Ireland’s own relationship with this language is understandably complex, thereby serving to problematise identity construction:

L’anglais est omniprésent dans l’univers des Haffigan, mais il ne symbolise pas une identité typiquement ‘anglaise’. Il est le symbole d’une identité fracturée, complexe, moderne. Il peut aussi être associé au passage d’une identité canadienne-française vers une identité québécoise. (242)¹⁷

English is less threatening in this case because it is mitigated through the Irish diaspora. Hiberno-English is thus indicative of this shift from one identity to something betwixt and between, due to the fact that it often manifests Irish language syntax in English. Amador-Moreno argues that “There is a type of fictional representation of IrE [Irish English] in contemporary contexts which assumes shared context and knowledge of the variety that both speaker and hearer are able to understand (intra-cultural),” which speaks to the degree to which the Irish diaspora in Quebec facilitates its theatrical presence (1975, 106). While the extent to which Irish identity in Quebec consists of an intercultural or intra-cultural context is debatable, the presence of anglicisms in Québécois literary works featuring the Irish diaspora, whether they are of Hiberno-English origin or not, potentially contributes to a latent sense of solidarity.

From Literary Imagination to Stage Construction

Given the temporal distance between the beginning of this translation relationship, the immigration side of which abated gradually at the start of the twentieth century,¹⁸ and contemporary interest in Celtic Tiger-era Irish theatre, the Irish theatrical diaspora forms an integral part of the Québécois theatrical milieu. Despite this lasting presence, Québécois interest in Irish theatre mainly focuses on late twentieth- and early twentieth-century plays. For example, the works of Martin McDonagh, Mark O’Rowe, Hilary Fannin and Deirdre Kinahan feature regularly on Quebec stages, whereas works by playwrights associated with the literary revival and the advent of the Abbey theatre, such as J.M. Synge, W.B. Yeats, and Sean O’Casey, have found limited distribution due to the relative lack of success of their theatrical runs. In spite of this disparity, the continued presence of Celtic Tiger-era plays highlights the evolving role played by linguistic alterity through the Irish diaspora on Québécois stages.

In writing about perceptions of Irish immigrants, Simon Jolivet (*Le vert* 2011) notes that, following the language conflicts of the Catholic episcopate and the Ontario schools at the beginning of the twentieth century, French-Canadians categorised Irish immigrants in one of two groups:

Le faux Irlandais, celui qui s’anglicise et qui se plie devant le pouvoir commercial anglo-canadien, et le vrai Irlandais, qui comprend ce qu’il se produit en Irlande, qui connaît l’histoire de sa mère patrie et qui lutte aux côtés des Canadiens français pour la conservation du français (tout comme il lutte pour la survie de la langue irlandaise en Irlande). (126)¹⁹

While this returns us to an earlier time period, it also hints at how the assimilation of the Irish diaspora performs; in grouping Irish immigrants together based primarily on their desire to engage politically alongside their new compatriots, the Québécois of this period seem to favour assimilation; however, a second glance at this quotation suggests otherwise: the *vrai Irlandais* never forgets that they are from Ireland, and therefore this political engagement is mainly a sign of solidarity, of having fought against the colonial power for similar objectives.

The performativity of Québécois-French and of its controversial sociolect, *joual*, accounts for why an Irish theatrical diasporic presence endures in Quebec so many years after the nineteenth-century’s, considerable immigration waves. The orality of Québécois-French functions in relation to standard French, which parallels Hiberno-English and thus inspires similar poetics. In turn, this poetics facilitates translative processes specifically in the theatrical domain. Dominique Lafon (2003) confirms this when he asserts that “loin de n’avoir été qu’un moment de l’esthétique théâtrale, le joual a permis l’émergence d’un langage dramatique spécifique libéré des normes linguistiques, autrement dit d’une poétique originale” (183).²⁰ The original poetics and dramatic language that is Québécois-French allow the translator-playwrights the creative space to account for the Irishness of the source texts whilst also adapting that Irishness for their Québécois audiences.

Likewise, the reconstruction of Irishness via these translations that, from roughly the 1990s onward, adapt the language to Quebec, but maintain an Irish setting and character names, allow us to consider the visibility of an Irish theatrical diaspora. Québécois translations of Irish plays do not adhere to one pole or the other of translation ideology (assimilation/acculturation or foreignisation/alterisation) (see Opperman, 2018; Tymoczko, 2003),²¹ but often blur the lines between these areas, acting instead on a continuum. Translator-directors like Marc-André Thibault (2016) point to how rural Quebec resembles the Irish country, there is “a universal color” that roots the Irish text in Quebec’s imagination--beyond cultural commonalities.²² Perceiving characteristics such as the dichotomy between urban and rural environments supports the claim that the Irish theatrical diaspora inhabits a hybrid space in the place of Quebec. Lawrence Venuti (1995) notes that the strategies often used to downplay or diminish the translator’s role in this process end up being used to “domesticate” the source text. This, in turn, provides “him or her with the narcissistic experience of recognizing his or her own culture in a cultural other, enacting an imperialism that extends the dominion of transparency with other ideological discourses over a different culture” (5).

While there are many examples with which to illustrate links demonstrating how Québécois translators approach Irish playtexts, in order to give a brief overview, I will focus on a few excerpts from Olivier Choinière’s 2001 translation of Mark O’Rowe’s play *Howie the Rookie* (1999). The dual-monologue play chronicles the fateful encounter between two young Dubliners, The Howie Lee and The Rookie Lee, in the tough Dublin suburb of Tallaght.²³ The urban setting of the play obscures notions of authenticity, further challenging the translator to employ effective strategies. Choinière has already translated two of O’Rowe’s plays, and has also received critical acclaim for his original work as well as his translations.²⁴ In a programme note from the 2016 production of *Terminus* by Théâtre de la Manufacture at La Licorne, director Michel Monty writes that Choinière admonished him to “*oublie pas que l’auteur est irlandais*”;²⁵ but then no subsequent mention is made regarding notions of Irishness. Monty does, rather, draw attention to the phantasmagorical, violent, Judeo-Christian imagery in the source text as potentially resonating with La Licorne’s audiences. To this end, the excerpts that follow feature those resonances, but also challenges for the translator, as they evoke stylistic and aesthetic concerns that go beyond that of the national.

A significant facet of O’Rowe’s text is the abundance of taboo and vulgar slang. As taboo words and explicit language tend to mostly relate to genitalia, the associated slang tends to reflect a certain amount of linguistic diversity as well, which can challenge translators to vary their strategies in order to achieve an equivalent effect in the target language. An example is the slang that O’Rowe uses to illustrate scenes in which either Howie or Rookie engage in sexual activities. In the excerpt below, Howie returns to his room to masturbate after having encountered Ollie burning his scabies-ridden mattress:

Source Text: Up to me bedroom, slide the bolt of privacy an' peace. Peace and quiet, nice. Dirty rags, polish me tool, nice one. Lie back, catnap an' repose.	Translation : Monte dans ma chambre, la porte, lock sur ma vie privée. La paix, tranquille, parfait. Sors de mes guenilles, m'astique le bat, beau morceau. Coupe le contact, me mets au neutre, pique un somme.
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(O'Rowe 9/Choinière 3)

In one sense, the slang that O'Rowe uses is appropriate to the storytelling context of the monologue, mitigating the distance with audience via euphemisms. On the other hand, it requires more effort to perform as the monologue itself acts as the only didaskalia for the production. The excerpt above also features the repeated use of “me” instead of the possessive article “my,” which Amador-Moreno observes as a way to mark Irishness without dwelling on a particular stereotype (105).

Choinière's translation of this excerpt achieves the same type of euphemistic slang that serves to mitigate the distance with the audience via the same poetics—the translator conceives of O'Rowe's cinema-esque style in a way that aligns with that of Quebec, including anglicisms (“the bolt of privacy”/“*lock sur ma vie privée*”). Choinière translates “tool” with “*bat*,” which Lionel Meney asserts is slang for penis and parallels standard French slang for the same word (2003, 184). The slang term for masturbate, “*s'astiquer*,” does not originate from Québécois-French either, specifically not from joul, but rather from Standard French argot. According to *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (Bimbenet 2017), whilst informal use of this pronominal verb denotes excessive care with regards to one's appearance, its vulgar usage has been in existence for nearly the same period of time, thus allowing for familiarity with this word. The fact that Choinière uses a pronominal verb provides another interesting parallel with that of O'Rowe's latent Hiberno-English, by automatically integrating the pronoun “*m*,” the contracted form of “me.”

Language and identity interact in a way that encourages Choinière to make certain choices on the ideological level, too. In Rookie's monologue, he describes an encounter between the gangster Ladyboy and a Frenchman, Pierre, in order to communicate the former's cruel nature.

Source Text: Was a Frenchman, Pierre, Ladyboy taught him once sentence, Kick me in the nuts, told him it meant Where's the toilet?, an' people bein what they are...	Translation : Y avait un Italien, son nom c'tait Fosco, à qui Ladyboy avait appris une phrase du genre Botte-moi l'cul, mais Fosco pensait qu'ça voulait dire Où sont les toilettes?, et le monde étant c'qu'i est...
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(O'Rowe 37/Choinière 33)

The change from Frenchman to Italian is more than a simple adjustment for cultural purposes, acknowledging that in spite of historical relationships with

France in which colonial ties were severed in the eighteenth century, there is not enough to sufficiently alterise the French in the context of Quebec. Choinière’s choice to use an Italian maintains the linguistic othering of the source text, as well as makes reference to the history of immigration to Quebec, mostly notably that from Italy. In spite of Quebec’s historical efforts to distinguish itself culturally from its former colonial link, France, the French presence in twentieth- and twenty-first century Quebec is a non-issue. The choice to adapt “Pierre” as “Fosco” instead recalls mid-twentieth century racism, specifically urban racism, towards Italian immigrants (Hurley, *National Performance* 67).

The final element that marks O’Rowe’s text as especially important in terms of translation is the burgeoning presence of the supernatural.²⁶ This element is significant in terms of this project due to the fact that it connects with the older Irish cultural form of storytelling and serves to undergird the connection between Howie and Rookie in a reverse manner. It also would provide an opportunity for Choinière to employ illocutionary strategies and connect with nascent interest in the supernatural in Québécois literature. At the beginning of Part Two, Rookie tells the audience about the “Mayan god of death”:

Source Text:	Translation :
When I was young, the oul’fella told me ‘bout the ancient Mayan Indians. Mayans believed God of death shows himself to a man many times before takin’ him, like, before he dies.	Quand j’tais petit, Le vieux me parlait des anciennes civilisations mayas. Chez les Mayas, le Dieu de la mort se manifeste plusieurs fois à un homme avant de venir le prendre, genre avant qu’i meure.
One man might keep seein’ a black panther if he lives in the jungle, the same black panther.	Ça peut être, mettons, un homme qui vit dans forêt pis qui arrête pas de voir une panthère noire, toujours le même.
Desert it might be a vulture or a particular camel or somethin’.	Où si i habite dans l’désert, ça peut être un vautour ou un chameau bizarre, queèque chose de particulier.
Vision here might be a...say a crow or a pitbull terrier.	Pis si tu vis en ville, ça peut être...disons un corbeau ou un pitbull terrier.

(O’Rowe 35-36/Choinière 31-32)

The incongruous nature of Rookie’s reference sets itself up against the backdrop of a broken family. However, the introduction of a supernatural element here, death omens, presents a secondary level of incongruity between Irish references and those that are globalised. Rookie translates the exoticism of the foreign to the familiar of Ireland—instead of a panther, he notes that the omen might appear under the guise of a crow or a pitbull terrier. In presenting a cadre of death omen images, O’Rowe allows Rookie to relate a story that moves from the unfamiliar to the familiar, thus becoming more localised. When presented in concert with the omnipresent ellipses, there is a sense that Rookie is processing the information, which demonstrates the need for a performative lens—we can understand this to mean that Rookie’s thoughts as expressed here to the audience

construct an identity via the storytelling mode. Even still, this territorialisation is mitigated by the fact that the reference to Ireland is, finally, general in nature. In spite of the specificity of O’Rowe’s Dublin slang, the animals that Rookie presents as harbingers of death are not specific to an urban milieu.

Additionally, in terms of translation strategies, Choinière’s illocutionary strategies here appeal to literality—“crow” becomes *corbeau* and pitbull terrier becomes *pitbull terrier*—and thus conserve the effect that is linked to these images in the source culture. There is no sense of Irishness beyond that which can be attributed to a general, deterritorialised urbanity. Furthermore, there is no concrete attempt to harness the ways in which the supernatural now appears in Québécois literature—through the influence, or appropriation of, First Nations’ mythology and spirituality, and Latin American diasporic literatures, which have contributed aesthetic qualities of magical realism. Interestingly, Choinière goes out of his way to avoid these overt references, which suggests limits concerning the degree to which appropriation may be engaged in order to acculturate a playtext. In providing a momentarily straightforward illocutionary translation, Choinière resists the expectations to superficially link an exaggerated Celtic-mythology past (something that does not feature to any meaningful degree in *Howie the Rookie*) with a somewhat problematic appropriation of Indigenous and minority imagery.

Nevertheless, the supernatural still features briefly, yet significantly, in the source text, without recalling a Celtic past. The importance of the supernatural element comes into full view due to its repeated appearances at the end of the play, in addition to how this content interacts with and subverts the structure of the monologue play. After having rescued Rookie from Bernie’s brother, Howie and Rookie make their way to Dave McGee’s party so that Howie can fight Ladyboy for Rookie. Rookie sees Flann Dingle, Ginger Boy and the Hi-Ace van once again:

Source Text:	Translation :
Somethin’ sparks in me head. Somethin’ to do with Flann Dingle an’ Ginger Boy. Sparks but doesn’t ignite.	Quéque chose s’allume dans ma tête. Quéque chose avec Flann Dingle pis Ginger boy. Quéque chose s’allume mais brûle pas.
It’ll come to me, some stage.	Ça va m’revenir un moment donné.
[...]	[...]
An’ it dawns on me. Flann Dingle. Flann Dingle, the hi-ace an’ The Ginger Boy. The Mayans.	Pis ça me tombe dessus. Flann Dingle. Flann Dingle, la van vert epis Ginger Boy. Les Mayas.
Been seein’ them all day, too much, too many times. Thinkin’ ‘bout death comin’, form of a green hi-ace. Comin’ to get me.	J’les ai vus toute la journée, trop souvent, trop d’fois pour que. J’arrête pas d’m dire : la mort s’en vient, sous la forme d’une van verte jackée à portes coulissantes. La mort s’en vient m’chercher.

Without the use of special punctuation this time, O’Rowe employs the text itself to perform this moment of realisation from Rookie—first, in order to warn that something might be amiss, and then finally to affect the realisation. O’Rowe’s choice of vocabulary here critically meets the illocutionary standards set by Austin (1975) and Searle (1979) in that “sparks” and “dawns” both do what it is that they suggest, namely, they are the act of thinking. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists “dawn” as having a verbal form that carries literal, figurative, and transformative connotations—the latter two of which apply in this context and are fully realised by the notion of performativity. The figurative sense directly applies here as this thought is something that “begin[s] to become evident to the mind. . . begin[s] to be understood, felt, or perceived.” This dawning, then, is active on an interior level, and makes apparent the potential in a performative analysis.

The verbal form of “dawn” is not easily adapted on the illocutionary level, which necessitates a more in-depth look at the level of poetics, where we can perceive an active reading on Choinière’s part with regards to how this evocative verb is adapted and contextualised. Indeed, according to the criteria set forth by Louis Jolicoeur, Choinière engages in a classic active reading that is part of the work of proactive translation, regardless of the extent to which changes are made. In this case, an “active reading” refers to the way in which there is a dynamic intervention on the part of the reader and their object, initiating a sort of dialogue that is necessary for a solid understanding of the literature in question (Jolicoeur 1992, 16-18). The logical flow of the previous excerpt demonstrates the result of such a dialogue, whereby Choinière understands the end result of Rookie’s story. Therefore, the translator can broaden his options to include different strategies for how this sentiment can be constructed and expressed. Rather than providing a literal equivalent to “it dawns on me,” Choinière translates a synonym, “it hit me” as “*ça me tombe dessus*.” Amongst other things, this proactive translation suggests that Rookie is acted upon from without, whereas the source text suggests that this thought also originates from within. In terms of performativity, the translation not only constructs a different existence for this sentence, but it changes the terms of the poetics involved; translating a synonymous phrase offers another filter by which the Québécois audience can engage with Howie’s performance.

Conclusion

The Irish theatre diaspora in Quebec is filtered through translation, in spite of the presence of a few English-language theatres featuring the works of Irish dramatists. The preponderance of translated Irish plays lends credibility to the argument that translated theatre forms a veritable part of the Irish theatrical diaspora in Quebec.²⁷ As inhabiting a hybrid space, that is to say, existing in contact with a diaspora that has been integrated to a certain extent, Québécois translators further complicate the ethics of intercultural theatre encounter, as proposed by Emer O’Toole (2012). Québécois theatrical practitioners reconstruct the Irish diasporic voice via translated theatre, which potentially allows for researchers

to engage with this notion in a way that is less fraught with issues of power differentials in intercultural theatrical practices. The relationship between Quebec and the Irish diaspora changes the dynamic where appropriation is concerned, thanks to similar experiences of oppression and its resulting marginalisation, including within Quebec. In evaluating the Irish theatrical diaspora in Quebec, it is therefore necessary to adopt an approach that allows for the consideration of the technical elements involved with translation as well as the cultural similarities that allow for a comparison.

The Irish diaspora's presence in non-Anglophone communities remains of interest here due to the changes that can happen during the translation process. In his essay "*L'américanité dans la dramaturgie québécoise: constantes et variations*," Pierre L'Hérault (2003) writes, "On aura vu cependant, par l'intervention du 'théâtre immigrant' et du 'théâtre amérindien', à quel point d'autres expériences et d'autres imaginations de l'Amérique dégagent des représentations convenues,"²⁸ which, while referring specifically to representations of North America by immigrants of various diasporas, also represents a way to approach diasporic theatrical traditions in translation (L'Hérault 176). It is in fact through an openness to these other experiences via the translation of plays that the field continues to grow and evolve, but not simply as a means to use the Other to work through issues with one's own sociocultural realities. If "translation is our [the audience's] condition" (152), as Michael Cronin (2003) notes, then considering the translative aspects of the Irish theatrical diaspora is not out of the question, and indeed speaks to the very heart of what it means to be a part of that diaspora, even if it is generations removed.

Nevertheless, considering translation within the context of the Irish theatrical diaspora is not without certain challenges, especially concerning ever-evolving notions of what constitutes and who determines Irishness. The choice of playtexts by certain dramatists further reveals the constructed nature of diasporic identities and how they are filtered. Valorisation of "authentic" and "inauthentic" versions of Irishness still inform translation strategies to a certain extent, further problematising the temporal distance between the initial waves of Irish immigration to Canada in the nineteenth century, and twentieth- and twenty-first century comparative studies of Ireland and Quebec. Such valorisations could mean that the diasporic presence of this theatrical tradition is being filtered in a way that actively excludes versions of Irishness deemed to be inappropriate. There is, in fact, a perceivable fissure between the presence of Irishness and spoken English—many Québécois claim Irish heritage from those initial waves of immigration, yet do not speak or understand English—and that gap could potentially contribute to how future translations of Irish plays are perceived, regardless of their subject matter.

Erin Hurley (*National* 2011) observes that theatre in Quebec and Ireland exists in a space where the "identity-imperative" is inextricably linked to the image of the nation (228). However, the fact that playwrights like Olivier Choinière, mostly known by the Québécois theatrical milieu for his original dramatic

works, are choosing to translate more than one play by playwrights such as Mark O’Rowe indicates that this theatrical diasporic presence is made manifest more often through similar artistic trends and interests.²⁹ The Irish theatrical diaspora therefore resists this “identity-imperative” by making the space of the nation permeable. Beyond aesthetic choices and generalised attraction to particular oeuvres, it is worth considering what differentiates the choice to translate plays by certain playwrights as opposed to those of others. The need to seek out and examine critical responses that suggest a move away from postcolonial approaches demonstrates that there is room still for an expanding definition of Irishness that encompasses the transformations undergone by its diaspora in Quebec.

In the end, moving beyond the narrow confines of locating the Irish theatrical diaspora solely within the space of postcolonialism creates, in turn, more space in which to consider the long-term status of that diaspora. The utility of applying a performative analysis to the artistic output of the Irish theatrical diaspora in Quebec means embracing a porous barrier between identities, languages, and aesthetics—porous to the extent that such elements have roots in a shared past, but are open to new influences. What an initial survey of Irish theatre in translation in Quebec indicates is that the constant evolution of identities is facilitated by a place that has already experienced and is familiar with the Irish diaspora through historical immigration. Subsequent stagings of translated Irish theatre thus demonstrate continued interest in Ireland and Irishness, as well as how Québécois-French constructs and transforms these two. The complex relationship between the theatre and Irish identity that Christopher Morash alludes to can be reimagined and reconstructed through translation, thereby re-centering the framework of the Irish theatrical diaspora on an international scale.

Notes

1. The term “Québécois” originated during the 1970s in Quebec following the widespread secularisation that resulted from the Quiet Revolution, wherein efforts were made to distinguish the cultural specificity of Francophone culture in Quebec as opposed to that of France or other formerly French colonial possessions.
2. However, both scholars take note of an Irish presence since even the beginnings of New France. Hathorn in particular takes note of a preponderance of Irish figures in the Québécois novel of the nineteenth century.
3. Louis-Martin Tard points out that in 1963, Le Théâtre du Nouveau-Monde (TNM) staged *L’Ombre d’un franc-tireur* (*The Shadow of a Gunman*, Sean O’Casey, 1923), but that it was a massive failure due to Montrealers’ inability to cope with similarities in that play to their own situation concerning mounting tensions with the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). To date, O’Casey’s work has not been performed again at TNM. TNM also included Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* in its 1959-1960 season, amidst mixed reviews. It has not subsequently been staged at this theatre. Louis-Martin Tard. *Vingt ans de Théâtre au Nouveau Monde*. Les Éditions du jour, Montreal, 1971, p. 67-68, 97-98.
4. It should be noted that the term “nation” is employed here for brevity’s sake, recognising the political entity that is the Republic of Ireland and still acknowledging the relationship many Québécois entertain with the province that is situated within Canada. Quebec represents a distinctly different culture from

the rest of Canada and perceives itself, for the most part, as such. This sense of separate identity remains central to the theme of this project.

5. For instance, even prior to this, however, the Irish presence in New France was well known and resulted from political upheaval in Ireland from the Cromwellian massacres through William of Orange's victory over the Jacobites in 1690, which exiled many Irish soldiers to Spain and France. Robert J. Grace notes that there were three different types of Irish who immigrated to New France prior to the British conquest of that territory: soldiers employed by France, escaped prisoners who had been brought to the English colonies, and civilians who immigrated specifically to settle in what is now the province of Quebec. Despite the seeming diversity of these three categories of Irish immigrants, Grace's study puts the Irish presence in New France as dating back even prior to 1690. Nevertheless, Grace goes on to acknowledge that, "...further research from French sources of the period [before the 1759 conquest by the British] will permit us to draw a balanced picture of the extent of Irish emigration from France to her colony on the banks of the St. Lawrence." Thus, even before the existence of a Québécois identity and prior to the waves of immigration that marked the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Irish made their way to New France indirectly through France itself, which Grace notes is difficult to trace as there are few studies examining the history of Irish immigration to New France via France. Even still, there is little doubt of an Irish presence in New France prior to the 1759 conquest by the British. The military presence in the period before *La Conquête* helped develop a certain amount of loyalty to the French cause on the part of the Irish, who served almost a means of military intelligence, according to Robert J. Grace and Thomas Guérin.
6. Hickey in particular details the somewhat controversial choice of using Irish English, Hiberno-English, or Anglo-Irish to describe the English spoken by the Irish, and settles on Irish English as the most neutral phrase. Carolina Amador P. Moreno also summarises the historical premises for using these terms. For the purposes of this essay, Hiberno-English is privileged due to its evocation of constructed, literary speech.
7. "The linguistic question has always played a fundamental role in the welcoming and integration of immigrants to Quebec. Therefore, when these immigrants are Anglophones, as was probably the case for a majority of Irish immigrants, they find themselves faced with two options: gradually integrate themselves into the Francophone majority or establish Anglophone communities."
8. "The historical reality of the Irish in Quebec is undeniable, although their assimilation by Québécois society tends to make the signs of cultural difference vanish, especially once linguistic assimilation has been accomplished. Thus a "Québécoised" Irishman tends to disappear, leaving only the surname."
9. Philippe Cauvet explains this concept in particular with regards to Northern Ireland, but does provide comprehensive definitions of these terms that have served to direct their usage in the context of this research. Philippe Cauvet, "Deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation, nations and states: Irish nationalist discourses on nation and territory before and after the Good Friday Agreement" (2011).
10. Some notable studies that deal with postcolonial aspects of Ireland and Quebec, respectively, include Colin Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland, Identity, Theory, Culture* (2001); Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune, Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (2007) and "Misplaced ideas? Locating and Dislocating Ireland in colonial and postcolonial studies" (2002); Jacques Coursil and Delphine Perret, "The Francophone Postcolonial Field" (2005); Victor Merriman, "Postcolonialism and Irish Theater" (2009).

11. “The novel associates Ireland, more precisely a Québécois version of Ireland, with what Quebec has not yet become.”
12. While this term remains controversial, it is also useful for contextualising and analysing the role played by translation in Quebec, especially from English to French, where there is a need to render available texts, literary or otherwise from one co-official language to another. For a more detailed account of translational cultures and how they are comprised, see Sherry Simon, *Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory* (2012).
13. Francisation programmes within the province have changed to an enormous degree throughout the years, but usually involve free or highly subsidised part-time and full-time language lessons. See Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration: <https://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/french-language/index.html>
14. Michel Biron, François Dumont, and Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge delineate this period as being “un corpus d’environ cinquante textes rédigés au cours de la période qui va de la découverte du Canada par Jacques Cartier en 1534 jusqu’au traité de Paris, par lequel la France cède le Canada à l’Angleterre en 1763. Ces textes appartiennent principalement aux genres suivants : la relation ou le récit de voyage, le journal, la correspondance (publique ou familière), l’histoire, la chronique, les mémoires et les annales. Longtemps lus comme de simples documents historiques, ces écrits sont aujourd’hui considérés comme faisant partie de la littérature au même titre que des œuvres de fiction.” Michel Biron, François Dumont et Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge, *Histoire de la littérature québécoise* (2007), p. 19.
15. “An Irish spirit that exists in the Québécois identity.”
16. *Le Salut de l’Irlande* is a novel written and published in 1966-1967 by Québécois author Jacques Ferron as a series in the journal *L’Information médicale et paramédicale* detailing the plight of the Haffigan family, Francophone, but having an Irish heritage. The novel seemingly predicted the infamous October Crisis wherein the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ), in an effort to secure Quebec’s separation from the rest of Canada, kidnapped and held for ransom Pierre Laporte (provincial Deputy Premier) and James Cross (British diplomat). The FLQ eventually assassinated Laporte, released Cross, and were subsequently exiled.
17. “English is omnipresent in the Haffigan’s universe, but it doesn’t symbolise a typically ‘English’ identity. It is the symbol of a fractured, complex, and modern identity. It can also be associated with the transition from a French-Canadian towards a Québécois identity.”
18. While the major waves of immigration occurred in the mid-nineteenth century as a result of the Famine, the Irish presence in Quebec dates from a much earlier period. See Robert Grace’s *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to Historiography* (1993).
19. “The false Irish person, they who anglicise and bend themselves before Anglo-Canadian commercial power, and the true Irish person, who understands that they were made in Irish, understand the history of their mother-country, and who fight alongside the French-Canadians to preserve French (just as they had fought for the survival of the Irish language in Ireland.)”
20. “Far from having been only a momentary function of theatrical aesthetics, a specific dramatic language freed from the constraints of linguistic norms emerged from the use of joul, which allowed for the creation of an original poetics.”
21. These terms have been teased out and elucidated in the context of intercultural and intracultural translation by researchers such as Sherry Simon (1994, 2012),

Lawrence Venuti (1995), Maria Tymoczko (2003), André Lefevere (1992), and most recently Suezette Opperman, Marlie van Rooyen and Kobus Marais (2018), to name a few.

22. Post-show discussion chaired by Dr. Emer O'Toole of Concordia University featuring translator and actor Marc-André Thibault and the cast of *Les Ossements du Connemara* (*A Skull in Connemara*), 16 November 2016.
23. In O'Rowe's playtext, both characters, as well as others throughout the play, are named with the definite article "the," which figures into the monologues as well, which will be discussed later. For the sake of brevity, the names will be shortened, where appropriate, to "Howie," "Rookie," "Mousey," or "Peaches." O'Rowe's body of work includes other highly stylised, minimalistic plays, mostly of the monologue genre, such as *Crestfall* (2001), *Made in China* (2001), and *Terminus* (2007). His career also encompasses screenwriting, having penned the screenplay to the John Crowley directed ensemble piece *Intermission* (2003).
24. Choinière's translation of *Howie the Rookie* was nominated for Best Translation at the annual Soirée des Masques (held annually from 1994 to 2009 by the Académie Québécoise du Théâtre, these are awarded to the theatrical community in Montreal) in 2003. He was also nominated for the Prix Siminovitch (recognises achievement in Canadian theatre and is awarded annually, sponsored by the University of Toronto and the RBC Foundation) in 2014 for his original work.
25. "Don't forget that the author is Irish". Michel Monty, 2016.
26. O'Rowe noted in an interview with David Clare that the supernatural became much more of a significant addition to his later works, as it was only briefly introduced in *HTR*. However, it is easy to see how the usefulness of this device first makes its mark for O'Rowe in *HTR* as can be seen in some of the excerpts used in this chapter, such as Rookie's referring to Howie as a fortune teller.
27. The exact number of Irish plays performed in English in the province has not been currently tabulated, nor is there an exhaustive list as of yet of all of the translations done in Quebec, but, for example, at Théâtre La Licorne, of the seventeen plays on offer for the 2019-2020 season, three are translations. Of the seven plays to be staged at Théâtre du Nouveau Monde for the same season, two are translations. At Théâtre La Bordée in Quebec City, two of the nine plays planned for the 2019-2020 season are translations.
28. "We will have seen, however, through the intervention of 'immigrant theater' and 'Amerindian theater', to what extent other experiences and other conceptions of America emerge from fixed representations."
29. Fanny Britt has also translated McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, 2004 (*Le Pillowman*, 2008), and Olivier Choinière has translated O'Rowe's *Terminus*, 2007 (*Terminus*, 2016), *Crestfall*, 2003 (*Tête première*, 2005).

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