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A Translation and Analysis of Spring's Bride by Mohammed Dib: Creating a Space for Indigenous North African Drama

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A TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS OF *SPRING'S BRIDE* BY MOHAMMED DIB:
CREATING SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS NORTH AFRICAN DRAMA

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Art
Theatre Studies

by
Jordan Marie Talbot
June 2016

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

A TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS OF *SPRING'S BRIDE* BY MOHAMMED DIB:

CREATING SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS NORTH AFRICAN DRAMA

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The Ubu Repertory Theatre Script Collection, which is located in the archives at New York University, contains numerous manuscripts in the French language from dramatists all over the world. One of those manuscripts, *La fiancée du printemps* by Mohammed Dib, is my own translation of the text from French into English, now titled *Spring's Bride*. The text operates as a plea for postcolonial solidarity in the face of an increasingly fragmented community. The characters of the play must confront their deeply held beliefs and their possible destructive power. The translation of this text presents the postcolonial perspective to an Anglophone audience. Using Patrice Pavis' conceptions of *mise en scène* as a process that mediates between a source culture and a target culture, the translation also operates as a continuation of Ubu Repertory Theatre's intercultural *mise en scène* between Francophone-African dramatists and the American culture in which those plays were staged.

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CHAPTER I

SOLIDARITY AND SPIRITUALITY: THE INFLUENCE OF THE POLITICS AND FAITH OF MOHAMMED DIB ON THE THEMES OF *SPRING'S BRIDE*

The play *La fiancée du printemps*¹, which I have translated as *Spring's Bride*², by Mohammed Dib is located in the Ubu Repertory Theater Script Collection. Through the Graduate Student Summer Research Fellowship awarded by Central Washington University, I was able to view the entire collection for my initial archival research into the topic of French-language African theatre.³ The collection contains scripts in English and French from numerous Francophone authors, reviews of productions by Ubu Repertory Theater, programs from these productions, and several unpublished manuscripts from the years 1982 - 1994. Each region of the Francophone world is represented in the collection including: Europe, Quebec, North and West Africa, and the French Caribbean. The materials are split into two series, one of which contains English manuscripts and the other contains French manuscripts, and these documents are listed in the finding aid alphabetically by author's last name.

The archivists at New York University allow researchers to photograph any material that is necessary for their research, as long as the research documents each item that they record. I received this permission from the university; my photographs of these items includes seventy-eight scripts and a miscellaneous collections of reviews, programs, production photographs, and a comprehensive list of translated works. The

¹ Series I, Box 7, Folder 265

² The title implies that the season has possession over the bride. The elements of earth and water dominate the world of the narrative and can truly be said to be the motivating factor in the lives of the characters. In effect, every character in the text has a subordinate position to nature.

³ The period of the Fellowship lasts ten weeks, five of which I spent in New York City in June and July 2015.

archivists also ask that the researcher identifies the result of their research. I indicated that I would be using these materials for an academic project.⁴ None of the materials I gathered would be used for monetary profit or professional publication.⁵

In 1986, *Spring's Bride* was the recipient of one of the three Jury Prizes awarded to unpublished radio dramas in the Concours Théâtral Africain,⁶ a contest which continues today as the Radio France Internationale – Théâtre⁷. Each manuscript must be submitted in the French language, although the texts also reflect the unique aspects of the various French dialects spoken across the Francophone world, and must not have been published in the author's home country or France. The script of *La fiancée du printemps* is dated September 2, 1985, while the second page is stamped with “Sep 1986” next to the address of Ubu Repertory Theater, indicating the date that it was received by the company. Rather than receiving the manuscripts directly from the author, the scripts were delivered by Radio France Internationale in a collection. It is unclear why the company ultimately ended up in possession of these scripts, as there is no record that these texts were produced as readings or full productions.⁸

⁴ Including, but not limited to, a Master's thesis or a doctoral dissertation.

⁵ It is possible that I would be able to return at a later date and ask the archivists for permission to use the materials in a journal article or performance. At that time, the archivists would then secure the necessary permissions from authors, publishers, and copyright-holders.

⁶ African Theatre Festival; in which authors from the former African colonies of France submit their dramatic works. The contest was established by the Office de la Coopération Radiophonique and awarded five prizes each year: the “Grand Prix”, three Jury prizes, and a “Listener’s Choice” prize.

⁷ In 2016, this contest has been organized by the following groups: La société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques, L’Institut Français, Le Festival des Francophones en Limousin/Maison des Auteurs, L’Association Beaumarchais, and Le Théâtre de l’Aquarium.

⁸ These manuscripts may have been solicited by Ubu Repertory Theater in order to expand their collection of Francophone dramatic literature and to have ownership of the rights to publish the works. The plays may have also been seen as translation projects, as the company produced an encyclopedia of the works that they had translated into English and provided information on these works which would be helpful to those wanting to stage these plays.

Upon the authorship of this thesis, this particular play has never been translated or performed in English nor is the manuscript listed in the author's official bibliography.⁹ The play would have been performed once in French as a reading, as one of the prizes that can be awarded for these manuscripts is the "Listener's Choice" award. The translation in this document is the first time this play has been translated into English and, it is my own original work which was supervised by Dr. Michael Johnson of Central Washington University. The purpose of the translation project was twofold. First, I was able to receive guided instruction in French-language translation, providing me with invaluable experience that can easily transfer to professional work. Second, the translation itself is an exercise in cross-cultural exchange and provides an interesting window into the interpretation of a text through multiple lenses.

The Life of Mohammed Dib

Mohammed Dib was born in Tlemcen, Algeria on July 21, 1920. He was exiled from Algeria in 1959 to France, where he remained until the end of his life on May 2, 2003. He held many jobs over the course of his life, working as a teacher, a journalist, and an accountant during the Second World War. Eventually, he found his calling as an author, writing several novels, collections of poems, and a few dramatic works. *La grande maison* (The Big House), the epic trilogy set immediately prior to the Algerian War of Independence, established Dib primarily as a novelist engaged in the

⁹ Arabesques Editions; this website provides a comprehensive biography of Dib's life along with an extensive bibliography of his principal works.

sociopolitical conflicts between Algeria and France. Until his death, Dib published over 30 creative works, and his complete works were published in 2007.¹⁰

Mohammed Dib was a member of the Algerian Communist Party and was exiled by the French, who assumed that he would remain somewhere in North Africa. Instead of residing in Cairo, the cultural capital of North Africa, or Morocco, where his family was located at the time, Dib moved to Paris and continued to write about Algeria and its people. The plight of the colonized Algerian subject could be brought to the French, and the French would have a community with whom they could sympathize. In addition, Mohammed Dib was instrumental in the movement to expand what could be considered Francophone literature. Dib, along with Kateb Yacine and their peers from “Generation 54,” legitimized the place of Algerian authors alongside more well-known French authors of the period, such as Albert Camus, Louis Guilloux, and Andre Malraux.

In order to fully examine the text of *Spring's Bride*, a text which engages with spirituality and the power of faith, it is necessary to shine some light on Dib's own religious affiliations. At a young age, "Dib was raised as a Sunni Muslim but he never attended Koranic school,"¹¹ which meant that he did not learn how to read Classical Arabic until he began secondary education. Algeria in 2016 is predominantly Islamic, with very small urban Jewish and Berber Christian populations. Given that Dib was raised in the Muslim faith, one might assume that he remained a Muslim until his death. However, the Algerian Communist Party was aligned with the same atheism of European Marxists rather than the Islamic fundamentalism which developed even more intensely

¹⁰ Edited by Habib Tengour

¹¹ Liukkonen

after the War of Independence. Dib may be linked to other “Arab Muslim” authors, but it is more likely that he was an atheist himself. The narrative of the play demonstrates a more universal spirituality rather than an allegiance to one specific religious doctrine, which will be explored in a more detailed examination of the text.

Spring’s Bride Narrative

The play introduces the conflict immediately in Part One, when Amour chooses not to marry Safia, the woman to whom he is engaged. He runs away from the village where the two of them previously lived and brings Itho, the woman whom he truly loves, to the city. In her grief, Safia claims that she has cursed the land and a drought strikes the village after Itho and Amour depart. When a drought begins to decimate the land, the villagers have various responses. The crones and the blind man believe that the curse can be lifted through certain ceremonies and sacrifices; whereas, the men and the sages believe Amour and Itho must be executed. The male villagers send a man, Sadak, who is called “the honest one,” to track down the two lovers and kill them, although Sadak only fulfills his task out of a duty to the village rather than a belief in the power of the curse.

Thus, the main conflict in the play is between the two lovers and the villagers, especially the men of the village who advocate most for their punishment. The villagers, specifically the crones and an assortment of other women, attempt several tactics in an effort to stay in their village; but those tactics prove useless and they are forced to leave their homes at the end of the play. Amour and Itho suffer greatly while travelling to the city. They are starved, thirsty, and beaten. Yet, the risk of harm on the road is worth their freedom from execution at the hands of the members of their village. In the final scene of

the narrative, Sadak finds Amour and Itho after a long soliloquy describing his internal conflict over executing the two of them. The lovers persuade him that the task is useless and the play ends when Sadak passes out on stage.

Dramaturgical Analysis of the Text

It must be understood that there were many contradictions in Mohammed Dib's life. He lived in France, yet he opposed the colonial regime and much of his literature favors the self-governance of the Algerian people. He was not overtly religious, yet *Spring's Bride* is steeped in tradition-based spiritual rituals. One of the most significant of these contradictions is the language in which he chose to write. He is considered to be the father of the "indigenous" North African novel, yet he spent the majority of his career writing in the French language rather than in his natively spoken Algerian Arabic or the more literary classical form of the language.

While there are elements of realistic representation in the text, as well as Dib's other creative works, Dib engages in the use of non-realistic moments in order to create a more complete picture of Algeria as a nation and a people. In the article "Driss Chraïbi, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine, and Indigenous North African Literature," Georges Joyaux argues that the writers of former colonies have a greater range of creative expression than their former oppressors. "And in keeping with contemporary American writers, North African authors have enjoyed a greater freedom than the French in their choice of literary genres, subjects, styles and techniques."¹² Because Dib writes from the perspective of a postcolonial subject, he has access to French literary traditions as well as

¹² Joyaux, 33

the literary traditions of the empires that have previously conquered those North African peoples.

In her analysis of *La grande maison*, Winifred Woodhull examines the importance of the role of women in Dib's narratives. According to her, "these texts show compellingly that the transformation of gender relations is not a private matter but a public one with revolutionary consequences."¹³ There are seven distinct women in *Spring's Bride*: Safia, Itho, and, of course, the five Crones. Safia embodies a certain tradition-based spirituality, being described by Amour as "possessed" by her grief. The villagers view her as a sort of witch because her despair has led to the drought that destroys the land. Itho can be seen as a representation of womanhood itself. She is referred to in insulting terms as a "bitch" and a "doe" and in positive terms as "my sister" and "my mother". As a modern woman who runs away with her lover, she complicates the idea of proper femininity through her existence. Throughout the play she demonstrates that she is simultaneously willful and weak, nurturing and combative. The five crones oscillate between commenting on the action of the narrative, working to correct the curse, and resigning themselves to the fate of the village. All of these women have the power to change their own world, even as they are subject to natural disaster and spiritual crisis.

Perhaps because of the greater creative freedom enjoyed by Francophone authors, Mohammed Dib incorporates literary and performative genres into his texts. In the article, "Mohammed Dib and the French Question" Winifred Woodhull states that "Eric Sellen shows that Dib's incorporation of poetry into his prose texts – for example,

¹³ Woodhull, 73

women's songs in *La grande maison* – works formally to ignite a 'subterranean fire' that burns beneath the novel's muted documentary surface."¹⁴ In Algeria, "women's songs" generally refer to those performed by Berber women in the countryside. These performances serve a variety of purposes, from wishing a bride a prosperous marriage to affirming one's identity as a Berber woman¹⁵. The text of *Spring's Bride* includes several instances of song interspersed with text where the majority of the characters speak in prose.

Beginning on page 25 and ending on page 27 of the original text, some of the villagers begin a chant to an effigy in order to alleviate the drought. They name the effigy Guenja and circle the village with it. At the end of the chant, the men bury the effigy in the middle of the town square. The chant specifically calls on Guenja to bring the rain back to the village, and the burial signifies Guenja as a seed that needs to be watered. This imagery connects closely to the idea of Safia as "Spring's Bride". The season of spring is symbolic of new life and growth from the earth; and, rain facilitates the growth of plants and crops. Thus, the effigy might represent the hope for new growth and life in the village. However, the burial and symbolic death of the effigy via burial suggests that in order for the village to see the rain again, someone or something needs to perish. The chant then reinforces the idea that Amour and Itho need to be killed in order to bring the drought, and the suffering of the villagers, to an end.

¹⁴ Woodhull, 76

¹⁵ The book *We Share Walls: Language, Land, and Gender in Berber Morocco* by Katherine E. Hoffman is an ethnographic study of the ways in which Berber women use song in order to preserve Berber language and culture. Hoffman argues that these forms of performance are central to Berber culture. As an Algerian, Mohammed Dib would understand how these songs could be used in Algerian literature in order to create a complete picture of North African life.

On page 38 of the original text, Amour sings to Itho as a gesture of comfort in order to keep Itho from wasting her energy physically and emotionally. In the previous scene, the two lovers have been assaulted by two thugs. After they incapacitate Amour, the two men rape Itho which leaves her without the will to keep evading Sadak. In this song, Amour sings about a yellow bird and several aspects of the natural surroundings, including: the sky, the sea, the mountains, and spring in which the predominant color is blue. Although Amour and Itho have rejected the life of the village, the two lovers continue to be metaphorically tied to their former home through their connection to the land and the hope for springtime.

During their last appearance on stage, the five crones and the blind man offer up a triumphant song because they have decided to remain in the village (44 – 45). Here the women and man refer to the mountains, just as Amour does in his song to Itho, and springtime, just as the villagers do in their chant to Guenja. This song is also the third to mention the coming of spring, thus calling to mind images of growth and new life. This song in particular reinforces the love for the land that the blind man and the crones have, even if the beauty of the land is lost with the drought. These characters are so connected to the land itself that they are able to recognize its beauty despite the great tragedy that has befallen them. It is also important to note that throughout the text the blind man can be read as the voice of reason, but when this song appears in the text he succumbs to the same delusions as the crones. Eventually, these characters are told to leave by a lone man who calls them all crazy and that there is no future in the village. The spring that the

women and the blind men refer to still signifies change, but that change will come in the form of relocation rather than a hope that the curse will be lifted.

In Safia's final monologue (47 – 48), she hums a tune to the previously buried effigy Guenja. Safia is the fourth and final person to refer to springtime in her song, once again reinforcing the concepts of growth and new life. However, the act of Safia singing one of these songs of springtime appears to be contradictory. If the audience believes the residents of the village, then Safia was the willing instigator of the curse who would have cause to celebrate the demise of the land. Yet, she sings that the sun will bring love, perhaps to her or perhaps to the land itself, but in the scene the sun makes her physically hot and her mouth completely dry. The sun has brought physical pain and emotional despair. Her grief over the loss of Amour is ineffectual, which highlights the tragic nature of the narrative.

There are several ways in which the narrative of *Spring's Bride* creates a sense of an arguably universal experience between the characters and the audience. First, the two major locations of the play, the city and the village, are not clearly defined. The only clues that the audience is given as to where the characters are in the world are that the village is in a rural location that could be severely affected by a drought and the city is located relatively close to some mountains. There is no reference in the text itself that this play would even take place in Algeria, or any other North African country. Second, while the stage directions indicate different times of day, the year (or even century) of the narrative is not mentioned at all. The lack of specificity implies that this narrative could occur in any location or at any time that a director may choose.

One of the tensions of the story of *Spring's Bride* is the refusal to define the specific spiritual affiliations of the characters, which also lends itself to the sense of universality. Thematically, one of the major concerns of the characters is faith and its power over their lives. In many tradition-based African societies, the people believe that the human mind is powerful enough that the thoughts, feelings, and desires will have physical consequences.¹⁶ There is little evidence that Safia has the supernatural ability to curse the land with a drought; but because the previously accepted engagement fell through between her and Amour, the other villagers believe that the consequences have manifested themselves in the natural world. The power and the consequences of belief are concerns not only for people who follow a specific religious tradition, but anyone who holds a profoundly unshakeable conviction.

Ultimately, *Spring's Bride* is a tragedy that stems from the prioritization of the differences between people in a single community. Itho and Safia represent the modern and the traditional notions of womanhood while Amour and Sadak represent these two ideas as applied to manhood. The crones and the blind man believe in the power of sacrificial effigies while the sages and the men believe that the only way to save the community is through the physical sacrifice of living bodies. These differences themselves are what tear the community apart. In order to survive, it is necessary to create a singular subject position rather than make room for multiple perspectives, especially when those views cause harm to the land or to love.

¹⁶ Using the Azande culture as his case study, E. E. Evans-Pritchard makes the claim that the belief that witchcraft produces negative consequences and the belief that natural causes can be attributed to misfortune are not mutually exclusive. The natural cause explains the how of something breaking or someone dying and witchcraft explains the why of that same circumstance.

Yet, Algeria has its own multicultural character. In addition to its colonization by the French, Algeria has been subject to a variety of invasions from the Spanish, Turkish, and Arab empires. These invasions brought a variety of languages, structures of governance, and religion to the region. Prior to the end of the War of Independence and the influence of fundamentalist sects of Islam, Algeria boasted significant Jewish and Christian populations.¹⁷ In addition, “each wave of invasion has given birth to a new ‘school’ of North African writers who, though born and raised in North Africa, became part of the literary history of the invading civilization,”¹⁸ thus creating a multilingual national literary canon.

Therefore, part of the work that *Spring's Bride* does is not necessarily erasing differences between the multilingual, multifaith, multiethnic groups of Algeria, but calling attention to the necessity of establishing a common identity. Given the fact that several Arab authors have written and continue to write in French, it is especially important to establish an Algerian identity that accepts the reality of a multilingual populace. In the 21st century, the French language continues to be taught in primary and secondary schools but, after the end of the Algerian War of Independence Arabic became the only national language of Algeria. In Assia Djebar's essay “The White of Algeria”, Djebar makes the case for the strength of a multicultural Algerian identity that seeks to legitimize Francophone authors as authentically Algerian. Essentially, Mohammed Dib is a cosmopolitan Algerian author, using the French language as a part of his own

¹⁷ From the Jewish Virtual Library; before Independence, approximately 140,000 Jewish people lived in Algeria before emigrating to either France or Israel. In addition, approximately 1,000,000 Christians, most of whom were Catholic pieds-noirs, resided in the country. In 2016, each of these groups number in the tens-of-thousands.

¹⁸ Joyaux, 30

connection to Algerian national identity. Djébar explains, “I use the word ‘Algerianity,’ a far broader notion than the ‘Algerian identity’ recorded on official papers; just as in the past it included Camus and Robles alongside Ferraoun and Kateb, it would now link Derrida and Mohammed Dib, or Helene Cixous and myself.”¹⁹

Mohammed Dib’s Marxist political leanings are not mutually exclusive with the multicultural character of Algeria:

Les écrivains algériens eux aussi recherchent le lieu de la connexion, si ce n’est de la conformité entre deux visions du monde apparemment irréconciliables²⁰

(The Algerian authors themselves also search for the place of the connection, if it is not of the conformity between two apparently irreconcilable visions of the world)

As a former colony at the crossroads of international trade and cultural exchange, Algerian authors can recognize the multiplicity of identities within their own communities while advocating for an Algerian solidarity. The play may not offer any resolution to this conflict, but Dib makes the stakes of solidarity extremely clear.

In *Spring’s Bride*, Mohammed Dib presents the audience with the tragedy of an increasingly fragmented community which eventually disappears. Both the Sunni Islam beliefs under which Dib was raised and the kind of Marxist philosophy that he later adopted value a non-hierarchical structure of community. According to Sunni beliefs, the relationship between the adherent and the Qur’an is more important than an interpretation of the text passed down by an imam. Each person has the right to interpret the scripture and live according to those interpretations. In terms of Dib’s Marxism, the Algerian Communist Party (and thus Dib) aligned itself with the liberation movement. Uniting

¹⁹ Djébar, 145

²⁰ Laroussi 55

workers against the upper classes meant uniting the Algerian people against the French colonial oppressors. Although the Algerian Communist Party significantly weakened in power after the War of Independence, one of its accomplishments was to make each Algerian citizen equal in their struggle for freedom.

The narrative of *Spring's Bride* reflects the necessity of an egalitarian community, rather than a fractured one in which some people have the power to administer death, the men of the village, and others are at their mercy, Amour and Itho. Even the blind women and Safia are not secure in their belief in tradition as neither Safia's grieving nor the prayers and burning effigies bring Amour back to the village and lift the drought. I believe that in this play, Mohammed Dib warns his audience against focusing on what is different between people, whether one is more rural or more cosmopolitan or whether one follows pre-Islamic or Islamic spiritual traditions. The lack of solidarity between the people of the village is what causes their destruction, rather than an external force or supposed curse.

CHAPTER II

THE INTERCULTURAL PROJECT OF UBU REPERTORY THEATRE; READING *SPRING'S BRIDE* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE THEATRE'S MISSION, SUCCESSES, AND SHORTCOMINGS

The Intercultural Work of Ubu Repertory Theatre

Founded in 1982 and disbanded in 2001, the Ubu Repertory Theatre in New York City was the premier producer of French-language theatre in the United States. In conjunction with the Alliance Francaise of New York, La MaMa E.T.C and other performance groups, Ubu Repertory Theatre was able to produce one-hundred and sixty full-length productions and staged readings, as well as providing original English translations of plays by Belgian, Canadian, African and Franco-Caribbean playwrights. The theatre's founder Francoise Kourilsky²¹ actively and successfully promoted the cultural significance of French-language theatre production in the United States. The scope of Kourilsky's project was immense. In this chapter, I will focus on how the translation of Mohammed Dib's *La fiancée du printemps* is a part of the Ubu Repertory Theater legacy of intercultural performance and promotion of the wide variety of Francophone political, linguistic, and cultural perspectives.

By operating under funding by the Ministry of Culture in France, there was a danger that Ubu Repertory Theatre could have become a repository for traditional French theatre, producing only authors who could be considered part of the canon of French literature. Yet Kourilsky was committed to presenting theatrical work from every part of the Francophone world, from Belgium to Canada to Martinique to Madagascar. In

²¹ Francoise Kourilsky was a French theatre critic and academic. She was a professor at Paris III – Sorbonne and New York University and is credited with exposing theatre artists and scholars in France to the Bread and Puppet Theatre. She passed away in September 2012.

addition to geographic diversity, the plays in the Ubu Repertory Theatre script collection present a variety of themes, including: queer identity, transnational identity, postcolonial politics, internal and external religious conflict, and the changing role of women across the African continent. These texts present the narratives of marginalized groups from individuals who identify as such.

In the pursuit of creating a multicultural theatre, Ubu Repertory Theatre created a space for staging, and thus representing, a variety of African identity on stage.

Mohammed Dib was one of several Algerian authors who provided manuscripts to the company, but first it is important to place Dib's work alongside those Algerian authors whose work was produced by the company. In 1988, Ubu Repertory Theatre produced a festival of eight plays by Francophone-African authors, one of which was *Intelligence Powder*, a story based on *The Arabian Nights*, by Kateb Yacine. Although Yacine is of Berber descent, he encompasses the specific multicultural identity of Algerian society. Trilingual, educated in French language and literature, and committed to the recognition of Berber communities in the predominantly Arab nation, giving a voice to Yacine's work would provide an excellent reflection on American multiculturalism. Staging his plays also opens up conversations on identity in the Middle East and North African regions which does not conform to Western notion that that identity is singularly Arab-Islamic.

Ubu Repertory Theatre also featured the narratives of Algerian women. A full production of *You Have Come Back* by Fatima Gallaire was produced in 1988²², and a

²² Production review in *The New York Times, Review/Theater; Leaving the Veiled Life of Algeria* by Wilborn Hampton

staged reading of *My Mother's Eyes* by Leila Sebbar was produced in 1997. Through theatre, the two women present two contrasting images of Algerian identity. Gallaire grew up in Algeria in a Muslim household, studied French at l'Université d'Alger, then immigrated to France and earned a degree in cinema studies from l'Université Paris VIII – Vincennes. As a feminist, she developed a body of work that is heavily critical of Islam, especially the practices of polygamy and wearing the hijab. *You Have Come Back* is essentially a call-to-arms for Muslim women to stop wearing the veil and renounce misogynistic interpretations of Islam. By contrast, Sebbar is a first-generation immigrant whose work focuses on the status of Algerian immigrants in France. While Gallaire's work is targeted at Algerian women, Sebbar writes about the tensions between her identities as a French citizen and as an individual of Arab-North-African descent. While her work is not explicitly critical, Sebbar provides a more ambiguous narrative in the conversation regarding the place of Algerian-Muslim women in French society.

A major success of Kourilsky's intercultural project was to collect scripts that reflected political perspectives that differed from a Western, and especially an American, point of view. All four of the aforementioned Algerian dramatists write within a post-colonial framework, which is representative of other Francophone authors from the Caribbean and Africa. Ubu Repertory Theatre began to collect these scripts in the early 1980s, the decade in which many of the independence movements of formerly colonized peoples had come of age. Not only could the theatre company provide a space for these post-colonial narratives to be represented, the multiplicity of perspectives and identities allowed the stage to present a more diverse picture of the Francophone world.

Casting actors of color became another tactic with which to create a truly multicultural theatre. In an interview for *The New York Times*, Francoise Kourilsky states that “since blacks actors here have fewer opportunities for work than white actors... I thought it would be a good idea to have work for them. And since the French black outlook is totally different from the American black repertory, we have raised a lot of interest... in New York.”²³ The plays that were written by West African and Sub-Saharan African dramatists created the perfect opportunity to cast a greater number of black actors. The plays of Gallaire and Sebbar also created the opportunity to cast women of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. For example, Honduran actress Blanca Camacho played the lead role of Lella in Gallaire’s *You Have Come Back*, and Sri Lankan actress Yolande Bavan played the role of Marie in *Nowhere*.²⁴

However, the directions in which Kourilsky often took the theatre company were contradictory. Although there was diversity in casting, Kourilsky and her primary translator Catherine Temerson were both white, European women. As director and translator, these two individuals had the most creative control over which plays were produced and which scripts were translated, few of which originated in any region of Africa. Several African as well as Franco-Caribbean playwrights were published and produced by the company, but the production history of these plays generally begins and ends with Ubu Repertory Theatre. While the company was able to provide a great cultural service to the Francophone community of the United States, it also suffered several shortcomings.

²³ Bourdain, 18

²⁴ Production review in *The New York Times*, *Theater: A First Play*, ‘You Belong to Me’ by Walter Goodman

There were several ways in which the theatre company fell short of its mission to be the premier producer of French-language theatre in the United States. Primarily, the company dissolved when Françoise Kourilsky retired and returned to live in France. As the founder and artistic director of the theatre, Kourilsky was the person who spoke to the media, vetted the manuscripts, chose its season, commissioned translations for performance and publication, and directed several of its productions. Now that the script collection is in the archives at New York University, the manuscripts are not readily available to the general public. These documents have been left in a sort of limbo; the copyright and production rights are difficult to find because the authors do not claim these works in their bibliographies. All of the unpublished radio plays remain largely unknown, even in the authors' own biographies. Finally, the selection of plays that were translated and published in English show a bias toward the dissemination of works by European and North American artists rather than African playwrights.

Another item that can be found in the Ubu Repertory Theatre Script Collection is *The Ubu Guide to New French-Language Plays in English Translation*²⁵; a book that provides script titles, character information, and plot summaries for translations that were commissioned by the theater. The information in the guide was compiled in 1990²⁶ by Danielle Brunon, Françoise Kourilsky, and Catherine Temerson who were all involved in the publication of Francophone dramatic literature. According to the introduction, in order for these plays to be officially published, they had to test successfully at a staged-reading produced by the company. Of the 51 plays featured in the first version of the

²⁵ Series II, Box 10, Folder 355

²⁶ The guide was updated in 1999 to reflect each play's production history at Ubu Repertory Theater and the themes associated with the narratives.

guide, only five of them were written by African playwrights: Kateb Yacine, Sony Lab'ou Tansi and Tchicaya u Tam'si of Congo, Bernard Dadie of Ivory Coast, and Protais Asseng of Cameroon. In the updated version, plays from Fatima Gallaire and Leila Sebbar, which were produced by the company, were added to the list of translated works.

Although Kourilsky was passionate about finding a place for a diverse selection of French theatre in the United States, one of the failures of the company is that plays by African playwrights were not translated into English. If part of the goal of Ubu Repertory Theatre was to increase the visibility of dramatists from global Francophone communities, then English translations should have primarily been done for those authors rather than for Belgian, Canadian, or French authors. The fact that so few African authors were included in this guide speaks to the perceived importance of African literature as part of the contemporary canon of French-language drama. The European and North American works are favored for production and translations, perhaps because the themes, structures, and styles of those plays are more familiar to audiences or perhaps because there is still a bias against legitimizing African theatre production. In either case, the work of African playwrights can easily become erased from the company's history because Anglophone audiences cannot be exposed to that material.

The impact of Ubu Repertory Theatre should not be limited to theatre production in New York City. Although the theatre company published numerous translated theatrical texts; the plays available to the English-speaking audience from Algeria and small parts of Sub-Saharan Africa paint an incomplete picture of Francophone African dramatic literature. In a book review written for *Theatre Journal* of an anthology of the

theatre's published translations, Suzanne Dieckman praises the company; "nevertheless the translation are quite actable, the plays a worthwhile challenge to American actors, directors, and audiences. Ubu Repertory Theatre is providing a valuable service in introducing significant contemporary French plays to the English-speaking theatre community."²⁷ Yet given the volume of plays that came into the possession of the company, this work is unfinished. Now that a decade and a half has passed since the closure of Ubu Repertory Theatre, it is important to examine how contemporary theatre producers, artists and scholars can continue the multicultural work of Francoise Kourilsky and her collaborators.

***Spring's Bride* Mise En Scène**

In *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, Patrice Pavis outlines a theory for mise en scène, normally translated as directing, that incorporates intercultural exchange and theatre production. Pavis defines mise en scène as the mediation between different cultural backgrounds, traditions, and methods of acting as well as the combination and/or confrontation of different signifying systems. These different systems are presented as a binary: the source culture and the target culture. The source culture is the community from which the performance text is taken and the target culture is the community to which that material will be performed. In order to have a successful mise en scène, the text of the source culture should be presented in such a way that the audience of the target culture can understand the material, but no significant distortions have been made to the original text.

²⁷ Dieckman, p. 124

The process by which the source material is transmitted is a twelve-step process that Pavis names “the hourglass.” There are three points of this process that are most relevant to the intercultural exchanges of Ubu Repertory Theatre: theatrical representation of the source culture, reception-adapters, and readability. According to Pavis, the theatrical representation should use theatre as a tool by which to communicate information about the source culture rather than to try to imitate the source culture. By choosing to stage these plays in the United States using American actors and designers, Ubu Repertory Theatre could not hope to imitate any source culture from which it drew its’ texts. The reception-adaptor is the individual or tool that is used to facilitate intercultural exchanges. In the case of the theatre company, that individual was Francoise Kourilsky. Readability refers to how well the audience can understand the text, including how well the source culture can be understood through the performance. The audience becomes a part of the creation of the staging through their understanding of the text. “Mise en scène is becoming the self-reflexive discourse of the work of art, as well as the audience’s desire to theorize. They want to know just how the work of art functions: ‘no more secrets’ is today’s watchword.”²⁸

Therefore, the translation of *Spring's Bride* by Mohammed Dib is the continuation of Ubu Repertory Theatre's intercultural mise en scène. The goal of completing the translation is to make a previously unknown African text available to Anglophone theatre historians and practitioners. The text needs to be readable in order for future audiences to make sense of the narrative as well as the cultural influences. The translator is the reception-adaptor as a mediator between two languages as well as between two histories

²⁸ Pavis, 37-38

and political perspectives. In the case of this text, the theatrical representation of the source culture has been done by the author, Dib. If this text were to be performed in the future, further considerations would need to be made in order to best represent the world of *Spring's Bride* on stage. Admittedly, translating another Algerian author reduces the influence of other North African authors; Dib's commitment to an essential, postcolonial, and Algerian identity would not alienate Moroccan or Tunisian dramatists.

According to Pavis, linguistic translation itself is a *mise en scène* and the performance of it is a *mise en jeu*, which Pavis defines as the unification of the body and the text. The translator performs the work of adaptation and the reception-adaptor, translating the text and understanding how to make that text readable to the target culture.

. . .in order to find out what the source text means, I have to bombard it with questions from the target language's point of view: positioned here where I am, in the final situation of reception, and within the bounds of this other language, the target language, what do you mean to me or to us? This hermeneutic act— interpreting the source text— consists of delineating several main lines translated into another language, in order to pull the foreign text toward the target culture and language, so as to separate it from its source and origin.²⁹

The translation of a dramatic text from one language into another can potentially produce a variety of problems. Different languages have different idiomatic expressions that may make sense in the source culture but are rendered nonsensical in the target culture. In addition, the way that a play is written in the source culture may be confusing

²⁹ Pavis, 133

to a director or actors when the play is staged in the target culture. The way that object pronouns are used in French needs to be clarified in English. For example, in *Spring's Bride*, "Elle lui prend la main" (18) can be literally translated to "she takes to him the hand", which is clunky and unhelpful, but is contextually translated to "she takes his hand", which gives the actor a clear idea of what the author would want the scene to look like.

The scene in which Itho is raped by the two thugs is a perfect example of how the translation of the text must reflect its imagined performance. According to Pavis, "the translation... (already inserted in a concrete *mise en scène*) is linked to the theatrical situation of enunciation by way of an entire deictic system. Once it is thus linked, the dramatic text can relieve itself of terms which are comprehensible only in the context of its enunciation,"³⁰ meaning that the translator must be aware of the text as something that will be spoken, and not solely read. Mohammed Dib chooses to communicate that Amour knows about the rape without actually saying the right verb. The challenge to the English translator is to communicate the same subtlety without completely changing the language that Dib uses. In the French text, Amour says "Ils t'ont . . ." (34), and the pronoun "te" signifies Itho and the "ont" signifies that Amour is using the past tense of a verb. These two words combined work to make the act of rape comprehensible through enunciation.

In the staging of *Spring's Bride*, the director would need to take into account how certain characters are perceived in different cultural contexts. To a Western audience, the characters of the two thugs (who are also referred to as "travelers") would appear to be derived from *commedia dell'arte* archetypes. One of the thugs charms Itho and Amour

³⁰ Pavis, 138

before enacting his plan of assault while the other thug is a mute who speaks in grunts and physically mimics the words of the more well-spoken man. Therefore, one of the thugs might fall into the Brighella archetype while the other shares the traits of a Harlequin archetype.

While this characterization makes sense in the text of the play, the danger lies in the way the actors might interpret the thugs physically. In the Western tradition, commedia archetypes are physical, comedic characters based in the improvisation of the actor. In this play, the characters of the two thugs enact cruel violence upon Amour, knocking him unconscious, and Itho, by raping her. Although, the archetypes of the characters may be influenced by the commedia tradition, their actions and the subsequent scene indicate an influence from Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Before this moment of the play, Amour and Itho are in the midst of their escape and are searching for something to eat. Amour debates whether or not to return to the village while Itho is opposed to that plan of action. The attack is shocking because the conflict is mainly dialogue-driven, and even the intense moments in the first scene between Amour and Safia do not result in violence on stage. In the subsequent scene, Amour sings to Itho which indicates that the normal manner of speech is insufficient to capture the emotional state of either of the two characters.

Another potential problematic character in *Spring's Bride* is the dutiful assassin, Sadak-the-honest. Translating characters provides a unique challenge to the translator in that the translator must interpret the motivations and arc of the character without direct knowledge from the original author. Unlike the other named characters of the text,

Sadak-the-honest does not have a clearly stated motivation for his actions. Amour and Itho want to live unmolested in the city while Safia wants to punish Amour for abandoning her. The men of the village send Sadak to assassinate Amour and Itho, but he only attempts to do so out of a duty to the community. The farther away from the physical place of the village, the less he desires to complete his mission. The actor may wonder what Sadak's purpose in the narrative is if he never completes his mission: why would he keep pursuing Amour and Itho if he does not have a compelling reason to do so?

The answer to this question will vary by who interprets the character of Sadak-the-honest, whether that is the translator, the director, or the actor portraying the character in a performance. According to Pavis, "the text has nothing permanent about it: it is of course materialized and fixed in writing and in book form, but it has to be constantly reread, and therefore concretized anew again and again, being therefore eminently unstable: it is impossible to count on it as something unchanging and durable."³¹ The author may intend the character to have a certain motivation or to behave in a certain way but, the audience can question and interpret the text in their own fashion. For now, Sadak can be understood as a duty-bound character that slowly unravels. Other interpreters may draw their own conclusions about this particularly ambiguous individual.

Above all, this translation does not aim to make Mohammed Dib's work conform to an Anglophone, European, or American theatrical tradition but to make *Spring's Bride* an accessible piece of dramatic literature for an Anglophone audience. It is necessary to

³¹ Page 42

recognize the importance of African dramatists and global theatre practices. As Pavis states:

On the one hand, we are witnessing . . . a universalization of a notion of culture, a search for the common essence of humanity, which involves a return to the religious and the mystical, and to ritual and ceremony, in the theatre. On the other hand, it is the time to acknowledge the plurality of cultures, individualities, minorities, subcultures, pressure groups, and thus to refine socio-cultural methods of measuring the extent and effects of culture, which leads sometimes away from a global conception of the functioning of society, and towards solutions that are partial and technocratic.³²

Spring's Bride reflects several levels of intercultural exchange, as a text written in French by an Algerian author and translated into English by a Mexican-American. Yet the themes of the narrative, such as: faith, the importance of land, love, and strength in community, could be considered universal across cultures. The *mise en scène* would be complete once the text has been staged, as the audience becomes the final interpreter of the text.

³² Pavis, 149

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APPENDIX A

Spring's Bride
By: Mohammed Dib

-begin excerpt-

IV

Armed with torches, some men and women suddenly arise from the darkness in a rough procession.

THE CROWD (chanting)

Guenja! Guenja!
Oh bride! Oh mistress!
Give us the rain!
Guenja! Guenja!
Oh bride! Oh mistress!
Give us the rain!

SOME VOICES

Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!

The clamors increase, of which the majority finish in lamentations. In the middle of the crowd, Guenja appears; it is an effigy of a woman grossly fashioned with rags and garishly made-up. While some young girls carry it, the villagers spray it with water. The sages exit hastily from the council.

FIRST SAGE (interposing himself in front of the procession)

What are you doing there? Cease! You have lost your minds!
You blaspheme and you offend yourselves! These practices are completely useless! In the name of the Sky, you must stop...

The crowd that began by listening in semi-silence starts up the chant again and little by little drowns out the words of the old sage.

THE CROWD

Guenja! Guenja!
O bride! O mistress!
Give us the rain!

The sage attempts to oppose the advance of the procession when he is shaken. He is shoved, thrown to the ground and stomped. He remains collapsed and unconscious. The crowd carries Guenja for several circulations around the village square, occasionally

stopping. Then a profound silence sets in. Crowd and torch-bearers fall to their knees, in the grip of a somber ecstasy.

The use of idiosyncratic vocabulary was one of the primary challenges that I encountered while translating this work. In this section of text, as well as the title of the play, “la fiancée” is most accurately translated to “the bride” rather than “the fiancé” because the two words have different connotations in English. The word “fiancé” most often refers to someone who is engaged to be married to another person, whereas the word “bride” can refer to either one half of a legal partnership, a woman who has a spiritual connection to another entity, or a person who has made a symbolic commitment. For example, Catholic nuns are often referred to as brides of Christ because their vows to the Catholic Church resemble traditional marriage vows.

In the above passage, the effigy named Guenja is referred to as the bride who can bring rain to the village. This relationship is between an inanimate object and an atmospheric climate event, therefore the marriage is one that is spiritual in nature. Guenja cannot legally marry the rain, but according to the crones of the village the nature of her relationship with the rain allows her to communicate with it and cause it to fall upon the drought-stricken land.

“FIRST CRONE

Now may we bury Guenja. Let her rest in the earth. Dig here the grave that will receive her.

After having pushed back the sage with their feet, two men dig, rapidly a tomb at the middle of the square. They put Guenja in the freshly dug hole.

FIRST CRONE

O Guenja, o mother of hope, go search for water under the serpents’ slab!

O Guenja, bring back to us the water, so that the wheat may grow!

O Guenja, our bride, O Guenja, our mistress, take pity on us!

Rest in the deep earth like the seed and call the rain!

May it water you and water us!

O Guenja, protect us, preserve the life of our children!

Die in order to resuscitate us!

Die in order to revive us!

Remain with us!

Caretaker, take away from us all of our ills!

Prepare spring weddings that renew the year, make the seeds sprout!

Give strength and splendor to our life! ...

All of you, extinguish now your torches, leave this place: Guenja is dead!

The torches are extinguished.

THE CROWD

Tomorrow we will have rain!

SOME VOICES

Tomorrow! Tomorrow!

ANOTHER VOICE (farther)

Tomorrow it will rain!

Each one returns to their homes. Now that the square is deserted and somber, the old sage stands up and moves forward like a ghost.

THE SAGE

Blood, blood. I am hurt.

A beat

Sedition, disorder, folly... Misfortune, you all have looked deeply into the abyss. Its devils have made you their prey by attaching themselves to you."

In this passage, the translation of certain grammatical structures posed a problem, specifically in the chant-plea to Guenja. I had originally translated the phrase "may it water you and water us" as "that it waters you and waters us", because the French phrase included the use of the word "que". In French, "que" operates as a clause in a sentence similarly to the English word "that". However, in the context of this plea, the verb is in the subjunctive form which indicates that the phrase should have the tone of a request rather than a statement of fact. The structure of both types of sentences is the same, but the difference of the verb conjugations, as well as the context of the rest of the passage, led me to the correct translation of the phrase.

"ITHO, AMOUR, TWO THUGS, SADAK

I

An arid countryside. Amour and Itho enter.

ITHO

Amour ... Amour! Do you hear me? I'm at the end of my forces. It's as though you're not hearing me. You're not tired? If you do not have anything more for us to eat, let us rest at least. Do you want to do that?

AMOUR

Yes, let us stop a little here.

ITHO

Oh! ... my legs are failing me.

She sits at once at the edge of a rock.

This makes a good place to sit!

AMOUR

My poor Itho...

Itho begins to sob, but maintains control over herself.

ITHO

Ass that I am! Now I am not going to flood the mountain with my tears! In a moment, I will be better, and we... we will begin to walk again. We... you do not believe me.

AMOUR

I'm afraid that all of this is too hard for you.

ITHO

You don't want to believe me.

She is still shaken by sobbing, which she stifles.

AMOUR

I would like to...

ITHO (in a halting voice)

Do not speak any more words. It would anger me. The most difficult thing is done. If we only had a morsel of bread. Just some bread...

AMOUR

Ah! Bread, bread!

ITHO

There would be no one happier than us on earth.

AMOUR (after a beat)

We glimpsed two or three villages, all far away, on the last foothills of the mountain. No one will refuse us food once we are there."

The translation of specific vocabulary also posed a significant challenge. In this passage, the problem was not finding the most accurate translation of a French word but finding an appropriate English alternative. In order to arrive at the name "thugs" for the characters of the two travelling men, I had to rework the translation in several steps. The

direct translation of the word “maquignon” in English is “horse-trader”. This term would only serve to confuse the reader, as there is no indication that the two characters are travelling merchants. While “horse-trader” does have a connotation of dishonesty, I believed that the meaning would be lost on the casual reader. At first, I settled on the word “hustler” as an alternative, because the word does not connect to a specific occupation and, it carries the connotation of criminality. However, I later learned that this word was associated with male prostitution among queer studies scholars. No such activity appears in the text of the play, so I needed a new word that indicated criminal behavior without suggesting that the characters were associated with any specific communities outside the world of the play. Thus, the “Two Horse-traders” became the “Two Thugs”.

In addition, the literal translation of some of Itho’s phrases in this passage would sound stilted or confusing to an English-speaking audience. In French and English, the prefix “re-” indicates an action that can or will be taken multiple times. The sentence structure of the French language precludes any substitutions for this prefix, because the verb itself contains all of the information that the audience would need to know. However, it is necessary in English to use the word again when a prefix would sound unnatural before a certain verb, such as “walk”. Therefore, when Itho says “nous reprendrons notre marche”, the literal meaning of “will we retake our walk” becomes “we will begin to walk again”. The latter phrase sounds more natural to an English-speaking audience and carries the same intention as the original phrase.

“ITHO

We will arrive there before the night, you will see. What is wrong, Amour? Since this morning, you have had a somber manner. You have nothing more to fear, right? We are so far away now. Despite all their efforts, the villagers will not succeed at finding us again... Oh! How able I was to shudder on that day when we took refuge in this sort of well. You recall? We were surrounded. A man leaned over the edge in order to shoot a glance in there. I believed that it was finished, absolutely finished, that our last hour had arrived. And he set off again without having seen us; some spirits must have blindfolded his eyes.

She laughs

Since that day, I haven’t been afraid any longer.

AMOUR

I wonder if we would not have done better to return to the village.

ITHO

To return to the village! After what happened? I do not understand you. You really thought about that?

AMOUR

What would have happened?

ITHO

I do not understand you, Amour, no, I do not understand you. Can't you imagine for an instant what they would have done to us?

AMOUR

They would have understood that it is impossible to continue to live as if we are living in the past. May all that happened freeze to their hearts and reduce their existence, to a dream, to a lie!

ITHO

Do you really believe so? Really? How naïve you are! We would have paid dearly in order to be able to... Oh! Look who comes there!

Amour turns himself quickly.

These two men..."

In this passage, Itho argues that it was necessary for her and Amour to leave the village, while Amour believes that the two of them should return home. In order to convey the appropriate tone for each character, it was necessary to fill in some of the blanks left by the translation. The translation of certain prepositions contributed to this problem. In the French language, prepositions can be used in a variety of ways, whereas in English prepositions generally have one specific usage. "De" usually translates to the English "of" or "from", but in this passage the "de" in Itho's lines translates to "to" which creates a more accusatory statement "...what they would have done to us" rather than "...what they would have done of us". The latter phrase contributes to Itho's argument, implying that the members of the village would have punished the two lovers in some way.

Some of Itho's phrases sound stilted when directly translated into English. For example, the original text contains the phrase "ceux du village" which reads in this passage as "the villagers". However, I had translated each word separately in my original draft which read "those of the village". While the phrase is grammatically correct, on stage the language would sound unnatural. People who live in a village are called villagers, and there is no need to use the definition of that type of person in order to refer to that type of person.

"AMOUR

Those are indeed the first human faces that we've seen in a long time. There is nothing to fear: these are not people we know.

ITHO

... Perhaps they might have something to eat. We could ask it of them. You don't think so?

AMOUR

After all, why not? They will understand. There's not even grass to graze on in this deserted place.

The two travelers appear.

FIRST TRAVELER

Heh! Heh! People around these parts? My jokers, you have indeed chosen the right place, you, if your goal is to remain hidden from view.

His companion bursts into a cavernous laugh.

Where did you come from looking like that, bloody name of a dog!

AMOUR

And what about you?

FIRST TRAVELER

Us?

To his companion that he takes by the elbow.

He asks, this brave boy, where are we coming from. But he doesn't seem to be able know how to say why he came to this damned desert with his young doe.

The second traveler emits some inarticulate sounds; he is a mute.

ITHO

Good people, Providence brought you just to us. I am going to tell you what he does not dare tell you. Do you not have something to eat? Some bread by chance? Anything! We have been boarders at the inn of starvation for several days, the saliva in our mouths is becoming thicker and our vision is becoming blurry; hunger has woven spider webs over our eyes. If it is possible for you, help us."

The "First Traveler" character uses the term "sa chevrette" in order to refer to Amour's relationship with Itho. The word literally translates to "young goat", which would normally be used as a term of endearment between two lovers. I changed the animal from a goat to a doe, because in English the word "goat" is not commonly used as a diminutive. Thus, the English-speaking audience may not understand what the author is trying to convey. The "doe" was chosen because that animal conveys a sense of

innocence and purity, and it is also used in English to describe women. For example, young, kind, and/or naïve women are often referred to as “doe-eyed”.

The metaphors that Itho uses in her dialogue were difficult to translate, because the sentence structure of a metaphor in France makes the imagery seem more literal in English. Itho begins the description of her hunger with the word “voici” which would indicate that the speaker is presenting a physical object to the listener. However, hunger is a more abstract concept, and her use of the phrases “inn of starvation” and “has woven spider webs in our eyes” indicate clearly to the audience that she and Amour are in a dire state. The English-speaking audience does not need to be introduced through a transition phrase or word like “voici”.

“FIRST TRAVELER

You need someone to assist you? Oh! Oh! Poor sweetheart. You are well-meaning. Providence put us on your path, you said it! Right away, my sweet. As for us, we are peaceful horse-dealers, a little lost also, who are going walking and walking to see what we can buy and sell... wait until I see what there is inside here.

The mute engages in mimicry intended to emphasize these remarks. His companion makes the appearance of digging in his bag and secretly makes signs to the mute.

ITHO

Bread... nothing more than bread, mercy.

Suddenly the mute leaps with his club towards Amour, who avoids the strike. But the first traveler attacks him next.

ITHO

Watch out, Amour! Do not hurt him! Ah! Ah! Let go!

A melee follows. Itho calls for help. Groggy, Amour is left inanimate in place. The two travelers seize Itho and drag her with them. She struggles.

FIRST TRAVELER

Oh! But this woman has a good arm! You don't know how to walk anymore? We are going to carry you! Ah! You're opening your mouth as if to make a sound?

He hits her.

Go there! Bite! Cry! Cry until you're all filled up! As long as you can! Now is the time. After, it will no longer be necessary.

ITHO

Let go of me! Let go of me! Miserable people!

FIRST TRAVELER

Why let go of you? Would people with nothing weighing on their conscience, honest subjects, would they come to spend time in this isolated country?

ITHO

Ah! Demons!

She throws some punches in their direction.

Leave me alone!

FIRST TRAVELER

Cry, cry thus, my sweetheart! The sweet song! Some bread, you will have some as much as you want! Wait only a little bit.

All three of them disappear behind some rocks.

VOICE OF ITHO

Leave me alone! No! I – do – not – want! I – do – not ...”

This passage includes dialogue that would make more sense if this play was physically staged. The two travelers attempt to capture Itho. Amour fights with them, but the travelers succeed by the end of the scene. One of the most difficult aspects of translation in this passage is conveying the tone of these lines. The reader understands that a fight is happening and that certain characters are commanding others, but it is difficult to convey desperation, fear, or anxiety by solely focusing on the words that the author has written. In order to truly communicate the brutality of what is happening in this passage, it would be necessary to put the words into the bodies of actors. This story was meant to be performed. It is impossible for the translator to capture the full meaning of these words without producing the play as a performance.

Silence. After a moment, Itho comes back completely undone. She kneels close to Amour who emits some dull growls without taking back awareness. The two passers-by appear again. They hesitatingly approach. The first traveler removes a bun from his bag. He leaves it on the ground not far from Itho.

FIRST TRAVELER

Child, forget us. Do not curse us.

He leads by the sleeve his companion who has trouble tearing himself away from the fascination that Itho exercises on him. They go.

AMOUR (returning to her)

Itho! Itho! Where did they go off to? Aaah! Where are you?

ITHO

There. I am there, close to you, Amour.

AMOUR (trying to get himself up)

Tell me: where did they go off to? Wait for me to stand...

ITHO

Oh! Stay as you are, do not move. You have a gaping wound on your head, your hair is all tarred with blood.

She dabs a part of his skull with her dress. All unsteady, Amour gets himself up while she remains kneeled in the same place.

AMOUR

Now, tell me...

Itho turns her head to the side in the direction the men went off to.

ITHO

They are far.

They look at each other in silence.

AMOUR

They r(aped you)...

A beat. He slowly moves closer to her: he caresses her hair.

One issue that is unique to the translation of dramatic texts is attempting to translate the subtext of the author's words. Generally, the playwright includes ellipses in order to signify a thought that the character cannot finish, a phrase that has been interrupted, or a pause in the action. When Amour says "Ils t'ont" the audience must understand that he makes a realization about what the two men did to Itho. In French, the use of the pronoun before the verb easily signifies that Amour refers to rape. In English, the parentheses indicate that the rest of the phrase should not be spoken, but the actor will explicitly know the act to which he refers.

My sister. My little sister Itho! Let me breathe you in. Let me cherish you. My lavender flower. May I cherish your perfume, your looks, your hands. My heart is engorged in despair, let us leave this horrible place. We will see new lands, another existence is going to begin. My little sister...

The words get stuck in his throat.

AMOUR (after a beat)

Who can choose the hour of his destiny? It takes us by surprise, grabbing our hair when we least expect it and we recognize it as an old scoundrel.

In a growl

Where are your hands?

ITHO

What are you looking for?

AMOUR

Your hands. Do not refuse to let me see them. Allow me to take them...

He gives her a kiss on each hand.

Allow me to say to you... by these hands, that nothing is changed... that you stay the same for me. My sister, my bride...

ITHO

It would be best to just kill me right here. Or bury me in a silo: I beg of you. Let me spend the rest of my life there! May the light of day no longer see me!

Sobs make her voice break.

AMOUR

Each one receives the hurt that is due to him.

He caresses her head. Then he lifts her by the waist, picks up the bundle, stuffs the bread in his shirt.

Yes. We must endure suffering and pay for the life that is given to us and for the white light of the day that is dispensed to us along with it! Come.

ITHO

Oh! Shut up. I need silence.

They leave, Amour supporting Itho. Enter Sadak who watches them move away, then disappear.

The first time that I read this play, I was confused by the use of the term “soeur” that Amour uses to refer to Itho. As a native English speaker, I have not heard the term “sister” to refer to anyone other than a female sibling. I had also not seen the word used

in other French-language fiction that I had previously read. As a term of endearment, the word “sister” would appear to have incestuous connotations, especially as an English-speaking American. In this passage, the word seems to convey familial ties and the strength of the bond between Amour and Itho. However, I do not know of an equivalent replacement word that would have the same connotations as “sister” without the awkward implications. In this instance, I have kept the direct translation of the word in order to most closely match the tone conveyed by the author.

“SADAK

I would have been able to bring to them assistance and perhaps save them. I would have been able to do it... But me, Sadak-the-honest, I followed and found their tracks with great difficulty in order to kill them and not in order to save them.

A beat

Such as I am there, and such as they go in front of me, these are condemned people and they are at my mercy. It is my right to do anything to them... Great is their weakness and profound their confusion. I should take advantage of this moment in order to be done with it and not have to go any farther. A strike of this sacrificial knife for the one, one strike for the other one. Justice would be done, everything would return to order at home. Yes, everything would return to order and, at the same time, I would relieve them of themselves.

A beat

Why is it necessary to wait? ... Tomorrow... Do we know what tomorrow will be made of? Their fate, which is found entirely between my hands, will not be changed. At all. Which benefit will they take away thus from extra time if they’ve lost their right to life? Repentance and return to the village are equally forbidden to them. Even if they wanted to make their submission at this hour, I am not qualified to receive it.

A beat

May destiny fulfill itself... I, Sadak, am here solely to fulfill a mission that was entrusted to me. I neither hate them nor feel sorry for them.

A beat

However, to see them go like this in front me now...”

At the end of this scene, Sadak appears on stage and explains to the audience that he is conflicted about whether or not to kill Amour and Itho. In one sense, he believes that he is destined to kill the two lovers, but in another sense there is no urgency with which to carry out this task. He does not intercede on the lovers’ behalf when they are

attacked by the two thugs, but he does not take advantage of their weakened state after the attack to kill them himself. There is a clearly presented conflict between Sadak's interest in the Amour and Itho living out their lives away from the village and his duty to kill the two characters on behalf of the village. Ultimately Sadak chooses not to carry out the sentence, and the rest of the play carries on.

This passage contains few complications from the translation, as the vocabulary is straightforward and the structure of the sentences follows regular patterns common in the French language. Sadak is delivering a soliloquy directly to the audience; therefore it would make sense that the character would use as clear and precise language as possible. In order to understand the subsequent events of the narrative as well as Sadak's role in those events, the audience needs to be told Sadak's thoughts explicitly. In addition, there are no complex stage directions contained within this passage. Thus, the author makes clear that the content of Sadak's speech is what's most important about the end of this scene.

II

An arid landscape with a stream, at the end of the day. Amour and Itho arrive.

ITHO

Amour, water! Oh! Look, look! Water! I'm falling! Water, water!

She bursts into tears.

AMOUR

You are no longer able to do so. My chest is on fire, mine too. Do not move; take another breath. Got it? Now, walk. I'll hold you up.

Lifting her halfway, he leads her just until the stream at the edge of which both of them fall.

AMOUR

Triple idiot! Half-wit that I am! Clumsy!

First, he puts himself on his knees. He picks up Itho, leans her against a part of a rock.

Are you feeling ill? I ask you forgiveness. There. Are you well?

Itho stays silent. She contemplates the stream with a sort of stupor. Amour collects some water in the palms of his hands and makes her drink. He repeats this gesture three times. With the same water that he takes in his hands, he washes her face, then he smooths her hair. Itho has a poor smile. She grasps at him a hand and presses it against his lips.

AMOUR

Is that better, small mother? Hush, say nothing, do not move your lips; taste the rest you've earned. Sit down, my little Itho.

ITHO (rising)

No! I want to walk, to walk again, to move myself away from here! I beg of you, come!

...

AMOUR

What are you doing, let's see? We still have several days of walking ahead of us.

ITHO

I beg of you! Come! Sorry!

AMOUR

Calm yourself. You need rest.

ITHO (allowing herself to fall back into place)

Sorry...

AMOUR

Console yourself. Do not have such a sad heart.

ITHO

I do not know what I have; everything I have tears itself away from me.

AMOUR

Be well!

He takes her hand."

This passage includes several idiosyncratic phrases that communicate ill health and pain. Amour's line of dialogue "J'ai la poitrine en feu" literally translates to "I have the chest on fire," and in this passage of the final translation it has been modified to read "My chest is on fire". In the French language, the verb avoir (or to have) is used to indicate which part of the body is in pain. For example, in order to say that one has a headache, one would use the phrase "j'ai mal a la tête". While Amour's line of dialogue is structured similarly, the use of metaphor created an inaccurate translation at first. Given the context of the scene, the best interpretation of this phrase is that Amour experiences severe chest pain after being lost in the desert. His chest is not actually burning in flames.

Another of Amour's lines in this passage is "T'es-tu fais mal?" which would literally translate to "Are you made bad?" However, the purpose of Amour's dialogue in this scene is to ascertain the state of Itho's well-being. Both characters are exhausted, in pain, and desperate for water. Asking Itho if she has been "made bad" might imply that

she has an evil personality or has done something to transform into a bad person. That information would not make sense, especially given that Amour and Itho are fulfilling the archetypes of the two lovers rather than two villains in the story. Immediately preceding this question, Amour complains about chest pain. Thus, the original phrase would make the most sense translated as “Are you feeling ill?” Amour’s own body is in pain, and it would be reasonable that he would ask after his lover Itho’s health.

“I will sing you a song which will draw away your hurt and misfortune.

A bird

Sings

His yellow color;

...

The sky is blue

By its height

The sea is blue

By its depth;

...

The bride and groom go

To the mountain

In order to make spring there;

...

In the sea go

The birds

Singing on clear

Branches

Ah! What a sound!

...

If you saw my house

On the hills

It is as if you saw

A boat in the sea.

...

Sadak appears. He does not betray his presence. He surveys Amour and Itho without moving.

ITHO

Let me forget, forget it all... My memories, the night that is falling on us, the uncertainty.

Oh! Everything I fear! ...

AMOUR

May I give you hope which fills me. May fortune be with you today and everyday that will follow. Let my eyes satiate themselves by looking upon you. I will buy these moments from my life; each of them contains centuries of existence. By this hair, this

piece of night that I lift my hands, where the voice of the mountain murmurs, you will no longer have any worries.

Itho moves Amour's hand away from her.

Do you need to drink again, Itho?

ITHO

I am no longer thirsty.

The song that Amour sings to Itho underwent several changes in order to more accurately represent the author's intentions as well as to match its poetic qualities. In the narrative, Amour and Itho are two lovers who have escaped the village in order to be with each other. The third stanza of Amour's song reflects their relationship in the play. They are the metaphorical bride and groom and, they will "make spring" by starting their lives anew in a faraway place. In order to create this particular meaning, I had to think beyond the literal meanings of dialogue in the script.

The first line of this stanza reads "Les fiancés s'en vont", and I had originally thought that "fiancés" should be translated literally. However, the relationship between Amour and Itho is not that of an officially engaged couple. They are in hiding and aspire to be married. In addition, the words "bride" and "groom" can be interpreted as having a spiritual meaning, rather than a strictly literal one. The third line of this stanza reads "Pour y faire le printemps". In French, the verb "faire" usually translates as "to do", and it is generally used in phrases which describes weather conditions. Literally translated into English, the phrase reads "in order to do spring there", but that sounds extremely awkward. In addition, the verb "do" is not specific enough to convey the intentions of the author. Yet, the verb "faire" can also be translated as "to make" in the sense of physically creating something. Because Amour and Itho are creating a new life together, "make" is the most appropriate choice of verb for that line of the stanza.

The fourth stanza ends with "Ah! Quel bruit!", which literally translates to "Ah! What noise!" in English. However, the connotation of the word "noise" does not match tonally to the singing of birds. One may use that word in order to convey frustration, annoyance, or anger at a specific sound, but Amour's song is meant to comfort Itho after her traumatic experience. "What sound!" conveys a more joyful opinion of singing birds. Rather than frustration, the bride and groom can take pleasure in the nature that surrounds them.

Amour hesitates then goes to take the bundle. After some new hesitations, he removes some of the loaf that he had stuffed there before. He makes side glances to Itho. He leaves the bread within reach of Itho's hand. He suffers. Itho contemplates the bread in silence and does not touch it. Some tears run down her eyes. Amour bends down, picks up the bread, splits it. He takes a piece. A beat. He begins to eat it slowly. In a mute entreaty, he presents the bread to Itho. She accepts it. They eat together. The night falls.

AMOUR

It is completely black.

ITHO

Where are you? Let me see you with my hands because I cannot do so with my eyes.

AMOUR

Let us settle ourselves here for the night. Tomorrow belongs to us.

The darkness envelops everything.

This passage proved to be particularly difficult to translate due to the use of idiosyncratic vocabulary and uncommon sentence structure. In French, the final stage direction of this scene “L’obscurité enveloppe tout”, and *obscurité* is a cognate of the English word “obscurity”. However, I understand the word *obscurité* to relate more to an abstract concept of deception or hiding, rather than something physical. In English, darkness has a physical presence, and on stage darkness is physically created through the use of artificial lights. Thus, “darkness” is a better choice for the translation of this stage direction.

Additionally, the word “tout” directly translates to “all”, but it can also be used as a short stand-in for “toutes choses” which translates to “everything” in English. If a director or designer were to read “The darkness envelops all”, that person would ask the question “all what?”. On stage, the use of the word “all” should be followed by the things that the darkness should envelop (i.e. all of the characters, all of the scenery, all of the stage) in order for a director or designer to understand how the playwright imagines the world of the play. The word “everything” is the best choice for the translation of “tout” because it captures the totality of the darkness and how it operates on stage.