

BRIDGING OUR DIVIDE

TRANSCRIPT

ASHLEY OBSCURA: I'm honored to be here today to introduce Bridging Our Divide, an event organized in collaboration with the 2021 Blue Metropolis Festival's NEXT program.

In Translation, Bridging Our Divide will be a bilingual reading and conversation that brings together Marcela Huerta, Daphné B., and Alex Manley, three Montreal based authors from francophone and anglophone writing scenes, to read from and engage in a dialogue about their work and experiences in and with translation.

It might be said that anglophone and francophone writing communities in Quebec experience multiple solitude, cultural, linguistic, and geographic solitude, but also often mutually exclusive ones. How do local emerging writers, both english and french speaking feel about these solitudes? How do we feel about each other's drastically different accesses to community, media, markets and what can we learn from our contrasting contexts and struggles? How can we work together to better reach new audiences? To share our access with one another? What has the internet done? What can it do about that? If we meet in translation, in solidarity, can we bridge our divide?

In celebration of the publication of the french translation of Marcela Huerta's *Tropico*, Marcela will engage these questions and more with the book's translator Daphné B. and Alex Manley, who recently translated Daphné's award winning *Maquillée/ Made Up*, due out this fall from Coach House Books. Together, they will share readings from these published works and discuss the joys of and their experiences with translation.

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Daphné B.

SCHMONEY.

La pop star anarchiste a eu un bébé avec le fils du milliardaire. C'est un motton gris-vert de cash et de guns. C'est la preuve, pour ceux et celles qui en avaient besoin, qu'elle ne pensait pas vraiment ce qu'elle disait.

Je pense souvent au bébé qu'ont eu la pop star et le riche héritier.

Je pense au motton gris-vert de cash et de guns, à cette couleur où richesse et violence, fibres indémêlables d'un même tissu, s'entrecroisent. J'essaie de comprendre la couleur, de mettre en mots sa confusion. Le motton est trouble, comme de l'eau sale. Il est opaque et ça lui sert. C'est qu'il voudrait masquer sa vérité banale : il n'y a pas de cash sans gun.

Avoir un motton de quelque chose, c'est en posséder une grande quantité. Or l'opulence présuppose la rareté, car elle fleurit sur la misère des autres. De cette relation étroite et essentielle naît la violence. Ce bébé-là tire du gun.

Le bébé que la poète Anne Boyer décrit n'est pas gris, mais grisâtre. Il n'est pas vert, mais verdâtre. En fait, sa teinte malheureuse et inaboutie mute constamment. De là son suffixe *-âtre*. C'est qu'elle tire toujours sur une autre couleur et se métamorphose, comme un organe en décomposition. Le rein d'un cadavre passe du brun au noir. La trachée, d'abord blanche, devient rouge, puis olivâtre. La couleur trace un mouvement, nous enferme dans un cycle. Et personne n'échappe à sa danse.

L'entrée en scène et l'importance grandissante du capital érotique ouvrent la voie aux campagnes publicitaires qui lient explicitement les produits cosmétiques au sex-appeal. C'est le cas de la campagne Fire & Ice de Revlon, une des premières en son genre. Lancée en 1952, elle connaît un succès historique. Ses pubs vantent les mérites d'un

rouge à lèvres et d'un vernis à ongles qui matchent. On destine la teinte cramoisie à la femme «de glace et de feu», cette créature enfermée dans la posture anti-nomique du glamour ; lascive, mais chaste. Je la connais, cette femme-là. C'est celle que j'ai souvent voulu incarner. Un test psychologique accompagne la photo pleine page d'une star en robe à paillettes : 15 questions auxquelles on doit répondre pour déterminer si nous aussi, on est des Fire & Ice bunnies. Au bout de huit « oui », on peut avoir la certitude que la gamme de produits est faite pour nous.

Avez-vous déjà dansé pieds nus?

Avez-vous déjà fait un vœu à la nouvelle lune?

Avez-vous déjà voulu porter un bracelet de cheville?

Espérez-vous secrètement que le prochain gars que vous rencontrerez sera psychiatre?

Je reviens de psychothérapie. J'ai le glamour en pyjama, qui mange un sandwich, qui perd une heure à scroller sur Instagram. Pourtant, je veux dire à Revlon que moi aussi, j'aime jouer avec le feu. Oui, c'est vrai, je patine sur les lacs à peine gelés. Oui, partout. Oui, Revlon, la musique tzigane me rend triste. Et oui, oui, oui, si c'était possible de partir en voyage sur Mars, je partirais là-bas, je ferais ma touriste. Je suis le genre de femme qui ne suit pas les recettes, qui met deux pincées de tout quand il en faut juste une. Je suis une fille qui danse pieds nus, qui ferme les yeux quand on l'embrasse. Moi aussi, Revlon, la fourrure m'excite, même (et surtout) sur le corps des autres femmes. Moi aussi, je rougis. Et dans les partys achalandés, je panique au début, puis je finis toujours par passer une belle soirée. Oui, oui, oui à toutes les questions C'est moi. Je suis du genre à me faire des mèches blond platine sur un coup de tête, sans consulter mon mari. Fire and Ice. Je lève la main, comme si je voulais parler. Je couine doucement dans mon appart vide. OUI.

J'ai répondu « oui » aux 15 questions. J'ai l'impression que Revlon est descendu dans ma poitrine, est allé parler à mes désirs de petite fille. Cette petite fille là chante, les poignets cerclés de bracelets d'amitié. Elle rêve à des pieds nus, des mèches blond platine et des partys achalandés. Elle ne sait pas encore qu'au cœur de la fête, il y a une autre fête, un vertige qu'elle souhaitera toujours plus grand. Car il faut s'approcher de la mort pour se sentir vivant.

Oui, je suis triste, triste comme une bête de foire, triste comme un aigle plus d'ailes, triste comme un violon avec rien qu'une corde et une corde pétée, en plus, triste comme une femme qui vieillit. Triste, triste, triste... Ou peut-être que si je disais juste « fuck », on comprendrait. Alors, je m'approche de la mort, je joue avec le feu, je patine sur une mince couche de glace et je mets deux pincées de sel dans ma soupe. J'ai beau suspendre le temps chaque matin, le corps féminin [est construit] comme une unité définie par la chronologie (et de cette façon menacée par le délabrement). Bientôt, je ne pourrai même plus avoir d'enfant. Si tu savais, Revlon. Je suis de la glace et du fucking feu. Je suis un aigle qui survole tout, même sa propre disparition.

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Alex Manley

SCHMONEY.

The anarchist pop star had a baby with the son of a billionaire. It's a little green-grey wad of cash and guns. Proof, for those who needed it, that she hadn't really meant the things she'd said.

I think about the pop star's baby with the billion-heir often.

I think about it, that little green-grey wad, the amalgamation of cash, of guns—about that colour at the intersection of wealth and violence, infinitely interlacing strands of the same fabric all come together. I try to understand the colour, to put the complexity of it into words. The green-grey wad, as murky as dirty water. Opaque, which works for it. That wad would love to cover up the banality of the truth: wealth comes from the barrel of a gun.

A wad isn't just a crumpled-up thing—it's also a stack of bills. Opulence, you see, presupposes scarcity—it blooms brightest in the garden of other people's misery. That intimate relationship between money and violence. This baby was born a gunslinger.

The baby that Anne Boyer describes isn't actually grey. More grey-ish. Nor is it green—more green-ish. In fact, if you look closely, it's an ever-shifting, mutable hue. Hence the '-ish'es. It's forever on the doorstep of another shade, metamorphosing, a decomposing organ. Did you know that? A dead person's kidney goes from brown to black. The trachea, which starts out white, becomes red, before landing on olive-ish. Colour is movement—it traps us in the steps of a dance, one that no one is allowed to sit out.

The burgeoning importance of erotic capital paved the way for advertising campaigns that explicitly linked cosmetics to sex appeal. Consider Revlon's "Fire and Ice" campaign, one of the first of its kind. Launched in 1952, its ads for a matching lipstick and nail polish were a historic success. The campaign was targeted at so-called "women of fire and ice." Who is this woman? She's a legendary creature, forever caught between the twin poles that circumscribe female glamour: Virgin and Whore. I know her well. She's the woman I've always wanted to be.

One ad in the campaign paired a full-page photo of a star in a sequined dress with a little proto-Buzzfeed quiz: fifteen questions to help determine whether you, too, qualify as a woman of Fire and Ice. Tick off eight or more yeses and you're in:

Have you ever danced with your shoes off?

Did you ever wish on a new moon?

Have you ever wanted to wear an ankle bracelet?

Do you secretly hope the next man you meet will be a psychiatrist?

Me, I just got back from therapy, with all the glamour of a woman still in her PJs, eating a sandwich, scrolling down the rivers of Instagram for an hour. Still, I want to let Revlon know that I, too, like to play with fire, and I, too, like to skate on thin ice. Yes, Revlon, gypsy music does make me sad, and yes, Revlon, if I could fly to Mars then I would, and go full tourist. Yes, Revlon, I am the kind of woman who says, 'To hell with the recipe' and adds two dashes of bitters instead of just one, yes, I do dance barefoot, and yes, I do close my eyes when I go in for a kiss. Yes, Revlon, fur does turn me on, particularly on other women's bodies. I, too, blush when I flirt, and at crowded parties, I, too, panic at first and then invariably end up having a great time. Yes, yes, yes to every question, I absolutely would go platinum blonde on a whim, without ever consulting my husband. It is I, Fire and Ice woman. I raise my hand, as if asking for permission to speak, and whisper a quiet "Yes" into the emptiness of my apartment.

Fifteen yeses later, it feels like Revlon's become a part of me, has travelled deep within me, gone to speak to my inner child's truest wishes. She's singing, her wrists encircled with friendship bracelets; she dreams of bare feet, platinum blonde locks, and crowded parties. She doesn't know yet that at the heart of the party there is another, different party, a vertigo that she'll always want to feel more intensely. Sometimes the only way to feel alive is to fly too close to death.

"Yes, I am sad, sad as a circus-lioness. Sad as an eagle without wings, sad as a violin with only one string and that one broken, sad as a woman who is growing old. Sad, sad, sad... Or perhaps if I just said 'merde' it would do as well." So I draw closer to death, play with fire, skate on thin ice, and put two pinches of salt in my soup. No matter how well I freeze time each

morning before the mirror, a woman's body is "*a unit defined by chronology (and thus threatened by decay).*" Soon, I'll be too old to ever have kids. If only you knew, Revlon. I'm fucking fire and ice—or maybe I'm an eagle soaring high above it all, above everything, even its own extinction.

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Marcela Huerta

SAD

I made a joke and it did not land and I remembered

that I used to be funny

and that I was so funny

I thought I could be funny

and someone would pay me to be funny

can you imagine?

today I tried to type

dad

and it autocorrected

to sad

and I thought

isn't that always the way

I am sorry

I could not come to your party because of my sad

do you know about my sad?

I heard others are sad too but they never said

they were happy

we have never been sad

or we have never showed up anywhere sad

because that is unpleasant to look at

it is hard to pay a sad maid they say that all the time

and you know

we are modelling for bananas

we are happy to be here

thank you for inviting us

an example of how

not to be sad is this

we are at the doctor's office

don't worry!

that dent in my nose

is not new

it is from when a soldier kicked me in the face

in the example my mother

is laughing

and everyone is moving slowly now

but she is still laughing

so they will know it is a joke

look at you and her

drunk together off black cats

tonight is a happy night

so you put wine in even the littlest glasses

and my mother goes to get more treats

and you say to me

and to a boy I love

that you tried to kill yourself

when you were five

because you thought

no god would put you in

such a violent life

with such a violent man

doing such violent things

but halfway through i'm sure

you could have turned it

into a joke

EL CHACOTERO

Here is one of your funny stories.

You grow up on a farm in your birthplace of Lota. Your mother has you at 15 and people say she makes the prettiest bride. Possibly by many standards you are quite well-off, but definitely by others you are not. Who is in the house? We count your mother, your father, your brother, and your sister, but we count also your three pigs, your goose, and your chickens. We will count also your dog. The classic party story of the Nuñez home is this: Your father has named the goose, the dog, and one of the pigs. They have very nice and very formal names, so that friends of your father Raul say, *Hola po' Señor Walder*, or, *Buenas tardes Señorito Patricio*, as they are walking down the street. This last one makes the most people laugh because Patricio is the long form of the diminutive Pato, which means duck, which is an insulting thing to name a goose.

On Saturdays the pig follows your father to the bar and sits next to him, near enough to place a drink on. He also serves to bring the ground up in case one falls, which is a help. Many are jealous. Many believe the pig is an accomplice in the act of cheating at cards, but those in the know are well aware the dog is the mastermind, look at his eyes.

On Tuesdays Raul brings the goose as well—full house. A less funny story that has been told many times is that one Tuesday a man pulls a knife on Raul and knocks over a table. Under the table is Patricio the goose, always at the ready, who viciously mauls the man, but loses his life in the battle.

Your father is inconsolable. You have never seen him cry so much, and you never will again. Patricio was a good goose, and many feel for Raul and are thankful he still has Walder and Guillermo, though the sight of the three of them with their heads down by

such an expensive cross still makes them laugh. Maybe it is the fact that by winter the grave is empty and your belly is full, but that's the way life has to go sometimes.

CASTRÉE

Someone I've never met before has just died and in thinking of her I read that until the day before she dies she is working or trying to work, which is also working. I think of you in your bed as you listen to a song about taking the hand of a metaphorical brother and letting yourself loosen from the ground gently and in pieces, as in a gold miner's pan so that you shake and shake until all of a sudden there are little pieces of gold glinting, rolling in circles, always having been there, but still you are surprised to see them. The song is not like the songs you played on your guitar, the song is a newer-sounding song, and it is also a song that, if I heard it on the radio, I would think very badly made. In fact in this memory here you are standing in front of me and you are so proud of this album, which you have found for five dollars, and here I am looking at it and thinking it is worth much less. And for this I am sorry.

I never met anyone with less of an inclination for the guitar. I remember my mother watching you with her whole face wrinkled toward the centre trying to avoid instructing someone who might as well be a stranger at this point. I think you thought it was only funny when the cat put his hand on your guitar and never took it as anything more. But behind your back and in front we were calling you *desafinado*. Remember when you asked my mother to sing your favourite song with you and she couldn't remember it? You kept saying, you know it, please I know you know it and then you said: You know you've really lost your voice. It's disappointing, Yoli. Who is this person? Who are you and why were you invited? To look to the top of a wall and see nothing but the sky at different times of day, look at how many times you have used the same word, do you become tired of yourself?

I wonder if standing still is work. Here I have a photograph of you looking darker than an oak tree sitting on a roof and smiling. You are working. My mother touches it and she says, when everyone had gone on unemployment he was still tarring that roof like a pack animal.

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Daphné B

SAD

j'ai fait une blague et personne n'a ri
et je me suis rappelé
qu'avant j'étais drôle
que j'étais tellement drôle
que je pensais que je pouvais être drôle
et que quelqu'un me paierait
pour être drôle
t'imagines?
aujourd'hui j'ai voulu taper dad
qu'autocorrect a remplacé par
sad
et j'ai pensé
et si c'était ça la vie
je m'excuse
je pouvais pas venir à ton party
à cause de mon sad
connais-tu mon sad?

j'ai entendu dire
que d'autres aussi étaient sad

mais iels n'ont jamais dit
qu'iels étaient heureux·euses
on n'a jamais été sad
ou on n'a jamais montré
notre sad nulle part
parce que c'est désagréable
à regarder
c'est dur de payer une femme de ménage sad
c'est ce qu'on dit tout le temps
et tsé
c'est nous qu'on voit sur les bananes
on est content·es d'être ici
merci de nous avoir invitées

voici un exemple à suivre pour
ne pas être sad
on est dans le cabinet du médecin
t'inquiète pas!
la bosse sur mon nez
date pas d'hier
c'est un soldat qui m'a donné un coup de pied
dans la face
dans cet exemple-là ma mère
rit
et tout le monde bouge au ralenti maintenant
mais elle rit toujours
pour qu'on sache que c'est une blague
regarde-toi avec elle
saoul·es, à boire des chats noirs
ce soir c'est soir de fête

alors tu verses du vin même dans les plus petits
verres
et ma mère part acheter d'autres gâteries
et tu me dis à moi
et à un gars que j'aime
que tu as essayé de te suicider
quand tu avais cinq ans
parce que tu pensais
qu'aucun dieu ne pouvait t'imposer
une vie aussi violente
avec un homme aussi violent
qui faisait des choses aussi violentes,
mais à mi-chemin dans ton histoire je suis sûre
que tu aurais pu la transformer
en blague

EL CHACOTERO

Voici une de tes histoires drôles.

Tu as grandi sur une ferme dans la ville où tu es né, Lota. Ta mère a quinze ans quand elle t'a et les gens disent qu'elle fait la plus belle des mariées. Peut-être qu'à bien des égards, vous êtes plutôt aisés, mais à bien d'autres, vous ne l'êtes pas. Qui est dans la maison? Il y a ta mère, ton père, ton frère et ta sœur, mais il y a aussi tes trois cochons, ton oie et tes poules. Il y a aussi ton chien. La traditionnelle histoire de la famille Nuñez, telle que racontée dans les partys, va comme suit: ton père a donné un nom à l'oie, au chien et à un des cochons. Ils ont des noms vraiment beaux et vraiment formels, alors quand ils se promènent dans la rue, les amis de ton père Raul leur lancent *Hola po' Señor Walder*, ou *Buenas tardes Señorito Patricio*. C'est ce nom-là qui fait rire le plus, parce que

Patricio, c'est la forme longue du diminutif Pato, qui veut dire canard, et c'est insultant pour une oie de s'appeler comme ça.

Les samedis, le cochon suit ton père jusqu'au bar et s'assoit à côté de lui, assez proche pour qu'on puisse poser un verre dessus. Il sert aussi de sol sur lequel s'appuyer quand on tombe, ça aide. Plusieurs sont jaloux. Plusieurs pensent que le cochon est le complice de ton père et l'aide à tricher aux cartes, mais ceux qui savent sont au courant: le cerveau, c'est le chien, faut voir ses yeux.

Les mardis, Raul vient aussi avec l'oie – la salle est comble. L'histoire moins drôle qu'on a racontée souvent, c'est le mardi où un homme menace Raul avec un couteau et renverse une table. Sous la table, il y a Patricio l'oie, toujours au poste, qui s'en prend à l'homme de façon brutale, mais qui meurt au combat.

Ton père est inconsolable. Tu ne l'as jamais vu pleurer autant, et jamais plus ça n'arrivera. Patricio était une bonne oie et beaucoup ont de la peine pour Raul et sont contentes qu'il ait encore Walder et Guillermo, même si la scène que forme le trio, prosterné devant une croix qui coûte aussi cher, les fait encore rire. Ou peut-être que c'est le fait qu'une fois l'hiver venu, la tombe est vide et ton ventre est plein, mais c'est comme ça, la vie, des fois.

CASTRÉE

Une personne que je n'ai jamais rencontrée de ma vie vient juste de mourir, et au moment où je pense à elle, je lis que jusqu'à la veille de sa mort, elle travaillait ou elle essayait de travailler, ce qui est aussi du travail. Je pense à toi dans ton lit qui écoutes une chanson qui parle de prendre la main d'un frère métaphorique et de te détacher doucement du sol, en morceaux, comme dans la batée d'un chercheur d'or, pour bouger et bouger encore jusqu'à ce que tout à coup, il y ait des petites pépites d'or qui scintillent, qui culbutent, qui ont toujours été là, et que pourtant, tu es surpris de voir.

La chanson n'est pas comme les chansons que tu jouais à la guitare, la chanson sonne plus récente, et c'est aussi une chanson que je trouverais vraiment mal faite si je l'entendais à la radio. En fait, dans mon souvenir, tu es là en face de moi et tu es tellement fier de l'album que tu as déniché pour 5 dollars, et je suis là qui le regarde et qui pense qu'il vaut vraiment moins que ça. Et pour ça, je m'excuse.

Je n'ai jamais rencontré quelqu'un d'aussi peu talentueux à la guitare. Je me souviens de ma mère qui te regardait, le visage entier plissé vers son centre qui essayait de ne pas corriger quelqu'un qui aurait très bien pu être un inconnu, rendu là. Je crois que tu ne pensais à rien d'autre qu'à rire quand le chat posait sa patte sur ta guitare, et tu n'as jamais pris ça pour autre chose qu'une blague. Mais dans ton dos et dans ta face, on t'appelait desafinado. Tu te rappelles quand tu as demandé à ma mère de chanter ta chanson préférée avec toi et qu'elle ne s'en rappelait plus ? T'arrêtais pas de dire, tu la connais, s'il te plaît, je sais que tu la connais et puis t'as dit: Tu sais, t'as vraiment perdu la voix. C'est décevant, Yoli. Qui est cette personne-là ? Qui es-tu et pourquoi est-ce qu'on t'a invité ? Regarder en haut d'un mur et ne rien voir d'autre que le ciel à différents moments de la journée, regarde, combien de fois as-tu utilisé le même mot, tu ne te fatigues pas de toi-même des fois?

Je me demande si rester immobile représente une forme de travail. Ici, j'ai une photo de toi où tu es plus foncé qu'un chêne, assis sur un toit, souriant. Tu travailles. Ma mère l'effleure et elle dit, quand tout le monde était tombé au chômage, il goudronnait encore le toit comme un vrai cheval.

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Daphné: I have to say, I grew up in a mainly francophone house and I also studied in french, even though I was studying at McGill. And I received a very traditional schooling—as in, we were only reading books that were part of the canon. And it's after my bachelor degree when I traveled and I taught in Asia and when I came back I wanted

to be part of a scene in a community because I had experienced this in Taipei where I was reading once a month in a crowd of very diverse people who would read in english or in other languages or mandarin and in a hairdressing salon. And I really loved the way that we could share something that we do. And so when I came back I wanted to share what I was writing and hear other people sharing their own writing. So I tried to, you know, ask around if there were such things in the city. And the francophone scene seemed more closed off. It was harder to penetrate because I wasn't a part of that scene beforehand. And so I felt that, for me, the literary community in Montreal in english is much more inclusive. And I think that the reason why it's more inclusive is maybe because it includes people from very diverse backgrounds and people that are not really born and raised necessarily in Montreal or in Quebec. So because of that, it's also open to the world and what the world is writing, as opposed to the Quebec scene which is much more centered around itself as a way of like... maybe it's a reflex for survival because they feel like they have to protect their culture, and so it's like a perverse effect where they're just looking at what they are doing and never opening their eyes.

Marcela: Well, because when you said that thing about how you didn't feel like you fit into it because you weren't already in it, like how would one have gotten in it? You know what I mean? (Laughter) It's like a snake eating its own tail.

Daphné: I felt very welcomed in, you know, in the anglophone community for some reason. And I started reading in cafes and bars. It's also a matter of love, you know. Like you love the people, you also love their writing and that's what brought me, you know, in the anglophone community, but also in the francophone community, because I write mainly in french.

Alex: To your point about the anglophone community's inclusivity sort of stemming from its comfort with, I guess, that people from all over Canada and the United States and in the world, I think you're right. But at the same time, I think that's probably one of the reasons why it's very linguistically set on english, because I feel like I've always

thought, you know, that Montreal is such a bilingual city. I would expect to see more bilingual events and stuff like that. But the anglophone community in Montreal's events are very unilingually english, because I think a lot of the people who make up the community are from places where they didn't learn french growing up, as the anglophones in Montreal did, or, you know, if they learned it elsewhere in Canada they don't feel necessarily comfortable with it, sort of to a point of being able to appreciate like a poem in french or a short story in french and so I think that kind of inclusivity is a strength. But also I think maybe it sort of hampers the bilinguality of the english scene a little bit.

Daphné: Yeah and I, sorry, I just feel also that you know it's because english has—is a *lingua franca* on the internet and everywhere around the world, so necessarily there is like an hegemony of english and you can see that in translation too. Because I want to read more. For example, I'm not super good in spanish but I love a lot of people from Argentina that are writing today or before that are dead now, and I would love to be able to read it in spanish but I have to read it in english because it's like the main channel, like everything that comes to be part of the, you know, a hegemonic culture has to go through english. So yeah, there is a lot of power dynamics at play.

Marcela: I really agree. The sort of dominance of english has always kind of upset me. And I was actually, like, when I was reading your book, I was thinking a lot about writing that includes multiple languages as well. Just how I don't notice that as much in—um, I mean it makes sense why you wouldn't see it as much in english poetry and english essays and stuff like that. But, I do sometimes feel a lack with that, like reading this book and then reading Nicholas Dawson and Karine Rosso's *Nous sommes un continent* and reading multiple languages in one text and having to do the work for myself. Like, if I'm having a hard time with the shifts, I actually think it is a strength of multilingual texts and I don't notice that as much. And in english texts, I think because of how it's so dominant that like there's not—it's not as easy unless you have an experience with another language. It's not as easy to bring other things in because it's

like the, it's like you said, like the *lingua franca*—I actually don't even know what that means! But... (Laughter)

Daphné: It's like, you know, the common language that everybody used to like... So basically this term comes from back in the days where people would do trades and you know, meet at the port and the ships would come, they would have to use a common language. The ship would come from everywhere around the world. So yeah... (Laughter)

Alex: The irony of it is that it's Latin for langue française. You know, like if you just sort of take the etymology of it, it is langue française, but now the lingua franca of the internet is english. So there's a certain... it's a little ironic.

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Daphné: Yeah, I mean there is some kind of appropriation going on of course, and it's, you know... even like I translated Marcela and this issue was at the heart of the project too because I didn't want to appropriate Marcela's identity and like we reflected upon that because we obviously come from different backgrounds and the story that Marcela tells in her book is very rich and complex and I don't want to like make it you know, flat or whitewash, whitewash it. I also, in my own book, *Maquillée*, really quote a lot and I use this quotation strategy because it's a way to bring the voice of the people that I love reading into the Quebecois culture and in my own words. So it's a way to appropriate the writing. And it's also because these writers were never translated in Quebec because of the way translation works. Everything that is written in the United States, for example, doesn't get translated in Quebec or Canada, it has to go through France. So for me, it's a way to show what I love to other people. And when I do it, I do it on my own terms. And in the way I write is maybe not the way the writer would have liked to be translated. Sometimes I translated these writers with slang, like Quebecois slang. So yeah, it's kind of violent and maybe you can add something.

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my own terms.

Alex: Sure. Well, I was going to say to that point, I mean, I know you told me that you were sort of very cautious in wanting to translate Marcela's work and to not sort of, um, I don't know... you wanted to do right by it, as someone coming from a different background. And that was sort of my first instinct when you asked me if I wanted to translate your book, because I'm, like, I have no makeup background! You know, like, I mean, obviously it's a different sort of degree I guess, of not having that background. But my first thought was like, oh, like someone who's more comfortable and fluent in that world would be the right person for this project. And you had to sort of convince me like, no, your sort of approach to the poetry of the text is what's most important. And you know, you can learn about the makeup stuff as you go along. But I definitely understand that kind of, I don't know, hesitation because like, I don't know, looking at a text that you really love it's sort of, I don't know...difficult to sort of say like, oh yes, I'm the person who is allowed to translate this. You're taking an ownership almost or claim over it.

Daphné: You have to give yourself a permission and sometimes it can be hard.

Marcela: Because you are changing the text. Like, you're making it your own, you're taking things out, you're leaving things and you're making active decisions. Like, that's what we talked about so much with *Tropico*, like you're making those decisions.

Daphné: In a way the text that you translate becomes your own. And it really goes inside my body. And it sometimes... I don't know... As writers, maybe we have specific

lines or poems that we wrote that are really dear to us. Sometimes there's lines that I translated that pop in my brain and even when I write, like in *Maquillée*, there's literally a quote of my translation of a book that I translated because it seems to me that it's like my book now. I don't know how you feel about *Maquillée's* translation. Like, do you feel ownership sometimes over some formulation?

Alex: I feel like maybe more ownership over some parts than others. I think, because one of the things that I love about *Maquillée* is that it flows very seamlessly between sort of more academic sort of stuff and more poetic stuff, or sort of more kind of... at times you get a little bit academic. But there's also just sort of like a kind of a nonfiction, almost journalistic at times, and then at times you are just really kind of talking about your feelings in a very poetic manner. And so I think sort of some of those, like... When I'm translating the more straightforward stuff, I'm probably not doing it in a very flashy way. And so I sort of like... it feels more kind of like just work a day, like, you know, like translate, you know, get the meaning across. But then when it gets a bit more poetic there, I feel like here's an opportunity for me to kind of use my talents a little bit more. And those parts I feel closer to.

Marcela: I mean I really enjoyed the process of... I really considered it like a collaboration, like the way that you translated *Tropico* because you let me... well A) privileged in the fact that I speak at least some french, and so I was thinking about it and I feel like I'm such a control freak. I feel like I would have a really hard time being translated in a language that I didn't understand at all. Because of the things that we've talked about it, because of the things that can change, because of the things that can get lost, that maybe are not even being communicated to you as the original author. But like, I mean, I just love... I mean I love your art, like period. So I just think that part of it for me was just getting to see someone make a new work of art out of something that already exists. I think, for me, that was super beautiful. And getting to be a part of the process. It did. I feel like it actually does really do something to connect people because like you said, you'd really inhabit the text and I think, I don't know—for me personally, I

find it rare to have an experience where someone else is inhabiting my text in that fully bodily of a way, because there's lots of stuff to read and maybe you're not reading it as thoroughly. Like, when you're translating it, you have to read it like 100 times. And all the details and all the things that are changing or questions or things like that. So it does become like a collaboration, hybrid thing. It's kind of beautiful.

Daphné: We were, I think, like us three are very privileged because it comes from, you know... it's work, it's a creation, but it's also a collaboration. It springs from a love and shared values I think, which is not really all the time. Like, it's not the reality of literary translation everywhere in Canada. But I think that for us it was the case. And it's good that you say, you know, the book that we did together is a new work of art, and I think that's how we should see translation. It's really a work of art and it's a creative process. And in the context—like Canadian context—sometimes it's only seen as a public service that you're doing. Like, you know, even for bridging two communities, but it's much more than that, it's like you're creating something new.

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work of art, and I think that's how we
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Alex: But it was, I think, it was perfect for a first time translator because I didn't have too much time to think about it. You know, like I couldn't obsess, it was just sort of like, you know, get to a kind of... not first thought best thought maybe... but just like that if it had sort of drawn on and on and dragged on and on over like, you know, a year or

something, it would have been so much more daunting and it would've had so much more time to like overthink every decision I was making.

Daphné: Well I think that's like what I liked about the translation that you made. With like the confidence you had and intuitive way of approaching the text, which like sometimes going to school and studying translation can be, you know, it's not really positive because then you get in that zone where you overthink things and you know, a creative process should always be seen from a place of where you feel free.

A creative process should always be seen from a place of where you feel free.

Alex: I think I really owe you a lot because I felt really lucky I guess, as with you Marcela, just being able to work together a little bit on it was really nice, but also just the way you were very clear with me: “I like what you brought to the”— because I translated the first few pages kind of by themselves first and Daphné was like, “I really like what you brought to this” and so I just kind of kept that in mind. When I translated those first few pages I wasn't thinking about how it should be. I was just kind of really doing my thing, and so I just tried to keep that mode going through the rest of the book. Like, you know, if that was something that resonated with you then that's what I'm going to go for. And that made it a bit simpler.

Daphné: I think, yeah, it depends on how you approach the text and what you are translating. The first two books that I translated I felt maybe like the person that I was translating wasn't speaking french, so I felt more liberty in a way (Laughter) and then when I read my translation I feel I can hear a little bit of my voice, but it depends what you're translating really. I feel like when I read the translation that Alex made of my

book, I hear Alex's voice, yeah! Which is a very special thing. I don't know about you, Marcela?

Marcela: Oh yeah. But I mean, I think the thing with us was that we were friends before too and I had tried to read the books before but, you know, it's hard for me to read french, but that the way that you write, and the way that I write I think are kind of in conversation with each other. I don't know if you agree?

Daphné: It's true. Because we both blend, you know, prose and poetry and yes, yeah, I agree!

Marcela: I remember that, I was thinking about that a lot. And so, for me, I do see that there is a connection between our work and so it didn't feel like as big of a leap. And so when I was reading... I just loved your translation. I remember I had very few notes. There were a few things, like cultural things, and things that I think about certain words. Like I remember *disappeared* was a big one that we always talked about. What was it originally in the...

Daphné: So there's a difference in english between 'have disappeared' and 'was disappeared'. And this is not something that you find in french, so it was harder for me to grasp. So I mistranslated it at first, and it was a very crucial thing in the book because it's kind of the theme, right?

Marcela: Yea. For context, 'was disappeared' like to be disappeared as a verb is to be forcibly just disappeared by the state. So you are abducted and then never seen again. There's no closure. There's no knowledge of whether you lived or died. And so that is something that happens in a lot of coups and things like that. And so I remember the feeling, that sort of like dissonance of reading it as not that and feeling like... but that's not... it felt so light. But yeah, I think I definitely can hear your voice in the book, and I love it, it's so nice. I really loved your translation! (Laughter) I'm super excited to read

your translation (Alex). I wanted to read it beforehand but I didn't get it, I'm not allowed! (Laughter) I'm not allowed to get an advanced reading copy!

Alex: We know some people so... So... (Laughter).

Alex: I feel like sort of, I don't know...I mean, I guess part of what was so important to me was just like, Daphné has to be happy. If there's anything that rang false to you or whatever that was, it was important for me to deal with and I guess sort of... I don't know...It's a hard question of finding the line of pleasing the readers and pleasing the writer I guess. But... uh, yeah, I don't know. Translation is a murky magic.

Translation is a murky magic.