

The Mercurian



A Theatrical Translation Review

Volume 1, Number 1

The Mercurian is named for Mercury who, if he had known it, was/is the patron god of theatrical translators, those intrepid souls possessed of eloquence, feats of skill, messengers not between the gods but between cultures, traders in images, nimble and dexterous linguistic thieves. Like the metal mercury, theatrical translators are capable of absorbing other metals, forming amalgams. As in ancient chemistry, the mercurian is one of the five elementary “principles” of which all material substances are compounded, otherwise known as “spirit”. The theatrical translator is sprightly, lively, potentially volatile, sometimes inconstant, witty, an ideal guide or conductor on the road.

The Mercurian publishes translations of plays and performance pieces from any language into English. *The Mercurian* also welcomes theoretical pieces about theatrical translation; rants, manifestos, and position papers pertaining to translation for the theatre; as well as production histories of theatrical translations. Submissions should be sent to: Adam Versenyi at anversen@email.unc.edu or by snail mail: Adam Versenyi, Department of Dramatic Art, CB# 3230, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3230. For translations of plays or performance pieces, unless the material is in the public domain, please send proof of permission to translate from the playwright or original creator of the piece. Since one of the primary objects of *The Mercurian* is to move translated pieces into production, no translations of plays or performance pieces will be published unless the translator can certify that he/she has had an opportunity to hear the translation performed in either a reading or another production-oriented venue.

The Mercurian

Volume 1, Number 1

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Editor's Note | 3 |
| Is that How It Was? (C'était comment déjà?) By Jean Bouchaud, translated from the French by Phyllis Zatlin | 4 |
| Theatre Translation: An Exercise in Historical Research of Demarigny's Cajamarca By Dana M. Pilla | 42 |
| The Last Inca: The Glory and Infamy of Pizarro By Claude Demarigny, translated from the Spanish by Dana M. Pilla | 51 |
| Polyeucte, The Martyr By Pierre Corneille, a version by Gordon Carver | 119 |
| Performing Arabic Plays on the Israeli Hebrew Stage (1945-2006): Some Case Studies and Reviews By Hannah Amit-Kochavi | 172 |

Editor's Note

Welcome to the first issue of *The Mercurian: A Theatrical Translation Review*! This premier issue contains translations of plays by three French playwrights, although not all of them were originally written in French, and an article on the reception of Arabic theatre in translation in Israel. Jean Bouchaud's *Is That How It Was?*, in Phyllis Zatlin's translation, is a play from the late 1970s recently revived in France. Claude Demarigny's *The Last Inca: The Glory and Infamy of Pizarro*, in Dana M. Pilla's translation, was written in Spanish while Demarigny was the French cultural attaché at the French Embassy in Buenos Aires. Both its genesis and its unconventional construction raise interesting issues regarding theatrical translation. Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte, the Martyr: A Christian Tragedy*, in Gordon Carver's translation, presents us with a seventeenth century neo-classical play that, as Carver argues in his introduction, may have particular relevance for audiences today. Finally, Hannah Amit-Kochavi's article, "Performing Arabic plays on the Israeli Hebrew Stage (1945-2006)", gives us an overview of both the potential and the pitfalls of theatrical translation's ability to transcend political and cultural barriers in the troubled context of the Middle East. Given the dearth of English translations of Arabic theatre, Amit-Kochavi's article is followed by an appendix that reflects the breadth of Arabic playwrighting in the hope that such information may inspire the translation of these works into English as well. As the theatre is nothing without its audience, *The Mercurian* welcomes your comments, questions, complaints, and critiques. With this spring issue *The Mercurian* embarks upon a quarterly publication schedule. Deadline for consideration for publication in the summer issue will be August 1, 2007. Publication of that issue should follow in late August. However, this born and bred Yankee has lived in the southeast long enough to realize that summer can last well into September! I hope this first issue of *The Mercurian* brings you as much joy as it does me to produce it!

--Adam Versényi

JEAN BOUCHAUD

IS THAT HOW IT WAS?

(*C'était comment déjà?*)

Translated from the French
by Phyllis Zatlin

Translator biography:

PHYLLIS ZATLIN is Professor of Spanish and coordinator of translator/interpreter training at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She has published widely in several areas of specialization, including theatre and theatrical translation, film adaptation, and the narrative of contemporary Spanish women writers. Her most recent book is *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: A Practitioner's View* (2005). Among her published and/or staged play translations are works from Spanish by Josi Luis Alonso de Santos, Francisco Nieva, Itziar Pascual, Paloma Pedrero and Jaime Salom and from French by Jean-Paul Daumas and Eduardo Manet.

CAUTION: professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *Is That How It Was?*, being fully protected under international copyright laws, is subject to royalty. All rights are strictly reserved. Inquiries regarding permissions should be addressed to the author's representative

Bureau Littéraire International Marquerite Scialtiel

Phone & FAX: (33-1) 46-05-39-11

E-mail: genevieve.ulmann@wanadoo.fr

or to the translator:

Phyllis Zatlin

Phone: 732/238-5729 or 920/823-2013 FAX: 732/932-9837

E-mail: pzatlin@hotmail.com

C'était comment déjà?
by Jean Bouchaud

was first performed at the Petit-Odéon in Paris, 27 November 1978, under the direction of the author, with the following cast:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Rosine..... | Catherine |
| Frot | |
| Irène..... | Danièle |
| Girard | |
| Germaine Lescot..... | Béatrice |
| Lord | |

Costumes and set were designed by Matias.

The play premiered in 1978 at the Petit Odion in Paris, under the direction of the author and starring Madeleine Renaud, one of the grandes dames of the French stage. Jean Bouchaud has had a long and distinguished career as actor, director, and author in France. *C'était comment dij`* has proved to be one of his most enduring works. In 1982 it was broadcast on French radio, starring Renaud, who also headed the cast for the television version. It has been translated and staged in various European countries. In the 1990s, the play ran for more than four years in Germany and was also shown on television. There was a successful French revival in 2006. The play has not yet been staged in English translation.

CHARACTERS

Irene, in her forties
Madame Lescot, her mother
Rosine, about twenty

The time is the late 1970s, on three days of the same week. The action takes place in the apartment of Madame Lescot. She lives in an old building, that has temporarily been protected from the destructive madness of real estate speculators, in what used to be a working-class neighborhood.

The sitting or living room, of a small Parisian apartment, obviously occupied by an elderly person. Assorted knickknacks, saucers on the walls, framed pictures on an antique buffet. The juxtaposition of new and old objects accentuates a certain hodgepodge effect: a television set, a dressmaker's mannequin, an old-fashioned sewing machine, etc.

Upstage, a window looking out on the street and a little entryway to the outside door, which we do not see. There is a door leading to the kitchen and another to the bedroom. The total effect should be that of cluttered space. During the play we will hear the sounds of a dance class coming from across the street from Madame Lescot's apartment.

DAY ONE

Monday. As the action begins, Irene Chotard is cleaning the room. She is Madame Lescot's daughter and is in her forties. Madame Lescot is looking out the window with her face pressed to the glass. Irene is wearing a smock that clashes with her elegant suit. She stops sweeping and gazes at her mother before speaking. A long pause.

IRENE: How do you feel?

MADAME LESCOT (*her forehead against the window, without turning*): Okay...

IRENE: You know, I went to see Madame Lambrecht. We talked about what happened. She doesn't hold it against you. She's forgotten about it...

MADAME LESCOT: I couldn't care less.

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: What a great attitude you've got there!

MADAME LESCOT: And she thinks she's going to come back and do my housecleaning?

IRENE (*ill-at-ease*): Yes...well... Perhaps not right away!

(*Pause.*)

MADAME LESCOT: You know, if it comes to that, I'm still quite capable of doing it myself.

IRENE: And your shopping, too? You know very well what the doctor says. You need to rest.

MADAME LESCOT: I've never been able to sit around doing nothing.

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: What if you tried sewing? Are your hands still bothering you?

MADAME LESCOT: Yes! And afterwards I feel so tired.

(Pause.)

IRENE: What are you looking at?

MADAME LESCOT: The little girls dancing. *(Pause.)* They look so sweet!

IRENE: They're going to be moving soon, too.

MADAME LESCOT: The dance school?

IRENE: Yes. When I was walking by I noticed a sign on the door. It's incredible how fast it's going. They've already totally demolished the building at number 20.

MADAME LESCOT: Number 20? That's where the Winstels lived. Do you remember them?

IRENE *(continuing her housework)*: No. Doesn't mean a thing to me!

MADAME LESCOT: Some memory you've got. During the war...they were Jewish...

IRENE *(laughing)*: And after the war they weren't any more?

MADAME LESCOT: No... Well, it wasn't the same for them any more... *(Pause.)* So they've torn down number 20?

IRENE: That's what's going to happen to that whole side of the street. You're lucky.

(IRENE pauses a moment, looking at her mother, who has turned her back and has her forehead pressed against the window glass again; then she goes back to cleaning.)

IRENE: Don't you ever watch TV?

MADAME LESCOT: No...

(Sound of piano music setting the rhythm for the dance class.)

IRENE: You'd think the piano player could change the tune!

MADAME LESCOT: That's the song they always play for beginners. They're doing barre exercises.

(Pause.)

IRENE: Good grief! On my way over, I ran into the Chardons' son.

MADAME LESCOT: D.D.?

IRENE: He looks horrible. He's got a moustache and he's gained at least forty pounds!

MADAME LESCOT: As a kid, you only had eyes for him!

IRENE: I remember. I wonder how I could have been in love with somebody like that.

MADAME LESCOT: You were twelve years old.

IRENE: He was cute, D.D. was, when he was little. I lucked out on that one.

MADAME LESCOT: Well, I always thought that boy didn't seem very bright.

IRENE (*surprised and a bit annoyed*): Oh? You never said anything to me!

MADAME LESCOT: You shouldn't have to say everything! So they've torn down number 20? It's been a long time since I've gone out.

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: You know, I'd have liked taking dance classes.

MADAME LESCOT: Why are you telling me that?

IRENE: I don't know! Because we were talking...before...

(*Pause.*)

MADAME LESCOT: I would have liked that, if you'd become a dancer.

IRENE (*smiling*): It takes more than a few classes to become a dancer.

MADAME LESCOT: I'd never have suspected that you'd want that! You always made fun of the little girls in their pink slippers.

IRENE: Out of spite. That's when there's real satisfaction in ridiculing other people.

(*Pause.*)

MADAME LESCOT (*surprised*): My word! That is funny, that you'd have liked to dance...

IRENE (*smiling*): Yes! But afterwards, you know, I had time to come to my senses.

(*Pause. IRENE continues her cleaning.*)

MADAME LESCOT: You did my shopping?

IRENE (*annoyed*): Yes...

MADAME LESCOT: You know, you don't have to come so often... If Madame Lambrecht comes back...

IRENE: Listen, Mama. I told you that Madame Lambrecht is not coming back...at least not right away.

MADAME LESCOT: What a nasty character. Just because she insists on talking about dressmaking. About how she worked

for Patou! She wants to teach me, can you believe! She knows better than anyone else, she does...

IRENE: Is that what you quarreled about?

MADAME LESCOT: You see, when she first met us, I was working at...then when I told her that I'd been a top seamstress before the war--the shop forelady--she laughed! The old hag!

(Pause.)

IRENE: There's something I never knew...never understood...

MADAME LESCOT (*not listening to her*): She couldn't tell a French pleat from a slash. The poor woman!

IRENE: Why did you leave that fashion designer?

MADAME LESCOT (*evasive*): Oh, that was a long time ago...

IRENE: Did you quit? (Pause.) Did they toss you out?

MADAME LESCOT: I raised you... You never lacked for anything ...and those dance classes, if you'd asked, I'd certainly have managed to pay for them, you know that.

IRENE: No, that's not the reason...it's because...Once, when I was little, you asked me if I remembered living in the country.

MADAME LESCOT (*insincere*): What are you talking about? We've always lived here!

IRENE: You know, Mama, there are things you can tell me now. About Papa, for example...

MADAME LESCOT: I've never hidden anything from you.

IRENE: Sometimes I wonder.

MADAME LESCOT: He was always depressed...it was bound to happen someday.

IRENE: Were you there?

MADAME LESCOT: Have you finished with your questions? Your father killed himself, you know that... I told you when you were just a little girl. I had to manage by myself, that's all. You think that if I didn't have to raise you that I would've worked by the day in other people's houses? After being in the fashion industry, you think it's pleasant to darn socks and shorten skirts?

IRENE: Is that why you quit your job? (*MADAME LESCOT remains silent.*) I'm trying to understand...

MADAME LESCOT: Understand what? There's nothing to understand.

IRENE: It's my life too, isn't it?

MADAME LESCOT: Your life! That doesn't concern me much. You stop in once in a while. Your husband, I won't even talk about him; I never see him. As for my grandchildren, I wouldn't recognize them if I passed them in the street!

IRENE: Don't exaggerate.

MADAME LESCOT: We don't live the same way. I'm just working class and I've never been afraid of work. You, you married...

IRENE: Would you rather I had to clean houses for a living?

MADAME LESCOT (*without listening*): When I had to raise you, by myself, without a husband, in the middle of the war, you never lacked for a thing. Butter, milk, they cost your eye teeth on the black market! But I always managed.

IRENE: I'm not criticizing you.

MADAME LESCOT: I should hope not! Your father was a laborer... A real professional, proud of his work.

IRENE: You're blaming me for marrying somebody from a different background? Jean-Paul's an engineer, not a banker's son! Besides, if you only knew...

(*Pause.*)

MADAME LESCOT: I've always been a straightforward person. Whatever I've done...I've paid...myself...without asking anybody for anything. I've always been able to hold my head up.

IRENE: What are you talking about?

MADAME LESCOT: If you don't want to do my errands anymore, I'll manage by myself! I had to wait forty years to hear you reproach me for not raising you right.

IRENE: I never said that.

MADAME LESCOT: And the dance lessons? You're not reproaching me for them maybe?

IRENE: Of course not.

MADAME LESCOT: Not a thing. You never lacked for a thing! You don't even know what work is. Your husband's rich...what a bourgeois life.

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: I've been working for three months!

(*Pause. MADAME LESCOT seems quite astonished.*)

MADAME LESCOT: Where?

IRENE: In an office.

MADAME LESCOT: You're working? But you don't know how to do anything!

IRENE: I learned, and I learned quickly. That surprise you?

MADAME LESCOT: Oh no...I paid for your studies with my mending.

IRENE: You know that I've never been ashamed of what you did.

MADAME LESCOT: You're working, with all the money your husband makes?

IRENE: Listen, Mama. Jean-Paul's been out of work for a year. He had unemployment for that long, but now it's used up. We had to find a solution.

(MADAME LESCOT sorts out the news, then, after a pause...)

MADAME LESCOT: Why didn't you tell me?

IRENE: You were sick. As long as I could hide it from you...

MADAME LESCOT: And if he doesn't find something?

IRENE: Jean-Paul is ten years older than I, and at his age now...they prefer younger people. I intended to talk to you about it at any rate because... Hasn't anyone come to see the apartment?

MADAME LESCOT: No. For what reason?

(Brief pause.)

IRENE *(quickly)*: I've put it on the market!

MADAME LESCOT: My apartment?

IRENE: Yes...I wanted to talk to you about it before and then I didn't have the courage.

(Pause.)

MADAME LESCOT: But where do you expect me to go?

(IRENE takes some folders out of her bag.)

IRENE: Look... It's a residence for senior citizens.

MADAME LESCOT: A nursing home?

IRENE: Well no, it's...it's really very nice. Jean-Paul and I went there last Sunday. It's kind of like a hotel. There's a trained staff. See all the flowers, how pretty it is.

MADAME LESCOT: And my things?

IRENE: You'll be able to take some furniture..not heavy stuff, of course. There's a splendid park and besides it's out in the country.

MADAME LESCOT: I have always detested the country. I've always lived in the city, I...

IRENE: We'll come see you regularly, I promise. It's sixty miles --in a car, that's nothing. You'll see. You'll quickly make friends. They're all your generation.

MADAME LESCOT: I don't know them.

IRENE: You'll get to know them.

MADAME LESCOT: But here, I have everything. I have my memories, these walls, the dance school.

IRENE: Out there, there are lots of activities. They've got clubs for photography, painting, gardening.

MADAME LESCOT: But I couldn't care less about gardening and photography. Besides, it's my home!

(Pause.)

IRENE: Alright, Mama, listen to me. I can't keep coming here like this to your place! Up to now, I've managed because I was only working half-time, you understand? Now they've offered me a full-time job, and in our financial situation, I can't refuse. You have almost no pension. Our place is too small. The kids are big; they have to have their own rooms. So you understand, don't you?

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, yes.

IRENE: By selling the apartment, we can pay your expenses at the Walmetz Institute. There you'll have specialized doctors to look after you.

MADAME LESCOT: I'm all better now.

IRENE: Yes...but you know that the doctor has forbidden your going out. Can you imagine yourself climbing up five flights with bags of groceries? Mama, I assure you that our situation is difficult. Jean-Paul has no more benefits, the kids are still in school. We can't continue to...

MADAME LESCOT (*cutting her off*): Keep me. If anybody'd ever told me that someday I'd be a kept woman.

IRENE: Oh, Mama, please, help me, at least make an effort. It's as hard for me as it is for you. Try to understand.

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, but I do understand. It's not your fault.

IRENE: No. I assure you that I'm sick about it. If we could do something else...

MADAME LESCOT (*in resignation*): You think I'll be able to take some of my things?

IRENE: Of course. The director told us you could. You'll see that he's a delightful man. Well, at first...that is, just for the moment, they're a bit short on space so you'll be in a room for four.

MADAME LESCOT: With old people?

IRENE: No, well yes...ladies of your age.

MADAME LESCOT: I'm not used to that.

IRENE: He told us it was really better at the beginning. Afterwards, he plans to find you space in a room with two beds. Some of them free up from time to time!

MADAME LESCOT: Departures?

IRENE (*ill at ease*): Yes...that happens... But besides, you know if Jean-Paul finds another position, we've decided to sell our apartment and get a bigger one. Then we'd have you come back with us...

(MADAME LESCOT obviously does not believe a word of this and suddenly seems more tired, and older too.)

IRENE: It's an institution with a lot of demand, so the director advised us not to lose any time. We'll drive you there Sunday.

MADAME LESCOT: Sunday? And my apartment?

IRENE: I've contacted an agency. Condolux. They've already put out an ad and someone's supposed to come to show it. You understand, we have to act fast. They require a certain payment at the time of your admission...and considering our situation... Normally it should sell pretty easily.

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, yes, it's very pleasant.

(Pause.)

IRENE: You know, it bothers me, too, to sell it. After all this is where I spent my whole childhood. I always feel so funny when I come back to the old neighborhood.

MADAME LESCOT: It's all changed. All the new houses. All the old neighbors are gone. Now it's my turn.

(Pause.)

IRENE: Oh! If only Papa were still here...

MADAME LESCOT: What makes you talk about your father?

IRENE: He could have helped you. You wouldn't have been alone.

MADAME LESCOT *(ambiguously)*: I'm not alone. I have my daughter!

IRENE *(hugging her)*: I knew you'd understand. I was afraid that you'd take it wrong! You've got such a bad temper. You're so proud!

MADAME LESCOT: That, too, goes away with time. Aren't you afraid of being late to work?

IRENE: No, they're very nice. The boss was a classmate of Jean-Paul's. It's a big German company. He couldn't do anything directly for Jean-Paul, so he suggested this position for me.

MADAME LESCOT: You're lucky.

IRENE: Without him, I don't know what we'd have done.

(An embarrassed silence. Suddenly they are two strangers. The music from the dance class which had stopped now starts again. Pause, filled by the music.)

MADAME LESCOT: It's the advanced class. The big girls do rhythmic.

IRENE (*not paying attention*): Huh? Oh, yes... It's strange they haven't sent anybody. You'll see, it won't bother you. At any rate, the apartment isn't big, and the visits won't last long.

MADAME LESCOT: Is that why you cleaned so thoroughly?

IRENE: Yes, so the place would look more presentable.

MADAME LESCOT (*pensive*): Yes...

(*Pause. MADAME LESCOT has gone back to looking out the window. She no longer listens to her daughter.*)

IRENE (*as much for herself as for her mother*): After all, with furniture properly arranged, this could be a cute place. Ideal for a young couple. The neighborhood's going to become more and more residential. Well, I don't know much about that. But Jean-Paul says so.

(*MADAME LESCOT, still at the window, doesn't appear to have heard her.*)

MADAME LESCOT (*remembering*): Oh...the dance school is moving too?

IRENE: What?

(*The doorbell rings.*)

IRENE: That must be someone from the agency.

MADAME LESCOT (*crossing to the bedroom*): I'm a bit tired. I think I'll go lie down for a minute.

IRENE: Did you take your drops?

MADAME LESCOT (*exiting*): Yes. (*She closes the bedroom door.*)

IRENE (*going to open the entrance door*): It's silly that you're not going to meet this person.

(*She opens the door. ROSINE BEX enters. She is quite young--about twenty--and quite pretty.*)

IRENE (*surprised*): Good afternoon!

(*Brief pause.*)

ROSINE: The Condolux Agency sent me.

IRENE: I was expecting you...but you look so young. Excuse me, please come in.

ROSINE: I haven't been in the real estate business very long.

IRENE: I hope that you do know how to handle this.

ROSINE: Of course. Monsieur Mermaz has explained everything to me...and besides I've taken some special courses.

IRENE: Oh, good. You gave me a scare. You understand, this is a sale that we'd like to make quickly.

ROSINE (*looking around*): Someone's living here?
IRENE: Yes, my mother. But of course it will sold unoccupied.
ROSINE: Yes, that's what Monsieur Mermaz said.

(*IRENE shows her around the little apartment.*)

IRENE: The tour doesn't take long. The kitchen... The bathroom, with a little dressing area... The bedroom... Just now Mama is taking a nap... and then this room. I think that with furniture properly arranged, it could be a very cute place.
ROSINE: One bedroom apartments generally sell quickly and bring a good price.
IRENE: I'm glad to hear that. We absolutely have to take Mama to...the country, on Sunday. And my husband and I would like to have the matter settled before then.
ROSINE: Monsieur Mermaz put out an ad this morning. As for assuring you that it will sold this week...you know when we're in the economic dolmans, it isn't easy.

(*Rosine's error has not slipped by IRENE unnoticed.*)

IRENE: Yes, I know. The economic doldrums....
ROSINE: Does the telephone stay?
IRENE: Yes...yes. We have one, and with Mama going to the country...
ROSINE: It takes so long to get one installed. Sometimes having a phone already there is what makes the sale!
IRENE: That doesn't surprise me. Monsieur Mermaz has told you what we're asking?
ROSINE: Yes. He said you didn't want to go below \$65,000.
IRENE: That's right. But, you know how it is... There's some room to negotiate.

(*ROSINE does not answer. She settles into a chair and begins taking books and magazines out of her bag.*)

ROSINE: I always bring some books.
IRENE: I hope you won't have too much time for reading.
ROSINE: Oh, prospective buyers rarely rush right over, you know, unless it's an exceptional bargain.

(*IRENE is a bit taken aback by the self-confidence of such a young woman.*)

IRENE: Of course. You seem very studious.
ROSINE (*giving a pat answer*): I plan to take as many courses as possible. These days you can never be too qualified.
IRENE: Well, I'll be leaving you. I don't think I've forgotten anything. Oh yes, I think Mama's sleeping. If a client

wants to see the place, please do wake her. Such a shame.
She's not in very good health.

ROSINE (*pointing to the dressmaker's mannequin*): She's a seamstress?

IRENE: She used to be. (*Sighing.*) It's terrible to get old.

ROSINE: Don't worry. I'll take care of everything, including granny!

(*IRENE is surprised by the use of the word.*)

IRENE: Alright then, I'll be leaving you. I think it'll go quickly and well...

ROSINE: Thank you.

(*IRENE, out of doubt or intuition, delays her departure.*)

IRENE: And have you been working for the Condolux Agency long?

ROSINE: Oh, yes. For ages.

IRENE: Good! I thought I heard you say you were just beginning. ROSINE (*a bit brusquely*): Madame, listen. Don't worry. I'll know how to sell your apartment. Just relax. You know, I work on commission, so what's in your interest is in mine, too.

IRENE (*annoyed*): Yes, of course. Well, keep me informed. Goodbye.

ROSINE: Goodbye.

(*IRENE exits. ROSINE, after glancing at the entranceway, gets up and crosses to Madame Lescot's bedroom. She puts her ear against the door and listens for a few seconds. Then she goes to the telephone and dials.*)

ROSINE: Hello... Yes, it's me again... Excuse me, it's the last time I'm calling you... Oh, no... Don't worry, I'm not going to cry... No... I wanted to tell you that after all, I'm really happy that you left. You see... Especially for Jacques... Yes, he's little...but, you know, it was my decision to live like that, with my kid, it was my choice, you see... Now that you've split, I'm pleased... Yes, I called to tell you that... you know... I don't have any desire to parade a bunch of guys through my life, so that by the time my kid's fifteen he'll have had fifty daddies... And anyway, putting up with somebody like you would finish me off in a hurry. I have a kid to raise, by myself, and I have no desire to risk his mental health with a guy who thinks he's the kid's father after only two weeks together, you hear? Huh? Where am I? At some old lady's place... (*yelling*) an old lady! Well,

yeah, I'm working... Huh? But I don't give a damn where she's going... to the country...yes, that's what her daughter said... So what's it to you?

(For several moments, MADAME LESCOT, has been listening to the conversation from the open doorway to her room.)

ROSINE *(still on the phone)*: No, I meant to tell you that calmly, without getting emotional... I did think that I loved you and then...nothing... I think my little boy takes it all out of me... No, it's really good that you left... Huh? You're kidding... Sure, I called you a few times, but this time is really the last... Your things? Say, what a nice guy... You go by and get them this afternoon... If not, when I get home, I'll chuck them right out the window, okay? No, not at all. I'm perfectly calm... Look, you go see Madame Pietri on the twelfth floor, the woman who takes care of Jacques, and you ask her for the key. Yeah, you explain to her. I don't care... Take your books, all your junk, and get lost. *(She slams the phone on the hook.)*

MADAME LESCOT: Why do you have to yell like that? You woke me up.

ROSINE: Oh, excuse me, Madame. I had an urgent phone call to make...*(stammering)* to the agency, to my boss. Excuse me.

MADAME LESCOT: My daughter gone?

ROSINE: Yes.

MADAME LESCOT: She didn't leave any message with you? She didn't say anything?

ROSINE: No...we just talked about your apartment, about selling it.

MADAME LESCOT *(going to the window)*: I must have missed the little girls' class.

(ROSINE, who doesn't know what the old lady is talking about, has gone back to her books. From a distance, we can hear the dance instructor counting as he marks the cadence by clapping his hands. ROSINE takes out a women's magazine and begins to read it.)

ROSINE *(breaking the silence)*: The customers sure aren't breaking the doors down...

(MADAME LESCOT does not respond. A long pause. ROSINE finds the atmosphere hard to take.)

ROSINE *(pointing to the mannequin)*: You were a seamstress? *(No response. Under her breath.)* Sewing, talk about

repugnant. (*Louder.*) It must be a great job having a skill like that!

(*No response. We hear sounds from the dance school. Suddenly it is silent. Then children's voices indicate that class is over and they are leaving.*)

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, it's time for my drops. (*She exits through the kitchen door. ROSINE watches her go and then gets up.*)

ROSINE: Do you mind if I use the phone?

MADAME LESCOT (*Voice from offstage. Indifferent, absentmindedly*): No, no...go ahead.

ROSINE (*picking up the phone and dialing*): Thank you.... Hello, Madame Pietri. Yes, this is Madame Bex. How's my little guy? Okay? Has he eaten? Oh, well... yes, I don't believe a whole lot in peas myself... They say, the eco... ecologists...that natural carrots are better...that is, not the canned ones... Yes... (*Lowering her voice.*) Listen, Madame Pietri...my friend, Max...my companion...yes, who was staying with me... Well, have you seen him? No? Because he has to go away, so you give him the key so he can get his things, okay? And then tell him... No, forget it. Don't tell him anything. Give my little Jacques a hug for me and tell him that Mommy will be back soon... Good... Hello, Madame Pietri, don't say anything about my calling...to my friend...Max... Okay? Good riddance... He's a guy who moved in on me... Yes, a kind of moocher... That's it. Good riddance! See you this evening, Madame Pietri. A big kiss for Jacques...

(*ROSINE hangs up. MADAME LESCOT comes out of the kitchen.*)

ROSINE: Madame, I have to...that is, I have to go out... There's an appointment I forgot... If the doorbell rings, if any clients show up, would it be too much trouble to show the place for me?

MADAME LESCOT (*unfriendly*): I don't open the door for anyone.

ROSINE: It's very easy, you know. You've been told the price your daughter wants to get?

MADAME LESCOT: Not at all! And besides, it's your job. You really don't want me to do it for you, do you?

ROSINE (*surprised by the reaction*): I'm asking as a very special favor. I have to go out, and if my boss finds out...

MADAME LESCOT: What do you want me to do? I don't know you. You come in here, and make yourself to home...screaming on the phone. You want to sell my apartment and you want me to do the job for you to boot! Now that's nerve. You've got some gall!

ROSINE: Okay, it doesn't matter. I'm sorry. I'll figure something out. *(Pause.)* You know I'm not the one who wants to sell your apartment. I...

MADAME LESCOT: You give me a pain. Do what you have to do and leave me out of it!

ROSINE: You're not very nice! *(Pause.)* I showed an apartment the other day in the 16th arrondissement, and it wasn't like this. The people there had good manners.

MADAME LESCOT: They knew how to pretend.

ROSINE: Hey...if you don't agree with your daughter about selling, you work it out with her, because I'm not used to being talked to in that tone of voice!

MADAME LESCOT: That so? Well you'd better get used to it, dearie.
(ROSINE, getting control of herself, does not reply and goes back to her magazine.)

MADAME LESCOT *(looking over Rosine's shoulder)*: It's not surprising you're the way you are if you read that kind of silly stuff.

ROSINE: Really? How am I?

MADAME LESCOT: Certainly not on the ball!

ROSINE *(controlling herself)*: Listen, I'm doing my job, so...

MADAME LESCOT *(interrupting)*: In that case, it must not take much of a brain!

(Surprised by the angry tone, ROSINE hesitates for several moments.)

ROSINE: As much as it takes to spend hours pulling a needle!

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, no! That takes a delicate touch... Quality sewing is done with the heart and the head... It was a profession that I chose...and I loved it. Do you love your job?

ROSINE *(not convinced)*: Yes! You meet lots of different people...

MADAME LESCOT: Money! Stinking money. It spoils everything.

ROSINE: It's not just that. You have to know how to sell, too.

MADAME LESCOT: There's always someone out to exploit the other guy. At your age, that's a great mentality to have.

ROSINE: You can think what you like. I don't give a damn!
(Changing her tone.) And besides, you know, if I asked you to show the place for me, it wasn't so I could go shopping. My baby's sick.

MADAME LESCOT: Really?

ROSINE: Yes. I have a little boy, eight months old, and he isn't well.

MADAME LESCOT: You're married?

ROSINE: No...I mean...I'm raising him by myself.

MADAME LESCOT: I know!

ROSINE: So, I'm a bit upset... Anyway, let's not talk about it anymore!

MADAME LESCOT: Quite the contrary, do let's talk about it.

ROSINE: No, I understand. I don't want to bother you.

MADAME LESCOT (*gently*): What's wrong with the little fellow?

ROSINE: Oh, nothing serious...just a throat infection. A touch of laryngitis. It's not serious.

MADAME LESCOT: And what's his name? Max?

ROSINE (*surprised*): What? No, his name is Jacques.

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, Max is the friend who's going to go get his things. And you're sorry...so you'd like to be there, huh?

ROSINE: Isn't that something! You're eavesdropping on me besides? MADAME LESCOT: It's not hard to do, not the way you yell on the phone!

ROSINE (*annoyed*): What a time your daughter must have had with you. It's no wonder she wants to get rid of you!

MADAME LESCOT: What are you saying? You don't want me to spend my last years here, do you? The sooner we sell, the better!

ROSINE (*surprised*): Really?

MADAME LESCOT: My daughter and her husband have a wonderful place on the Loire River. I'll be much better off there than here. I love the country...and besides it's not far from a senior citizen's center where there are photography and gardening clubs. Yes, indeed. The sooner I'm there, the better. And since the money from the sale will be mine... (*MADAME LESCOT goes back to the window. After a pause, she begins to softly sing a song from the 30s.*)

Whether you're twenty and starting in life;
Whether to thirty you've grown.
Whether to forty, a husband or wife,
Whether you're fifty, a Darby or Joan,
There's one thing certain that you'll have to own:

Love is the greatest thing,
The oldest yet the latest thing,
I only hope that fate may bring
Love's story to you.

(*ROSINE cannot keep from smiling and finally bursts out laughing.*)

MADAME LESCOT (*turning around*): What's wrong with you?

ROSINE (*barely able to stop laughing*): Nothing. (*Pause.*) I'm sorry about what happened before...

MADAME LESCOT: I'm not an easy person myself. (*Pause.*) That young man, Max, he's your boyfriend?

ROSINE: He's a nice guy...definitely not a jerk!

(Pause.)

MADAME LESCOT: It's not easy being alone with a child.

ROSINE: It's better than being completely alone. (Pause.)

Max, he's buried in his books. He's always studying. We just weren't communicating anymore. So it's for the better. (She gets up and crosses to the buffet, where she looks at the photos.) Is it a beautiful place, your daughter's house? (MADAME LESCOT looks at her without answering.) Out in the country, where you're going?

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, yes. It's a big white house with lots of flowers. My grandchildren go there often. Yes, I'll be fine out there...it'll be posh.

(ROSINE continues looking at the framed pictures with a certain insensitivity.)

ROSINE: Who's the baby girl with the man? Your daughter?

MADAME LESCOT: Yes, that's Irene when she eight months...

ROSINE: The same age as my Jacques.

MADAME LESCOT: He died, before she was a year old.

ROSINE: She must not remember him at all.

MADAME LESCOT: No, I don't think so.

ROSINE (suddenly realizing): And you were left all alone?

MADAME LESCOT: I raised Irene, yes, all by myself.

ROSINE: It's a scary responsibility. (Picking up another photo.) Which one is you?

MADAME LESCOT: The third from the left, on the top row--wearing the boater hat.

ROSINE: That's great! (Reading.) Saint Catherine's Day 1935...

MADAME LESCOT: That was my workshop...all those girls...

ROSINE: You were in a factory?

MADAME LESCOT: No, I worked for a fashion designer...as the shop forelady.

ROSINE: You seemed to be having a super time.

MADAME LESCOT: Yes, we enjoyed ourselves. And then afterwards, there was '36, and the big Popular Front celebration...

ROSINE: It's funny when you see...well, that is... You were beautiful! It was like a party?

MADAME LESCOT: On Saint Catherine's Day, it was... That's the seamstresses' patron saint, you know, and we'd make crazy hats for all the single girls. How we laughed in that shop!

ROSINE: It's more fun when there's a group working together. Well, that depends. Before I worked in a hospital...and there wasn't much joking there every day.

MADAME LESCOT: A nurse?

ROSINE: Oh, no. I scrubbed floors...and sinks. Cleaning up crap! I prefer real estate...only there's never a group so there's not much chance to kid around.

(MADAME LESCOT smiles at her without saying anything. ROSINE looks at another picture or two.)

MADAME LESCOT: What's your name?

ROSINE: Rosine Bex. And yours?

MADAME LESCOT: Germaine Lescot.

(The doorbell. The two women look at each other.)

ROSINE *(somewhat ill at ease)*: There are some clients. I have to open the door.

MADAME LESCOT: Go ahead. Do your job.

(ROSINE crosses to the door. MADAME LESCOT turns to the window. We once again hear the sound of the piano as the lights go down.)

DAY TWO

Wednesday. The stage is empty. We hear Rosine's voice in the entranceway. She is seeing some visitors to the door. Something about the room has changed, making it seem more cheerful.

ROSINE *(offstage)*: You'll want to make your decision quickly. This is an opportunity that won't last long. Here...This is the agency's number. Well, goodbye, sir..goodbye, madame...

(ROSINE enters. She partially opens the door to the bedroom where Madame Lescot undoubtedly is still asleep. She closes it gently, then takes out of her bag a little bouquet of violets that she quickly puts in a vase. The doorbell rings. ROSINE puts the flowers down and goes to open the door. IRENE enters.)

IRENE: Good morning.

ROSINE: Oh, good morning. I almost asked if you had come because of the ad!

IRENE: I'm sorry to bother you, but I left my keys at the office... *(She glances around as if looking for something.)*

ROSINE: Your mother's still asleep.

IRENE: Oh? I passed a couple on the stairway...
ROSINE: Yes, they just left here.
IRENE: You couldn't show them the bedroom?
ROSINE (*grinning*): Sure, I opened the door part way. They got the idea. Germaine certainly pounds the pillow! (*IRENE does not seem to catch on. ROSINE, dismayed, tries again.*) I meant that your mother sleeps well.
IRENE: Her medication has a sedative. I talked on the phone yesterday to your boss. So there's a young couple interested?
ROSINE: Yes, but I have the impression they find it a bit expensive.
IRENE: You let them know that we might meet them partway?
ROSINE: No, it's still too early for that. That's a selling point you shouldn't bring out the first few days. If we really don't find a buyer...
IRENE: Of course, but Monsieur Mermaz must have told you that we're in a hurry to sell?
ROSINE: Oh yes. I also think that the neighborhood scares people off. All those empty lots and buildings being torn down.
IRENE (*suddenly concerned*): Yes, but this building is staying. All this section is protected.
ROSINE: Obviously. But there's still the noise, and dust, and all that.
IRENE: The ideal would be to find people interested in investment property. In a year or two, with urban renewal, this place will have a fantastic increase in value.
ROSINE: Why don't you wait a bit to sell it?
IRENE: Unfortunately, we don't have the means to be able to wait. If we didn't have to worry about my mother...

(*Pause.*)

ROSINE: She seems to be happy about going to the country.
IRENE (*uncomfortable*): Really? Oh, for her, it's the best solution. I can't leave her here alone and my work takes up more and more time.

(*IRENE mechanically picks up the bouquet of violets. ROSINE anticipates the question.*)

ROSINE: I thought I'd bring her a little bouquet...to make the place more cheerful. After all, I'm disturbing her ...
IRENE: It's true that it's a bit dreary here. And...it's really very nice of you. u. Well, I'm going to have to scoot. Do emphasize the investment potential; that could help buyers decide.
ROSINE: Yes, of course. Don't worry, Madame.

IRENE: Your boss seems to have great faith in you. Is this the first sale you're handling on your own?

ROSINE (*a bit annoyed*): Yes. But now that I know the money goes to your mother, I'm ready to perform miracles.

IRENE: Why do you say that?

ROSINE (*innocently*): You know, in the real estate business, you see some funny things with the elderly. Not all children are like you with your mother.

IRENE (*embarrassed*): We can't always do what we want to. When you have children, you'll understand.

ROSINE: Ah, but she seems happy to be going to that big house. What she seems really pleased about is that she'll be seeing her grandchildren all the time.

IRENE (*astonished*): Of course, we'll go to see her. There are visiting hours every Sunday.

ROSINE: Visiting hours?

IRENE (*unaware of the misunderstanding*): An establishment that large has to have certain rules, you know. But it's a very nice place. She'll even be allowed to take along two or three pieces of her own furniture. At any rate, it's reassuring that she's going so willingly. (*ROSINE says nothing.*) And besides she'll soon make friends. She's not very easy to get along with but after all, she's here by herself all the time. It'll be better, won't it?

ROSINE: She's your mother.

IRENE: Yes, and I think I know her well enough to predict her reaction. She's been a widow for a long time. I think it's because of me that she never started a new life for herself, so to speak. My father was the only man she ever loved. It's difficult you know for two people to live in such a little place as this one. I stayed here more than twenty years. I'm heartsick myself at selling it, but, that's life! (*Pause.*) Are you married?

ROSINE: No.

IRENE: You're young. You have time. (*Pause.*) Well, it's getting late. I do have to get to work. Goodbye, and thank you! Do keep me posted.

ROSINE: Goodbye.

(*IRENE exits. Silence. ROSINE goes toward the window, then over to the buffet where she looks once again at the photos. MADAME LESCOT, wearing a dressing gown, comes out of her room.*)

MADAME LESCOT: Who was that?

ROSINE: Your daughter.

MADAME LESCOT: She's gone?

ROSINE: Yes, she was late to work.

MADAME LESCOT (*going into the dressing room*): Her work. Has anybody come?

ROSINE: This morning, yes. I bought you some violets.

(*MADAME LESCOT does not hear her.*)

MADAME LESCOT (*from offstage*): I slept very late.

ROSINE: That's good for you.

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, at my age, it's a way of filling time. The days are so long...

(*ROSINE is now near the window. We hear the sound of the piano from the dance class.*)

MADAME LESCOT: Is today Wednesday?

ROSINE: Yes.

MADAME LESCOT: Wednesday there are morning classes, when the children aren't in school. They used to get Thursday morning off.

ROSINE: That was the school schedule in my day.

(*MADAME LESCOT returns, fully dressed.*)

MADAME LESCOT (*teasing*): In your day... Have you ever wanted to dance?

ROSINE: Oh, like every other kid...but I lived in the sticks, so dance classes...

MADAME LESCOT: You're from the country?

ROSINE: Yes.

MADAME LESCOT: And your parents?

ROSINE: My parents? They must be...somewhere. Maybe they're dead. I never knew them. I was placed with a farm family.

(*Pause.*)

MADAME LESCOT: Were they nice to you?

ROSINE: They kept me fed...yes...they were what you'd call good people. When I was eighteen, I took off, came to Paris. I've had a bunch of jobs, some of them lousier than others...the hospital... I got pregnant...and I kept the baby. Now things are going okay.

MADAME LESCOT: Have you had any word from Max?

ROSINE: No...that's over, ancient history.

MADAME LESCOT: He went by to get his things?

ROSINE (*pensive*): Huh? Yes, I guess. What do I care? Guys, who needs 'em? And you?

MADAME LESCOT: And me, what?

ROSINE: Your big house in the country...when are you going there?

MADAME LESCOT: Sunday. They're supposed to take me there Sunday.

(Pause. ROSINE mechanically opens a cupboard.)

ROSINE: Oh, my word! Look at what you've stashed away! *(She finds a 1925 style cloche hat and puts it on.)* This is a super hat! Talk about chic! Oh, and this. What kind of material is it?

MADAME LESCOT: Raw silk.

ROSINE: It's gorgeous!

MADAME LESCOT: I've had that for a long time. It's a remnant from back when I was the shop forelady.

ROSINE: That's been ages.

MADAME LESCOT: You said it.

(ROSINE has draped herself in the cloth; she still has the hat on her head. She clowns around a bit.)

MADAME LESCOT: You're a beautiful girl.

ROSINE: Yes...huh? This stuff is gorgeous. Why don't you make dresses anymore?

MADAME LESCOT: I'm old.

ROSINE: That doesn't mean anything!

MADAME LESCOT: Oh yes it does. And besides I have rheumatism in my hands.

ROSINE: But with a machine. Don't you want to make me a dress?

MADAME LESCOT: Aren't you the cheeky one!

ROSINE: Come on, Germaine...

(Still draped in the cloth, ROSINE approaches the old lady and takes her by the shoulders.)

MADAME LESCOT: Careful, now.

ROSINE: Don't I have the figure for a model?

MADAME LESCOT: Not really. You're a bit short.

ROSINE: With high heels...I'll look like a *leetle Parisienne*, won't I? Come on, make me a dress!

MADAME LESCOT *(hesitating)*: I don't even know if the machine still works.

ROSINE: We had the same kind out on the farm. All it needs is some oil.

MADAME LESCOT: You can't just do it like that, you know. You have to have a pattern.

ROSINE: I have one. *(She goes to pick up a magazine and shows it to the old lady.)* Look...is it smashing, or what?

MADAME LESCOT: Well...not very chic.

ROSINE: Oh! But it's in--the latest American style.

MADAME LESCOT: You can sure tell that! (*Remembering.*) I won't even have time to finish it.

(*Pause.*)

ROSINE (*brusquely*): Why are you leaving?

MADAME LESCOT: I told you...I'll be better off there.

ROSINE: The apartment is yours?

MADAME LESCOT: Yes.

ROSINE: Then she doesn't have the right... Did you sign a paper for her?

MADAME LESCOT: Why are you butting in, huh? (*Pause.*) You'd do better to straighten things up. If anyone comes to see the place, it's a real hodgepodge.

(*Admitting defeat, ROSINE puts the material and the hat back in the cupboard.*)

ROSINE: Nobody's going to come at this time of day. It's lunch hour.

MADAME LESCOT: That explains why I have this gnawing feeling.

ROSINE: You haven't had anything since you got up.

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, you know that when you live alone you almost forget about eating. And then with all the medicine I'm taking...

ROSINE: It kills your appetite? Yesterday you told me that it kept you from sleeping. If it's the same thing with food... I bought a couple of things.

(*From a paper bag, she takes out several packages and a bottle of wine.*)

MADAME LESCOT: Don't bother. I have all I need.

ROSINE: In your fridge there's nothing but some spreads with yellow mold and a steak that's turned black!

MADAME LESCOT: Irene brought me up some eggs.

(*ROSINE has unwrapped an array of appetizing things that attract the old lady's attention.*)

ROSINE: Wait 'til I get some plates. Sit down. There is one pâté that's not disgusting looking. (*From the kitchen.*) Don't you have any little sweet pickles?

MADAME LESCOT (*sitting down at the table*): Yes, over on the left of the counter. In the old days, I made them myself.

ROSINE (*returning*): The ones you buy in the store are just as good.

MADAME LESCOT: No, it's not the same. They're filled with chemicals.
ROSINE: You sound just like Max. You see chemicals everywhere. You can imagine how he bugged me about baby food.
MADAME LESCOT: Homemade, they're different. They have a sort of...nutty...taste.
ROSINE: Great! Personally I'd rather they had a pickle taste. Otherwise I'd buy nuts.

(They both laugh. They start to eat and drink.)

ROSINE *(filling their glasses)*: Go ahead, Germaine.
MADAME LESCOT: Careful. The doctor says...
ROSINE: The doctor's not here! It's bordeaux... Out on the farm, the old man used to say that bordeaux is better than any medicine.
MADAME LESCOT *(drinking)*: Well, here goes. One Prussian less!

(They laugh, happily.)

ROSINE: Why did you say that?
MADAME LESCOT: It's something my parents used to say. An expression they used. From before the First World War, I suppose.
ROSINE: And in your workshop, what was it like?
MADAME LESCOT: It sounded like a chicken coop...with all the women. We got to see lots of rich people...you know, the real uppercrust.
ROSINE: You liked it?
MADAME LESCOT: My work? Oh yes. We turned out artistic creations...beautiful, beautiful dresses.
ROSINE: Did you put them on?
MADAME LESCOT: No. But I don't think any of us needed to. We could see them on the models. I often did the fittings.
ROSINE: You met people rolling in dough?
MADAME LESCOT: We didn't talk to them, but we got to see them. We loved our job so much we didn't really think about the customers' money. We almost thought they should be envious of us!
ROSINE: You could have married a rich man.
MADAME LESCOT: Just like one of those romance novels. Where I came from, we didn't believe in that. For my friends--my girlfriends, too--that would have been disgraceful, a kind of betrayal. Maurice used to say: you don't betray your class.
ROSINE: Who was Maurice?

MADAME LESCOT: My husband. A laborer...a machine operator at the Caudron Mill. First rate. (*Pensive*). Oh, the things those crazy girls would do!

ROSINE: Like in the picture?

MADAME LESCOT: Anything was an excuse for a lark: a going-away, a christening, a wedding. With all those twenty-year-olds, we always had an excuse for a party.

(*ROSINE refills the glasses.*)

ROSINE: Life was easier then.

MADAME LESCOT: No, no. We were just coming out of the Great Depression. But when you're twenty years old, even when it's overcast, you still see rays of hope. And besides, there was '36; now that was a real celebration! Boom! Bombs bursting in air!

ROSINE: A revolution!

MADAME LESCOT: Almost. Parades, flags everywhere, dances--even in our shop! We were so busy. What a celebration!

(*Pause. Rosine lets the old lady think about her memories.*)

MADAME LESCOT: We laughed, and we fought...and we won!

ROSINE: You're not fighting anymore.

MADAME LESCOT: No. I'm too old.

(*Pause.*)

ROSINE: Don't go there!

MADAME LESCOT: But I'll be fine. My children have a house...

ROSINE (*angrily*): Your children are going to shove you into a nursing home!

MADAME LESCOT: That's not true. It's not a nursing home. It's...like a hotel. (*Pause.*) Who told you that?

ROSINE: Your daughter!

(*MADAME LESCOT gets up and crosses to the window. She presses her forehead against the glass. We hear the shouts of the children who are entering the dance school. Pause.*)

ROSINE: Your daughter's not a bad person, but maybe there's another solution.

(*Pause.*)

MADAME LESCOT (*still at the window*): No, no...I'll be fine there. It looks very clean. And there are the clubs, and I'll make friends. If you get sick, there are specialists.

ROSINE: Those people are just out for the money.

MADAME LESCOT: What do you know about it? My daughter's right. Here I'm all alone...and sooner or later you have to pay up.

ROSINE: Pay up what? You did a great job of raising your daughter. Is she the reason you wasted your life?

MADAME LESCOT: I didn't waste my life. I hope you have as good a one!

ROSINE: Thanks! I'm not going to sacrifice myself for my kid. She's the reason you spent your life alone and she's the reason you're letting yourself be put away in a nursing home!

MADAME LESCOT: It's not a nursing home. It's like a hotel. You can even take your own furniture.

ROSINE: That's what you think! I didn't work in a hospital. I was in a hotel, just like yours. Oh, they had glossy folders, too, but the rooms were overrun with cockroaches, the bedrooms and the sitting rooms. All those little old people left to die. Oh, they have visitors the first few weeks, but as time passes, nobody comes anymore. A hotel? Call it a dumping ground. A pound where you drop off old people as if they were animals. There are even crazy people there. The dishes aren't washed clean, the paint is peeling, it's grimy--that's your hotel for you. A place where you can kick off faster, that's what!

MADAME LESCOT: You're a wicked person!

ROSINE: No! You're still strong. You can do lots of things. I'm sure that you can even still sew. Once you're there, that'll all be gone!

MADAME LESCOT: Irene's right. I've always paid when I had to. that.ROSINE: But paid for what? For sacrificing your life for her?

MADAME LESCOT: No. For abandoning her...and my husband...and killing him! (Pause.) I lived my life for six months...not a day more. Six months of radiant sunshine. I don't regret it. Irene's right! They have their troubles, too.

ROSINE: You've given your daughter everything, all your life.

MADAME LESCOT: No. I kept six months of happiness for myself--and the man I loved.

ROSINE: Your husband?

MADAME LESCOT: No! It was just after '36. Irene was ten months old--just about the time in the picture. At the shop we had a club for recreational activities. The workers went on nature hikes, picnics, rides on bicycles--built-for-two. I was young. Maurice was a good man, and I thought I loved him. I ought to tell you that in those days we didn't have a lot of experience before we got married: not even among the working class. We were very

proper. We went to people's houses. We read books: Zola, Hugo...

ROSINE: You mean you were a bunch of prudes!

MADAME LESCOT: No. Well, maybe something like that. Then a group of Italian refugees arrived, anti-Fascists. They were working class, too. Lisette, a friend of mine from the shop, fell in love with one of them, and he started going with us on the Sunday outings. And he had a buddy, who came along too, since he was all alone. The minute I saw him, I felt that something terrible was going to happen. Maurice did too. But we couldn't do anything about it. One day, we just met, almost by chance, and we went off together. Without even taking a suitcase. We got train tickets and we left. Maurice thought that I was dead, that I'd disappeared. He waited...and because he couldn't take care of Irene by himself, he put her with a nursemaid. I didn't have any scruples, no remorse. I was just floating like a cloud. One day, Lisette's Italian friend--the only one who knew where we were--let us know that Maurice had thrown himself in front of a subway train. I came back and went to get my daughter. *(Pause.)*

ROSINE: And the other man? The Italian?

MADAME LESCOT: Gianni? Lisette, some time later, told me that they were killed, both of them, in Spain. There was a war there. You know, Rosine, it's funny, but you're the first person I've ever told all this. Because after, when I came back, I'd lost all my friends. Maurice's friends wanted to kill me. I had to move, and that's when I came to this building.

(ROSINE has gone around behind the old lady and hugs her.)

ROSINE: Germaine, I love you.

MADAME LESCOT: So you see, now what's happening to me is a kind of justice.

ROSINE: Do you have regrets?

MADAME LESCOT: Oh, no! For Maurice, yes. He died because he loved me. If I'd known he loved me so much, maybe I wouldn't have left him...maybe.

ROSINE: It's a beautiful story. You were lucky.

MADAME LESCOT *(smiling)*: If you can say... *(The piano is heard, announcing the start up of the dance class.)* Now we have to straighten up, in case people come to see the place.

(They start to clear the table. ROSINE goes to the cupboard and takes the silk material back out. Then she crosses to the sewing machine.)

MADAME LESCOT: What are you doing?

ROSINE: You're going to make me a dress!

MADAME LESCOT: Whatever has gotten into you?

ROSINE: A beautiful dress...like the ones you made for rich people before...when you were happy...young...in love...and all that!

MADAME LESCOT: Don't mess things up. They're going to come see the place. Come on, let's do the straightening.

(ROSINE, without saying a word, opens the sewing machine.)

MADAME LESCOT: Will you stop! You're going to get in trouble! You're supposed to be here to sell the apartment!

ROSINE: Listen, Germaine. I have a proposition for you. We're friends now, right? Well, I pay a lady everyday to take care of my baby, a lady your age. Well, if I have you come live with me, you see, you could take care of Jacques while I work. You could tell him stories about when you were young. Do you know any songs?

MADAME LESCOT: You're absolutely crazy.

ROSINE: And besides, I'm sure you could still make dresses. You realize that in my building if the women find out that you can sew, that you worked with the great designers...they won't let you rest, I swear.

MADAME LESCOT: You're a wonderful girl!

ROSINE: Not wonderful, Germaine. I need you, that's all.

MADAME LESCOT: Can you imagine yourself burdened with an old lady like me?

ROSINE: Yes. You know, we have to have an understanding. I'm not suggesting this because I feel sorry for you. When I was a little girl, and I found myself being sent away to some farm, I decided once and for all that you'd never catch me doing favors for anybody.

(Pause. MADAME LESCOT begins to rummage around in her old sewing box.)

MADAME LESCOT: I have to find my measuring tape.

ROSINE: So it's a deal? You're going to make me my dress?

MADAME LESCOT: Among friends, why not? I don't guarantee a thing. It's been so long. But you're so cute...I really want to see you wearing my creation.

(ROSINE rushes over and hugs her. The doorbell rings. MADAME LESCOT starts to say something, but ROSINE quickly puts her hand over her mouth.)

ROSINE: Shh...

(The doorbell rings again. Several knocks and then silence. ROSINE tiptoes to the entranceway and listens. Sound of footsteps going away. The old lady is agitated.)

MADAME LESCOT: You're going to get into trouble!

ROSINE *(laughing like a child)*: I'll say that Jacques was sick...and since you never open the door for anyone...

(While she is talking, ROSINE takes off her sweater and skirt, and stands there in her underwear.)

MADAME LESCOT: What are you doing?

ROSINE: For the measurements. Isn't this how it's done?

MADAME LESCOT: It wasn't necessary, and what if somebody should come in?

ROSINE: Am I that bad looking?

MADAME LESCOT: What about Irene?

ROSINE: She's at her office. So get to work!

(She holds out her arms so that MADAME LESCOT can begin to take the measurements. As the lights go down, we hear the offkey piano from the dance class.)

DAY THREE

Saturday. Same décor, but the sewing machine is open and the dress is already basted together and hanging on the mannequin. There are flowers. The cupboard is open and we see pieces of material and boxes jutting out. The disarray indicates life, and perhaps happiness. IRENE is on stage, surprised by the state of f affairs and above all by the absence of her mother and Rosine. She goes to the phone.

IRENE: Hello? Is this the Condolux Agency? May I please speak to Monsieur Mermaz... Hello, Monsieur Mermaz?... Yes, hello. This is Madame Chotard... Yes, the one bedroom apartment on Vignerons Street. How come there's no one here to show the place this morning?... No, she isn't here... Yes, but it's very annoying. It's Saturday and that's when people have time to be out looking... Well, that young couple is supposed to give you their answer today, right?... No, I'll be here. Call me back if you have any news... And say, as for that young woman, I must tell you that she isn't working out... No... It's just an impression I have... But if I were you... No, I don't have any specific complaints... Except for this morning... Well...

(All out of breath, ROSINE comes rushing into the room after bursting through the door that Irene Chotard had left partially open.)

ROSINE (laughing): Oh, it's you?

IRENE (still on the phone): Yes... Listen, she just came in... I'll let you go but do call me if there's anything new... Goodbye. (She hangs up.) Where's Mama?

ROSINE: On a park bench, in the sun. I think it'll do her good. IRENE: I don't think you're the one who should decide what is good and what isn't good for my mother.

ROSINE: She never gets out.

IRENE (cutting her off): Until there is evidence to the contrary, you are here to show the apartment. I should tell you that I have just reported your absence to Monsieur Mermaz.

ROSINE: Well that's really nice of you!

IRENE: The other day, I believe it was Wednesday, people called the agency to report that there was no one here. And they had come at the designated hours. Where is my mother?

ROSINE: She's down in the square. I'll go get her.

IRENE: You left her like that, in her condition?

ROSINE: We took down some bread for the pigeons. I'm going.

IRENE: Oh, no. And leave the apartment unattended! You know very well that Saturday is when people come to look!

ROSINE: Not so much anymore, not since people have started going away on weekends!

IRENE: I shouldn't have trusted you. When I first saw you... First impressions are rarely deceptive!

ROSINE: You've gotten me canned?

IRENE: That's up to your boss. (Pointing to the dress.) And what, pray tell, is that?

ROSINE (with insolence): A straight jacket...for maniacs.

IRENE: You know, young lady, that I have a daughter almost your age.

ROSINE (picking up the game): Oh, oh...Mama, boohoo!

IRENE: And I can still give her a good smack when she needs it.

ROSINE: Don't be surprised if someday she puts you away in a nursing home.

(IRENE reacts as if she'd been slapped in the face.
Pause.)

IRENE: I feel sorry for your parents, Mademoiselle...

ROSINE (smiling): Yeah...I'd have a hard time relaying the message!

(Pause.)

IRENE (*calmly*): How is she? Is she worried about going there?

(*ROSINE remains silent.*) Aren't you going to answer?

ROSINE: She's your mother. You ought to know her better than I.

IRENE (*not knowing how to respond*): Yes, but these last few days, you've been with her. I have the impression that she likes you. (*Pause.*) This dress... it's been a long time since she's done any sewing. (*Pause.*) Do you think that if I had an alternative I'd be doing this? (*ROSINE doesn't answer.*) She hasn't had a very pleasant life...

ROSINE: What do you know about it?

IRENE: She sacrificed everything for me.

ROSINE: You think so?

IRENE: When Papa died, she was still young, and beautiful. She must have loved him too much!

ROSINE: No doubt.

(*IRENE is suddenly intrigued by Rosine's deliberately reserved response.*)

IRENE: Did she talk to you about it?

(*Pause.*)

ROSINE: A bit.

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: About me?

ROSINE: No!

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: About my father's suicide? I know all about that. He was always depressed. There had already been two suicides in his family. Is that what you talked about?

(*Pause.*)

ROSINE: Yes. That was it.

IRENE: I don't see what I wouldn't have understood... It wasn't her fault at all!

ROSINE (*ambiguously*): No...

(*Pause.*)

IRENE: Don't you find this strange? That I'm asking you about my mother?

ROSINE: I don't know a lot about parents.

IRENE: You live alone?

ROSINE: No, I have my son... *(Pause. She gets up, serious.)*
Your mother...you know that I love her.

IRENE *(smiling, but on the defensive)*: Well, so do I...

ROSINE: Of course...that's not what I mean...but I'm alone with my son.

IRENE: Some day you'll get married.

ROSINE: No, I don't think so. I work, and I live way out of the city, but even so I've never left him in a nursery.

IRENE: Why?

ROSINE: I don't know...maybe because I got left myself when I was little, permanently. I'd be afraid that some evening they wouldn't give him back. In the hospital, at night, I got up to make sure he was still there. I was afraid that somebody'd steal him!

IRENE: You're a good mother.

ROSINE: No. Well, that's not the reason I brought it up. You see, if I had my mother, she could help me with the baby. *(Pause.)* You...you no longer have a use for yours. So I've decided to take her home with me.

(ROSINE has had trouble getting to the end of her little speech. IRENE, surprised, decides to respond with a smile.)

IRENE: Usually one adopts abandoned infants, not old people!

ROSINE: We get along really well, you know. And you could come visit her.

IRENE *(amused)*: Thank you very much, but I doubt that my mother's ready to...

ROSINE: You prefer to have her in a nursing home?

IRENE: In the first place, it's not a nursing home. And in the second place, I don't think you have any idea what kind of responsibility a person of her age would be.

ROSINE: That's my problem.

IRENE: Let's say that it's also a bit mine, and hers!

ROSINE *(obstinately)*: She does not want to go to your retirement home.

(Pause. Then IRENE reacts.)

IRENE: She told you that? Why the other day she seemed quite in agreement.

ROSINE: That's because she feels guilty about you.

IRENE: Guilty about what?

ROSINE *(reluctant to tell)*: About...I don't know...I'm not her daughter! I assure you that your mother will be happy with me. We have fun together.

IRENE: You have fun?

ROSINE: Yes! See the dress! I asked her to make it.

IRENE: That's nice.

ROSINE: Your mother's not old. She can still do lots of things. Out there she'll fade away...quickly.

(For a moment, MADAME LESCOT has been in the entranceway. Leaning against the wall, she clutches her heart. She is breathless and pale. The two women see her and rush over to her.)

IRENE: Mama! *(To Rosine.)* Help me!

(They support the old lady, who seems to be quite ill. ROSINE is extremely upset.)

MADAME LESCOT: It's nothing. I climbed the stairs too fast...

ROSINE: I told you to wait for me.

IRENE *(to Rosine)*: Go get her drops. Quick!

(ROSINE exits.)

IRENE *(to her mother)*: Sit down.

MADAME LESCOT: It's all right. It's all right.

(The telephone rings. IRENE goes to answer. ROSINE enters with the drops.)

IRENE *(to Rosine)*: Make her drink! Hello...yes... Fantastic...

MADAME LESCOT *(to Rosine)*: I was afraid that you'd left.

IRENE *(still on the phone)*: Now? I mean...

MADAME LESCOT *(getting up)*: I'm very tired. I'm going to lie down a while...

(ROSINE takes her into the bedroom.)

IRENE: Good! Tell them to be patient... I'll be right there.

(ROSINE returns. Turning to her.) That's it! It's sold!

ROSINE: That's great!

IRENE: You see what shape she's in.

ROSINE *(less sure of herself)*: It did her good to get some fresh air. And besides, in my building there's an elevator.

IRENE: It's absolute madness. Moreover, you're young. If you find a nice young man... *(Pause.)* You'll get a commission on this sale?

ROSINE: Yes, but that has nothing to do with it.

IRENE: Listen, I'd like you to wait. I can try to delay her admission...the apartment doesn't have to be vacated for a few more days... Once she's better, we can ask her... if

she really wants to go live with you, I'll go along with it.

ROSINE: Yes, we'll ask her.

IRENE: They're waiting for my signature. See you later.

(IRENE hurries out. ROSINE, left alone, picks up the telephone.)

ROSINE: Hello...Madame Pietri? Listen, I'll be a bit late this evening... Oh! He's there? He's getting his things? Thank you, Madame...

(After hanging up, she remains motionless for a moment, then quickly grabs her bag and heads to the door. MADAME LESCOT comes out of her bedroom and discovers Rosine about to leave.)

MADAME LESCOT: You're leaving?

ROSINE *(embarrassed)*: No, well...I just wanted to get some fresh air...

(Pause. MADAME LESCOT gazes at Rosine, smiling.)

MADAME LESCOT *(serious)*: Irene is right. I can't manage on my own. I'm ill.

ROSINE: Were you able to rest a bit, Madame?

MADAME LESCOT: We're not using first names anymore?

ROSINE: Of course. Do you need something?

MADAME LESCOT: No, that's kind of you. Without you, this last week would have been dreadful. At times it's difficult being alone.

ROSINE *(without conviction)*: Now you're not going to be alone anymore.

MADAME LESCOT: No... Before, in the square, I was cold, so I wanted to come back up.

ROSINE: I planned to go get you.

MADAME LESCOT: I suspected that Irene was here...I was afraid...

ROSINE *(like a child)*: I didn't tell her a thing.

MADAME LESCOT: I wasn't worried about that...but I was a bit afraid that you would fight. You both have such strong characters. And besides learning about those things would hurt her. She's so reasonable, so...organized... Eventually solitude destroys everything, even the good memories. What you remember best are bodies...maybe because you've touched them, caressed them, and the hands remember best. I never had his picture. Maybe it's better that way.

ROSINE: Madame Lescot?

(The old lady seems to be coming out of a dream.)

MADAME LESCOT: You're still here!

ROSINE: About our plans...

MADAME LESCOT: Did you really think that I was going to move in with you?

ROSINE: Don't you want to anymore?

MADAME LESCOT: The nursing home, you've looked at it with your eyes, as a young girl...all those old folks together are enough to scare you. But for us...I'll probably find some of my old companions from my seamstress days. No, Rosine. I'm not going to live with you, but I love you just as if I were twenty, or you were my age. Not like a girl...but like a comrade from the old days, from the shop. It's funny, isn't it? We didn't owe each other a thing, and yet we wanted to give each other everything. You love that boy, don't you?

ROSINE: I think...yes.

MADAME LESCOT: Then get going!

(ROSINE jumps up, and stands with her face to the wall and her back to the old lady.)

MADAME LESCOT: You'll come to see me?

ROSINE: I'll bring my little boy.

MADAME LESCOT: Don't forget your dress... Good grief, you see, I didn't have time to finish it.

(ROSINE turns to face her.)

ROSINE: You can take your sewing machine there. Your daughter said they'd let you. And when I come to see you, it'll be finished, right?

MADAME LESCOT: That's right. Now, go quickly!

(ROSINE runs to the door, but she doesn't leave. As she is about to go out, she stops.)

ROSINE: You're not mad at me?

MADAME LESCOT: I'm the last person who could be mad at you.

You should never sacrifice a love story for anything, ever.

ROSINE *(hugging her)*: I'll never forget you, Germaine.

(She exits rapidly. After the sound of Rosine's closing the door, there is silence. Then we hear the muffled echo of a Chopin waltz from the dance class. Slowly, as if attracted by the music, the old lady goes to put her face against the glass. Pause. Suddenly she throws the double

*windows open and stares into the emptiness as the lights go
down. Blackout.)*

THE END

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

For the relatively unknown French song in the original text I have substituted Ray Noble's 1932 "Love Is the Sweetest Thing" (ms. page 16).

This and other slight modifications to the original play have been made in consultation with the playwright.

Theatre Translation: An Exercise in Historical Research of Demarigny's Cajamarca

Dana M. Pilla, Rutgers University

Dana M. Pilla is a teacher and translator from the Philadelphia area. After graduating with master's degrees in both Spanish Translation and Language Education from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, she has worked for the New Jersey Education Association as a freelance translator, specializing in all issues affecting the public schools of New Jersey. With the NJEA, she has also produced voice-over translations for DVD and radio. She is currently a teacher of Spanish in Edison, NJ, with professional experience ranging from the primary to secondary levels. *The Last Inca* is her first foray into theatrical translation.

INTRODUCTION

Claude Demarigny is a successful playwright who resides in France and creates dramatic texts in both French and Spanish. He has published a variety of works over his lengthy career. From 1955 to 1980 he was the French cultural attaché to Latin America and Denmark. He is actively involved in several associations that promote Latin American theatre and theatrical translation. Of his three pieces originally written in Spanish, the dramatic text *Cajamarca* is the most acclaimed, having been performed in Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. Later, the French translation was performed in France, Switzerland and Belgium. *Cajamarca* has won several awards, among them the prize from the Society of Argentinean Authors in 1978 ([*Claude Demarigny: Auteur Dramatique*](#)).

At first glance, *Cajamarca* does not seem to be a play at all, but a short story with theatrical dialogue. The acts are separate stories and there is no buildup, climax or resolution at the end. The characters sometimes have very little interaction, and they think aloud for minutes at a time. Only four actors interpret all of the characters in the play, morphing into different roles as the text dictates. In addition, sound, music and movement play an important role in the interpretation of meaning.

The play addresses a controversial topic for Latin Americans and Spaniards: the fall of the Inca Empire. Demarigny takes his viewers through the decline and destruction of one of the greatest empires South America has seen through the voices of four protagonists: Atahualpa, the leader of the Incas and illegitimate heir; Felipillo, interpreter and traitor of the Inca; Pizarro, the Spaniard conquistador who ultimately puts Atahualpa to death; and Valverde, the Spanish priest who, in the name of God, baptizes Atahualpa a Christian and then condemns him to death. While there are many historical texts and chronicles that address this very topic, Demarigny takes the audience into the thoughts and feelings of these historical figures and thereby creates a new perspective on history. The audience is challenged to view an emotionally charged topic from a different perspective. It is evident that Demarigny sympathizes with Atahualpa and paints the final meeting at Cajamarca Plaza as a tragic event that would ultimately spur the destruction of the Inca Empire. Demarigny found it necessary to give Atahualpa a voice and to let that voice be heard by those of us who only learn about history in an academic setting but have never felt history as a real event. He wanted us to feel what the Inca felt during his final moments as leader, and to understand how such a great empire could fall in such a short period of time.

STAGING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Because *Cajamarca* is episodic in nature, the director has total artistic license to stage the play as he/she wishes. While the piece had first been performed in Quito in 1973, the staging in Buenos Aires in 1978 by director Francisco Javier gave the play new life. Because the piece reads like poetry in some places and prose in others, the director's vision was a clarifying factor in the overall conceptualization of the staging. Javier opened the play with four young 16th century actors from the University of Salamanca who happen to stumble upon a manuscript from the long lost city of Cajamarca. The play centers around these actors telling the story in the

manuscripts, and also narrating and interpreting all of the characters in the play. For example, in the first scene they play the main characters and at the same time they alternately play the part of the Spanish soldiers. In the three subsequent parts of the play, each actor plays one of the main characters while the others form the chorus. The play is portrayed as one movement, punctuated by long and short scenes, a prologue, an epilogue, two silent scenes, with music and two brief blackouts. When the play was staged in Buenos Aires at La Casa de Castagnino, the prologue was carried out in several rooms on the bottom floor of the playhouse. The actors were dressed up as 16th century tightrope walkers to set off the introduction of the play from the play itself. Each of the actors entered the room running; one of them held a tambour and another a banner, while another announced the plot of the play and another did acrobatic stunts. When they finished the introduction, they invited the spectators up to the main theatre to watch the rest of the play. When the last act was over, the actors turned into acrobats again to announce the end of the play to the spectators. This performance frame incorporates the audience members into the theatrical action. They become witnesses to the discovery of ancient manuscripts. Also, the actors' facial expressions and body language factored into the plot, as did the dramatic use of lighting. Not many props were employed because the main essence of the play was carried out through the use of poetry, rhythm, and music. The ways the actors delivered the lines, and the actual cadence of their voices, communicated meaning to the audience.

Peter Podol, in "Dramatizations of the Conquest of Peru," explains that as a literary text Demarigny's *Cajamarca* stretches somewhat the conventional definition of drama (124). Javier had put into practice in Buenos Aires much of what Podol elaborates in his text. The latter states that the play is well suited to an experimental approach because of its Artaudian nature: "The work has no true exposition and the thespians assume a multiplicity of roles, achieving another

degree of Brechtian distancing by portraying Spanish soldiers as well as the principal characters in the tragedy of Atahualpa” (125). Podol comments on the musical aspect of the second act of the play, “Sonata for Atahualpa.” This portion of the text in verse utilizes short, choppy lines, which create dissonance and tension rhythmically within the overall harmony of the Inca civilization. He explains that the sonata is shattered by the integration of the Spanish culture into the harmonious Inca civilization. *Cajamarca* therefore announces tragedy and destruction in its actual form (126).

Podol similarly describes the elements behind Javier’s staging. The rhythm and musicality of the play’s language create meaning for the spectators. Zatlin states that to recreate dialogue that flows well and that actors can handle with ease requires a linguistic sensitivity akin to the translation of poetry but is yet more demanding because of the need to maintain the desired rhythm for performance (72). In *Cajamarca*, this type of sensitivity in translating is imperative not only for aesthetic reasons but for semantic ones. Susan Bassnett writes that the translator of theatre “must wrestle with... speech rhythms, the pauses and silences, the shifts of tone or of register, the problems of intonation patterns...” (“Still Trapped in the Labyrinth,” 107). If Demarigny intended rhythm and musicality to be signs, then transferring these elements into the target text is necessary for the overall conceptual meaning of the play.

Podol also explains how Artaud factors into the staging of *Cajamarca*. Artaud’s ideas about the actor’s body and voice, the use of music, the role of the written text and theatrical space are all evident in Demarigny’s play. According to Podol, Artaud shifts the emphasis from the author to the director by rejecting the literary focus of traditional theatre. “By using innovative sound, highly visual props and a volatile stage space, he brings to life the entire theatre space surrounding the spectator” (“Contradictions,” 520).

To be able to translate *Cajamarca* effectively, one has to consider the Buenos Aires staging of the play. Before reading Javier's notes, I did not understand how four actors could embody all of the characters and one hundred percent of the stage time. I could not visualize the beginning or the end of the play, nor could I understand how the audience would take to the play in the theatre. After considering Podol's insights into the staging of *Cajamarca* and the meaning behind music, rhythm and movement, I now see how Demarigny's text needs a director who can realize his Artaudian vision without leaving the audience feeling disconnected.

It is clear from the beginning of *Cajamarca* that Demarigny wants the audience to understand that there are several different accounts of what happened in Cajamarca, Peru, on November 16, 1532. By presenting quotes in the actual play dialogue from different chronicles, an overall feeling of uncertainty is achieved. What really happened on that particular day? Whose account is the true one? Demarigny answers these questions by giving us several versions of what could have happened and then presenting us with a final version. My sense is the final version presented in the play is the blending together of several different historical accounts to make the story unfold into what he believes could have or should have transpired. Because Spain was able to win the battle of Cajamarca, destroy the Inca Empire, and impose the Spanish language on thousands of people, the history in current textbooks reflects the dominance of Spain in Latin American. Demarigny's play takes us back to the critical moment where history could have been different and leads us to believe that the history books we have come to trust do not tell us the whole story.

One of the central issues of *Cajamarca* is the historical basis for the fall of the Inca Empire as glanced through the dialogue between Atahualpa and the Spanish conquistadors. Marta Bermúdez-Gallegos states that Atahualpa was both a traitor to the Incas and was betrayed

by the Spaniards (331). Atahualpa's death in Cajamarca in 1532 subsequently produced many accounts from Incas, mestizos, and Spaniards of what actually happened that day. Upon closer examination of *Cajamarca*, many of the accounts are written with both the rhythm and musicality of *romances*, or ballads from the 16th century. Demarigny's text differs from a *romance* in that the ideas and phrasing are his own. Even though the poetry and musicality of a 16th century *romance* are elements that Demarigny carries throughout the play, the characters' speeches are not strictly based on any one particular historical text. History tells us that Atahualpa was defeated at Cajamarca by Pizarro and Valverde; Demarigny suggests as much and builds on it, loosely using several historical texts from the 16th century to create "original" dialogue. Although some of the *romances* portray Atahualpa as a man whose betrayal of his brother and disrespect for Inca laws led to the downfall of the Inca Empire, Demarigny does not conclude his play in this way. Instead, he portrays Atahualpa as the one betrayed by his interpreter Felipillo, the conquistador Pizarro, and the priest Valverde. The Spanish conquest ends up being the ultimate betrayal in Demarigny's version of events.

Also in Demarigny's *Cajamarca* is the idea that the fall of the Inca Empire was at least in part linked to Atahualpa's encounter with the written word. Patricia Seed explains how the Western belief that the ability to write denotes cultural superiority is evident in early Spanish narratives of the encounter between Atahualpa and the Spanish conquistadors (7). A pivotal scene in *Cajamarca* unfolds when Atahualpa and Fray Vincent Valverde have a conversation, after which Atahualpa throws the Bible to the ground. Shortly after this incident a battle breaks out at the main plaza and the Incas are ultimately defeated. Seed, through the analysis of several versions of the event, tries to ascertain what exactly happened to the book. Did Valverde drop it, as Garcilaso de la Vega suggests? Did Atahualpa throw it to the ground, as Titu Cusi Yupanaqui

suggests, in response to offenses the Spaniards committed the day before? Or was this gesture on the part of Atahualpa a completely unprovoked attack, as described by Francisco de Jerez? (9).

These various accounts display different historical perspectives. Demarigny represents several voices, and in the first section “And So It Was” includes three historical versions of the meeting between Fray Vincent and Atahualpa. When Atahualpa encounters the written word in Cajamarca, Demarigny portrays him as having the upper hand. Atahualpa can read “God” while Pizarro cannot, and the fact that Pizarro is illiterate spurs an animosity between the two.

The use of language during the Spanish Inquisition was very important. Seed writes “A particular collection of sounds, designated as language, which came to be known as the Requirement, became an essential part of the conquest itself and formed the basis for Spanish assertion of sovereignty over Atahualpa at Cajamarca” (13). Seed further states that this Requirement, which stated the Christian right to rule the New World, was apparently read to Atahualpa in 1532 by Fray Vincent Valverde. In Cajamarca, a scene between Atahualpa and Valverde takes place over the Bible. Francisco de Jerez, a Spaniard, describes this clash in 1534, only two years after the standoff at Cajamarca Plaza. He believed that what the Spaniards did in Peru was driven by the hand of God. Seed comments that in Jerez’s *Relación*, the Indians “know nothing of human food and are no better than beasts” (15). The Spaniards clearly thought themselves superior to the Indians. What concerns Jerez the most is Atahualpa’s refusal to be awed by the Spaniards. In *Cajamarca*, Demarigny takes the idea of Atahualpa’s haughtiness and crafts dialogue out of it. He creates actual interaction where the chronicle only describes what might have taken place between Atahualpa and Pizarro. There are other instances where Demarigny takes several notions from Jerez’s chronicle to mold his own, blending together ideas

from history to make his play more believable. In essence, his play is yet another chronicle. Like Jérez, for example, he refers to Pizarro as “the Governor.” He describes how Pizarro has Atahualpa approach him, not vice-versa, to denote the latter’s military power. He also describes Valverde with “the cross in one hand and the Bible in the other.” Like Jérez, he describes in detail the scene between Atahualpa and Valverde with the Bible. According to Seed, Atahualpa’s failure to marvel at the Bible, God’s holy written word, is what caused his downfall. His failure to marvel at the Spaniards, their leader and their military, is what caused him to lose his Empire. Demarigny takes the idea of Atahualpa’s apparent disdain for the Bible and shows it from a different perspective. Instead of portraying Atahualpa as insolent and arrogant, as Jérez did in his chronicle, he shows him to be a victim of a devious interpreter and an overzealous priest. In Demarigny’s version Atahualpa is willing to speak about the Bible, about words, but through the deliberate misinterpretation of Felipillo, his message is lost. Demarigny obviously has the intention of depicting Atahualpa as the true Inca leader who has been betrayed both by the Spaniards and his own people (Felipillo) without losing his dignity.

The final result of months of historical investigation into the fall of the Inca Empire, and cross-continental research on the staging of the original *Cajamarca*, is the English translation *The Last Inca*. It is my hope that the theatrical translation provides the reader with not only the same visual images and dialogue as the original, but also evokes the same emotions through the sound and rhythm of the English language as it does in the Spanish. It is my greatest hope that by rearticulating the author’s sentiment and transferring his intended meaning, I have produced a translation that will be intriguing and accessible to speakers of English.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bassnett, Susan. *Translation Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Bassnett, Susan. "Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre." Ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto and Sydney: Multilingual Matters, 1998. 90-108.
- Bermúdez-Gallegos, Marta. "Oralidad y escritura: Atahualpa traidor o traicionado?" *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 19.38 (1993): 331-44.
- Claude Demarigny: *Auteur Dramatique*. Ed. Claude Demarigny. 21 Mar. 2007. <<http://claudedemarigny.free.fr/>>.
- Demarigny, Claude. "Cajamarca." *Teatro internacional* 7 (1979): 9-47.
- Centro Latinoamericano de Creación e Investigación Teatral*. Ed. Juan Carlos Gené. 21 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.celcit.org.ar>>.
- Demarigny, Claude. "Cajamarca." *L'Avant Scene Theatre* 737(1983): 9-22.
- Javier, Francisco. "Apuntes sobre la puesta en escena." *Cajamarca*. By Claude Demarigny. *Teatro internacional* 7 (1979): 4-7.
- Podol, Peter L. "Contradictions and Dualities in Artaud and Artaudian Theater: The Conquest of Mexico and the Conquest of Peru." *Modern Drama* 26.4 (Dec. 1983): 518-27.
- Podol, Peter L. "Dramatizations of the Conquest of Peru: Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* and Claude Demarigny's *Cajamarca*." *Hispanic Journal* 6.1 (Fall 1984): 121-29.
- Seed, Patricia. "Failing to marvel: Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word." *Latin American Research Review*. 26.1 (1991): 7-33.
- Zatlin, Phyllis. *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: a Practitioner's View*. Clevedon and Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2005.

Claude Demarigny

THE LAST INCA

The Glory and Infamy of Pizarro

Translated from the Spanish

by

Dana M. Pilla

The theatrical score consists of four parts, respectively entitled:

And So It Was

Sonata for Atahualpa

Felipillo's Dream

For One Million Twenty Six Thousand Five Hundred Pieces of Gold

CHARACTERS

There are four characters or four actors who play Father Valverde, the Inca Atahualpa, Pizarro the conquistador, and Filipillo the interpreter (Filipillo to the Indians and Felipillo to the Spaniards). When the actors are not interpreting their roles, they become part of the CHORUS that comments on events, or remain the same character in someone else's dream.

The play consists of three dreams, or to be more precise, three nightmares:

In his dream, Atahualpa tries to understand what has happened to him, why he has been defeated, who these strange people are, what he can still hope to do, etc.

Felipillo dreams about improving his standing with the Spaniards and discovers that History is perverse.

Pizarro discovers that his name symbolizes the destruction of a king and a culture and dreams of reinventing History once it is too late. Hence, the idea of Pizarro's punishment; he is sentenced for all eternity to kill the vultures that try to attack Atahualpa's corpse, that is "Tahuantinsuyo", the Inca Empire, the America that never tires trying to rediscover itself.

It goes without saying that the author has his own ideas about staging and set design, but he does not impose them on anyone. The interpretation of the play depends on what the text means to whoever is reading it.

AND SO IT WAS

When Atahualpa, surrounded by thousands of Indians, realized that not one Spaniard was coming out to greet him, he said: “....”

Which meant, according to the writers of the chronicles,

“What is it with these bearded men?”

Or “Where are these Christians who will not appear?”

Or “Where are these men?”

One of the advisors who stood beside him said:

“.....”

Which according to the writers of the chronicles meant:

“They must be hiding.”

“They must be hiding in fear.”

Pizarro, noting Atahualpa’s indignation, sent forth Father Valverde with Filipillo or Felipillo or Martinillo or an interpreter by some other name.

“...so Father Vincent de Valverde of the Jesuit Order, who later would be bishop of that faraway land, went armed with the Bible and an interpreter”.

“Or Fray Vincent, accompanied by a messenger, set out with a cross in one hand and a Bible in the other.”

(That is, he had to go back to get the cross that he had forgotten in the first version)...

What happens next is of the utmost importance. These are the exact words that Valverde and Atahualpa exchanged.

FIRST VERSION

VALVERDE: The Governor expects you for dinner and begs you to come as he will not eat without you.

ATAHUALPA: You have all stolen the land through which you have traveled, and now he is expecting me for dinner? I will not leave here unless you bring back all of the gold, silver, slaves and clothing you have stolen. If you do not, I will have to kill you all.

Or... I will not leave here until you bring back everything you have stolen from my land. I know all too well who you are and why you have come.

VALVERDE: Look, Atabalipa, God has other plans. He only wants us to love one another.

ATAHUALPA: Who is this God?

VALVERDE: The One who made you and us. And what I have just told you He said right here in this book.

“Atabalipa asked to see the book and Fray Vincent gave it to him. When Atabalipa saw the book he was more impressed with the letters than what was actually written. He THREW it down, MOCKING THE PRIEST.”

SECOND VERSION

VALVERDE: ... I am a servant of God and I teach Christians about God and likewise I have come to teach all of you. What I teach is the word of God, as it appears written in this book. Therefore, as a messenger of God, I beg you

to be His friend because that is what God wants and you would do well to comply. Now, go speak to the Governor. He is waiting for you.

Atahualpa asks Valverde for the book.

Valverde gives it to him closed.

Atahualpa cannot open it.

Valverde reaches over to help him.

Disdainful, Atahualpa strikes him on the arm, not wanting him to open the book,

“To me words and paper are no miracle.”

He throws it fifteen to eighteen feet from him, “enraged and with a fiery complexion,” and says:

ATAHUALPA: Tell these men to come here because I will not leave until they have accounted for themselves and comply and pay for what they have done to my land... I know too well what you have done along the way, how you have treated my officials and taken clothing from the huts.

VALVERDE: The Christians have not done this. Some Indians brought us the clothing without the Governor’s knowledge, and he sent it back.

ATAHUALPA: Tell these men to come here. I will not leave until they have accounted for themselves and comply and pay for what they have done to my land...

ECHO: I will not leave here until they bring back everything...

THIRD VERSION (according to Montaigne)

VALVERDE: We are a peaceful people who have come from afar, sent by the King of Castile, the greatest prince of civilization, whom the Pope, the representative of God on Earth, has made king of all the world. If you would like to pay him tribute, you would do well to know this.

ATAHUALPA: As for you being peaceful, if you are it is hard to tell. As for your king, if he asks for these things it is because he is in dire need. And he who doles out such things must be a man accustomed to disputes for he promises to others things that are not his in the first place. So, hurry from here fast... or we will do to you what we have done to the others whose heads you see before you.

FINAL VERSION

ATAHUALPA: Tell them to come here. I will not leave until they have accounted for themselves and comply and pay for what they have done to my land...
I will not leave until they bring back all of the clothing...
I will kill them all... I will kill all of you, kill all of you, all of you...
(*Turning forward*) Ahh! Let no one escape.

THE INDIANS: Oh Inca! Oh Inca!

Seeing this, Valverde picked up his book and went back to Pizarro “crying and calling out to God.”

VALVERDE: What are you doing? We cannot wait any longer.

ATAHUALPA: I will kill all of you... Ahh! Let no one escape.

THE INDIANS: Oh Inca! Oh Inca!

VALVERDE: What will you do, sir? Atahualpa is the devil himself.

ATAHUALPA: I will not leave... I will kill all of you! Ahh! Let no one escape.

THE INDIANS: Oh Inca! Oh Inca!

VALVERDE: Can't you see what's happening? Why are you engaged in niceties with this arrogant dog? The whole countryside is filled with Indians... forward

march, I absolve you of your sins. Forward march, I absolve you of your sins. Forward march, I absolve you of your sins. I absolve you of your sins.

ATAHUALPA: Ahh! Let no one escape!

THE INDIANS: Oh Inca!

PIZARRO: Godspeed! Go get them!

THE INDIANS: Oh Inca!

PIZARRO: Godspeed and long live Spain!

THE INDIAS: Oh Inca!

PIZARRO: Godspeed! Godspeed! Godspeed and forward march!

Two cannons fired here and there.

Trumpets sounded.

Shots rang out, brief, isolated, disconnected, but numerous, coming from every which way.

The clicking hooves of 60 horses could be heard and saddle bells rattled.

The riders' voices could be heard, urging on their horses as they did their own selves.

Voices could be heard of men pushed to kill and of those who refused to die.

But which voices came from the Indians as they died?

And the muted sound of swords plunged into the bodies and of bodies on the ground...

“Pizarro arrived at Atabalipa's platform... fearlessly grabbed him by his left arm... and was left with a small wound on his hand from defending him.”

“It was a wondrous thing to see such a great man who had once been so powerful imprisoned in such brief a time ...”

“With Atabalipa imprisoned, people fleeing...although they could not flee from the stampede... two or three thousand of them moved closer to the barricade and knocked it to the ground... and that’s how they found open ground in which to flee...”

“The ones who used to carry Atahualpa on his platform,
seemingly important men,
all died
along with the ones who stayed on the platforms and hammocks.

The cacique Lord of Cajamarca died there, too.

Other captains died as well
but since there were so many
no great mention is made of them.”

“A lot of Indians were killed.

Atahualpa admitted
that seven thousand of his Indians had died.”

“Those who had seen people on the battlefield
believe that there were more than forty thousand.

In the plaza
two thousand lay dead
not counting the wounded”

“During the entire time no Indian brandished a weapon against the Spaniards
because they were so shocked
to see the Governor among them,
and to have the artillery suddenly loosed on them and the horses in formation,

which was something they had never seen before,
and so troubled them,
they tried to flee more to save their lives
than to wage war.”

“The sun shone for two hours, so there were two hours of fighting.”

“The Governor asked if everyone had returned in good health.

His general reported

that only one horse had suffered a scratch.”

We had one hundred sixty men and they had more than forty thousand.

Two thousand of them lay dead not counting the wounded...

We have killed seven thousand Indians...

All of the caciques died.

All of the captains died

but because there were so many

no great mention is made of them...

and we all came back in good health.

Only one horse had suffered a scratch...

PIZARRO:

“I give thanks to God

for granting us

so great a miracle

on this day.

I give thanks to God

for granting us
so great a miracle
on this day.

I give thanks to God
for granting us
so great a miracle
on this day.

“It was obviously God’s will and great mission guided by His hand.”

“It was obviously God’s will...”

“Ask God for His mercy,
and He shall have mercy upon us
and grant us the grace to perform such tasks
so that we might enter His Holy Kingdom”.

EVERYONE: Ask God for his Mercy so that we might enter His Holy Kingdom.

“Some were of the opinion that all of the warriors should be killed or have their hands cut off”. The Governor did not agree, saying:

PIZARRO: Atabalipa’s power is sufficiently immense that to gather a great number of people, though the power of the Lord our God is much greater in comparison, for through His infinite goodness, He helps His own. Understand that He who has freed us from past danger will free us from this day forward. For the Christians have good intentions in luring those barbaric infidels to the service of God and to the knowledge of the holy Catholic faith. Let us give thanks to God.

EVERYONE: I give thanks to God
 for granting us
 so great a miracle
 on this day.

At that moment the captain who had razed Atahualpa's fields and tents, and brought back "men, women, sheep, gold, silver and clothing," approached Pizarro.

They raided eighty thousand gold coins, seven thousand silver pieces, and fourteen emeralds.

The gold and silver came in enormous pieces, as well as in large and small plates, jugs and pots, stoking rods, goblets, and other objects.

ATAHUALPA: These are my personal treasures and the Indians who have fled took with them even larger quantities.

PIZARRO: And what would you be willing to put down for your ransom?

ATAHUALPA: If you promise to free me and to restore me to the throne, I will give you as many gold and silver handmade objects as are needed to cover the entire floor of the cell in which I am now imprisoned.

CHORUS: Some twisted up their faces in disbelief to hear that he could produce such a treasure. The Inca noticed this and said:

ATAHUALPA: I can not only give you that, but as much as is needed to fill this room with gold and silver to the height of my arm.

CHORUS: There they painted a white line.

PIZARRO: If you do as you say, not only will we let you live, we will also let you return to your homeland in peace.

ATAHUALPA: Well, if you'll do as you say, I will add a bit more than what I have

promised.

CHORUS: The house was approximately twenty feet long and fifteen feet wide.

ATAHUALPA, *to Felipillo*: Tell these Christians that if they do not kill me, I will give them this house filled with gold... this entire house filled with gold.

PIZARRO: How soon will this be done?

ATAHUALPA: Within two months.

POLILOGUE

-Do you think Atahualpa will comply?

-I think he will.

-I think he won't.

-He has more than enough gold.

-... he's a great leader, too, and a man of his word.

-...if he were a man of his word he would not fight against his own brother...

-... he might not even have enough gold to fill a room *this* size...

-...I think he has enough.

-...so kill him, and take the gold without waiting for him to bring it.

-Pizarro has given his word to let him live.

-Muslims cannot be trusted.

-He's not a Muslim.

-But he is a barbarian.

-He won't comply.

-And if he does?

-The Governor will decide what to do.

-He will have to spare his life.

-I say let's wait and see. He might betray us while the gold arrives...

...or send over spies with the ones bringing the gold...

...Of course. This is surely an ambush! He has us in a trance, looking at the gold coming in, while amassing his forces...

... and then the hills fill up with Indians who will come down to kill us as the last bucket of gold arrives...

... Our troops, horses and artillery will arrive...

... Forget about the troops! Three or four hundred men against Forty Thousand Indians who already know how we wage war. And us hidden in these hills.

-If he complies, his life should be spared.

-Complying and killing are the same thing. It's better to not wait and kill him and to continue the conquest.

-We could wait, too, but we have to go out and attack the Indians, not let them rest, show them power and superiority so they're scared, and not sit around waiting for gold.

-And if backup doesn't arrive?

-We won't have to share the treasure trove.

-It's better to share than to die.

-It's not about dieing because one horse can scare thousands of Indians.

-Yes, that's the truth. You had to see how they fled... and not one of us was injured.

-It's just that they didn't know who we were, and now they know.

-They don't know anything and God is with *us*.

-If God is on our side, how could you kill a captured king?

-That's the priests' problem...

-Some conquest!

-You'll see, Atahualpa will betray us. That's all I have to say.

SONATA FOR ATAHUALPA

Why? Why,

Atahualpa?

Why did you throw down the book?

Why, with such anger?

Why, with such fury?

Didn't you know that it was sacred?

Anything not understood is sacred,

Atahualpa.

What have you done?

Now you're in your golden cage.

The soldiers keep watch over you,

Like some wild animal.
“What does he eat? What does he drink?”
“Why does he dress like that?”
“Is it possible that he thinks like us?”
And how do soldiers think?
Soldiers do not think, Atahualpa.
They don’t think but they do civilize.
Now history has given them leave.
You will be the savage, Atahualpa.

You have beaten them at their game of chess. Fine.

Their horses don’t frighten you,
Their swords or their cannons, either.

None of this is a mystery,
As you’ve well understood.

But the book...
That cursed, blessed book...?
What do all those signs mean?
This you have not understood.

Search, ask, question, Atahualpa.
Do not die without this knowledge.

In it your death is written.

Atahualpa once innocently asked Hernán Pizarro, who was the legitimate Pizarro, the oldest and learned one, or maybe it was some other captain:

“Are Christians born knowing how to read and write?”

Confused, Hernán Pizarro or some other CAPTAIN answered him:

“Are your Indians born knowing how to play the panpipes?”

Atahualpa smiled and the captain continued:

CAPTAIN: Many different sounds come out of the panpipes or flutes your Indians play to entertain you, but did you realize that there are only a few tubes that play all the notes? Well, depending on its size, each tube embodies a distinct sound so that the sound is written in the size of the tube. We do the same in writing down the sounds that come out of our mouths so that we can say the names of all things, only that instead of drawing them as little bars of different heights, we make little pictures or letters everyone can recognize. We read the names of things just as melodies are played.

ATAHUALPA: Can you write “Atahualpa”?

CAPTAIN: Yes, even though the word isn’t part of our language, we can sound it out and write down the appropriate letters.

ATAHUALPA: Write it down... A-ta-uall-pa...Ataualpa...Ataua-lpa... You’re writing my name. You’re the first person to write down an Inca’s name. No other Inca’s name has ever been written. Will you write them all down? Promise me you’ll write them down so that they will not disappear from the memory of my condemned people.

CAPTAIN: I promise you.

ATAHUALPA: The names of my ancestors will not be forgotten! Their rough sounds will still be heard in the memory of other names once my people have died and their language has disappeared. The art of reading our history told in knotted fabric, quipus, will be forgotten but the names of my race will live on. Oh, heavenly instrument! Oh, simple, simple toy! How did we not invent this? Children can learn to use it through play... Is it true that all the children where you're from know how to read?

CAPTAIN: Some do.

ATAHUALPA: Why not all of them?

CAPTAIN: How do I know? Maybe there aren't enough schools or they don't want to go...

ATAHUALPA: I would make them go... It's a disgrace they don't go! Can you imagine how strong a people would be if they knew the names and feats of their ancestors and had no way to forget them?

Just then, as if some other idea had suddenly occurred to him, Atahualpa repeatedly asked Hernán Pizarro or some other captain who was with him:

“Do you know how to write the name of your God”?

CAPTAIN: Yes.

ATAHUALPA: Write it on this fingernail.

Wrinkling his brow, Atahualpa diligently spelled and memorized the word with great determination, and repeated it several times: “Dios. Dios. Dios”... always in amazement, laughing out loud each time at how easy and obvious it was to read and say.

ATAHUALPA: You say *Dios* to me and I understand that you speak of He who is, for you, creator of the world. I see, I see, I see, I can speak and understand it.

Letters embody words as the tubes of panpipes embody songs, or better yet, letters embody thoughts... and what does “Idos” mean?

CAPTAIN: Go away.

ATAHUALPA: And “Sido”?

CAPTAIN: That’s the name of an ancient city.

ATAHUALPA: And “Sodi”?

CAPTAIN: That doesn’t mean anything.

ATAHUALPA: How is that possible?

CAPTAIN: Well, at the moment, the combination of those letters in Spanish does not make any sense. This doesn’t mean that one day this word won’t be used to name something new.

ATAHUALPA: So, letters are waiting for new things to be born. They embody the past, the present and the future. The letters are waiting, things only need to be discovered. Give me letters so that I can make new things! Invent anything you like, I will name your inventions... Have you already named this newly discovered land?

CAPTAIN: Peru.

ATAHUALPA: That’s a minor river near the coast. We call it Tahuantinsuyo, the four corners of the world.

Atahualpa looked at his finger nail and repeated in a low voice: “Dios, Dios.” He turned pensive and frowned. Suddenly he grabbed his interpreter, Filipillo, by the throat, put his left hand around his lower back, and bent him backwards with tremendous force, and said:

ATAHUALPA: If you dare speak about what you have seen or heard, I will kill you. Remember, no shortage of men can tell me what you say to the Governor even when you two are alone. Remember, too, that my life is still important to the Christians. But yours is not. I will kill you with these hands and no one will mourn your death. No one. Not even that princess who attends me, the one you stare at so often. I forbid you to flatter her, speak to her or even to cast your eyes on her. Do you know why? No. You do not know why. This happens with traitors like you who forget why things are the way they are... Not even General Ollantay could marry princess Cusi-Coyllur while his father Inca Pachacutec was alive... I see you still don’t understand... Remember, I will kill you if you speak about what you have seen or if you look once more at that princess who is worth more than you. Leave with your lips sealed or I will kill you...

Filipillo ran off in a hurry. The captain, not understanding what had just transpired, asked to be excused. Without losing any time, Atahualpa approached the door of his cell. His presence caused a stir. A Spaniard approached to attend to him. Atahualpa showed him his fingernail.

“God,” the Spaniard said and anyone who came close looked at the fingernail and said,

“God.”

“God,” said one.

“God,” said another.

An ignorant man said nothing.

And Atahualpa looked at him contemptuously.

“God,” the last one said because Atahualpa stepped back.

ATAHUALPA: Dios, Dios, Dios. Everyone knows how to read His name
 -except for the ignorant-
 and their eyes open wide as they do it.
 One of them made the sign of the cross,
 another looked at me in hatred,
 but no one felt indifferent.
 Thoughts are born of words
 just as happy or sad melodies are created by the panpipes.
 That is where the songs of birds are hidden.
 Every song from every bird,
 born and waiting to be born,
 each celebrating the rising of the sun.
 That is where the trickling of every spring lies,
 the roar of torrents among the mountain rocks
 until the serene river flows with its unique song through the spacious
 valleys.
 That is where the truth of the song lies,
 the truth of the river flowing fast and serene, its source unknown,
 replenishing its waters century after century, its spring unknown,
 the voices of its forgotten spring harmonizing in a majestic symphony.

It flows smoothly all year,
shores are watered and towns prosper.
No one asks why.
The river flows smoothly, serenely, melodically,
the manifest river made into an inexplicable truth.
Where did the river come from?
Where did the songs come from?
Where did the letters that mold our thoughts of yesterday, today and
tomorrow come from?
Where did the letters they used to write out the truth come from?
Where?
What did Father Valverde tell me?
Help me remember!
WHERE DID THE LETTERS COME FROM?
HOW DID THEY WRITE THE TRUTH?
HELP ME REMEMBER!
HELP ME!

A storm erupted like no one had ever seen.

The men stood silent in the mud.

Lightening flashed across the sky for more than six hours straight.

The lightening killed everyone who came with the patriarch.

A glowing being, whose silhouette remained hazy, descended from the clouds to earth.

He appeared to rest on a peak when, suddenly, his being took form, in the shape of a face, among the clouds that erupted in lightening.

Instead of crying to his companions,
the patriarch stumbled about wildly, looking toward the storm,
to see if he who spoke would appear again,
but the voice was lost in the thunder, as if the thunder itself had spoken.

When he threw himself on the ground in despair, covering his ears and squeezing his eyes shut, a vibrant force, like liquid gold, fiery and trembling, swept him up and made him, still unconscious, engrave the laws of the people:

Thou shalt not kill

Thou shalt not commit adultery

Thou shalt not steal

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife

Or his servants

Or his ox or his donkey

Or anything else that belongs to him

It was not a dream, it was not imagined.

As the patriarch awoke, he saw the law of God written on the rock.

He saw it and could read it: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal.

He shouted out in happiness. But no one answered him.

He shouted out again: Come! Gather round!

But no one answered him.

He started running across the flooded land, tripping over the bodies.

He continued day and night without straying from the path.

Finally he came across some men, mountain dwellers.

He shouted out in happiness and wanted to embrace them.

But they wouldn't allow it for they were frightened.

He saw that their eyes were filled with fear.

His face was giving off rays of light.

He then kissed the ground and the rocky terrain became covered with grass.

He lay down on his back and thousands of llamas filled the pastures while thousands of men came together in prayer.

The patriarch rose, and without saying a word, set back out in the direction whence he came.

Everyone followed him day and night, in silence, over peaks and cliffs.

Nearly everyone arrived at the rock where the law was written without feeling hunger or fatigue.

The patriarch read: THOU SHALT NOT KILL. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

Everyone kissed the earth.

The sun shone brightly upon the lagoon. The snowcapped mountains could be seen in the water's reflection.

Not even the slightest of breezes made the tall reeds sway.

A town nestled in the frozen mountaintops paid homage to the sun.

The patriarch spoke for the first time, "I am the child of the sun. It is he who used my own hand to engrave what is written on this stone so that I would be able to read it. This he did not want anyone to witness and so he struck my companions down with his rays. But I will guide them over the path of truth".

This occurred centuries ago near Lake Titicaca.

Oh, if only it could happen!

If only we had the word of God written on the rock!

If only everyone could read it in a book, like the one I threw down with such hatred!

If only I could reign again over a people who know the book of truth,
a beautiful book

that does not contain a single error

because God himself wrote it.

Because everything within it
is accepted by all men.

It is written in the here and now,
and included the name of the Incas

and who their ancestors are
and what their greatest feats were,

their victories, their tenderness

in advising those they defeated to end their human sacrifice,

their just revenge on the arrogant tribes they defeated,

like the Cañaris,

the extermination of the rebels

and the repopulation of the provinces with a better race of people.

In this there can be no doubt.

The blessed children of my realm will read about the great feats of their kings,

who conquered Tahuantinsuyo

so that peace and justice might prevail.

They will learn how my father divided the Inca Empire between my brother and me

in order to appease the recently conquered peoples in the north,

giving them as monarch a king who was born one of them,

and how I waged a just war against my brother

because he left Cuzco without defenses,

frolicking in pleasures while our common enemy

besieged the coastlines.

And so much so that, if it weren't for him, the Christians would not have me in captivity.

What will the books say? There cannot be just one book. My brother will find someone who defends him, who will write another book to rival mine. So each case requires two books to explain both sides, and one more book to be impartial. Three opinions per case seem fair to me. And who will write the book about Pizarro? Who will tell the story of his unprecedented feats? Who will speak of his boldness, his bravery and his scorn toward death? What will it say about me? What will it say about my brother, the one who will write out Pizarro's epic journey?

PIZARRO: Don't be offended because you were imprisoned and defeated;
 even though the Christians here with me are few in number, I have
 conquered with them more land than you own and have defeated men

greater than yourself, subjecting them to the rule of the Emperor, under whom I serve.

FILIPILLO: He says that he has conquered men greater than Your Majesty because, even though the Christians are few in number, they are braver than the Indians and superior.

ATAHUALPA: I do believe that.

PIZARRO: God allows us, as few as we are, to conquer such a multitude of people so that you can leave behind your savagery and the wicked lives you lead.

FILIPILLO: He says that his God will always grant them victory regardless of the number of their enemies.

ATAHUALPA: It seems so.

PIZARRO: Why aren't you translating for me?

FILIPILLO: He says, "Let's see."

PIZARRO: He'd do well not to get me angry! Tell him this. We do not wage war unless war is waged upon us. And even if we are able to destroy our enemies, we will not do this without forgiving them first.

FELIPILLO: He says the Christians are good because they forgive when they could kill.

ATAHUALPA: I have also witnessed the kindness and courage of the Spaniards.

FILIPILLO: He says...

PIZARRO: Shut up! I don't care what he says. I'm the one talking. If you were imprisoned and your people the ones defeated, it was because you came with such a great army against us, though we had begged you to come in peace.

FILIPILLO: ...that you were imprisoned and conquered because, instead of coming in peace, as he had asked, Your Majesty came with armed troops.

ATAHUALPA: I wanted to come in peace but my people would not let me, and all those who once advised me are now dead.

PIZARRO: What did he say?

FILIPILLO: That he came ready for war because the Spaniards had stolen clothing from him and had killed his people, and that all of you are nothing more than thieves, murderers and liars.

PIZARRO: Well, you can tell this dog that he threw down the book containing God's word, and that therefore Our Lord allowed the defeat of his pride, for no Indian may offend a Christian.

FILIPILLO: No Indian has fought against a Christian because his God protected the Christians by making them invincible. And this so occurred because Your Majesty threw down the holy book and is haughty, proud, and ignorant.

ATAHUALPA: Tell him I know very well that the god who speaks through my idol is not the one true God because he has helped me so little... helped me so little ... so little.

As he was saying this, Atahualpa grabbed Filipillo and threw him to the ground.

He shut the door and walked over to Pizarro, showing him the fingernail where "God" was written.

Pizarro, illiterate, fell silent.

Pizarro fell silent before the name of God.

Seeing this, Atahualpa was astonished, and turned his back on him until he left. As Pizarro was leaving, Atahualpa shouted “God.”

CHORUS: What was Atahualpa thinking?
 How embarrassing!
 Pizarro does not know how to read.
 How embarrassing for the conquered Inca!
 If only his brother Huascar had taken revenge on him!
 Like him, his brother knew about their family history and their ancestors,
 more so than the Inca elders,
 and he also knew everything a leader has to know to reign.
 How embarrassing! Pizarro does not know how to read,
 that is, he knows less than his captains
 knowing not what makes him stronger.
 Yet despite this he conquered the Inca
 with the stampede of horses and roar of the cannons.
 A true uproar. A true upheaval. Nothing more. Brutality, savagery.
 How embarrassing! How embarrassing!
 Defeated by some mediocre adventurer, with no choice but to be bold, but
 an adventurer nonetheless
 One whose person cannot justify his victory.
 And just like that the Inca Empire sinks into the sea of oblivion,
 Its future cut short like an unknown tree,
 Like a black-pelted jaguar.

An Empire was sunk
by the audacity of an illiterate.
How embarrassing! And the Inca is imprisoned
at the mercy of the adventuring, fortunate and famed illiterate.
How embarrassing! How embarrassing!

ATAHUALPA: The ignorant rule the world.
Father Valverde says, "There are three people in one God".
Filipillo translates, "Three plus one makes four".
The mystery of the Holy Trinity
in the mouth of a demon.
How would you expect me to understand?
Pizarro triumphs without knowing how to read.
Filipillo triumphs while defiling royal blood.
Hernán Pizarro,
the only one who had shown me compassion and respect,
leaves for Spain.
One-eyed Almagro,
and fat Riquelme,
will triumph,
along with Father Valverde,
who in the name of God
would condemn rocks to hell.
I am surrounded by enemies,

ready to accuse me of everything, even of amassing armies while in
captivity.

But why would I do that when not a single
bird flies or sings in my Empire
if I don't want it to?

Is Pizarro mocking me?

A dark green comet shot across the sky,
like the one that shot through the night
a short time before my father, Huayna Capac, died.

A comet that forewarns great disaster,
the destruction of empires,
the death of kings,
shot through the sky.

I've seen it,
not quite as wide as a man's body,
and larger than a pica stick.

My death is near.

Losing my life does not sadden me.

What saddens me is to not be able to rule as I'd wished.

The history of Tahuantinsuyo will never be written.

The laws of this people will not be written
so that children will learn them.

Nor will they be taught any other truth.

They will not believe it.

They will always be missing something: the book I will never have written.

They will continue believing that there is another truth that is hidden from them,

but that speaks through their blood,
their traditions,

and they will continue mourning me for centuries,
mourning for something less and less familiar over time.

There will be one mass mourning no person will understand but which everyone will feel. Flowers will lose their scent, birds will not sing, rivers will not flow.

The river's symphonic melody will be forgotten.

And they will kill Atahualpa again

for the gold,

for black gold,

for centuries

upon centuries.

Kill me!

It doesn't matter.

Kill me!

For now I am ready.

The falcon has flown off your coat of arms,

Atahualpa,
faster than a comet
it crosses the starry night
flapping its wings across the rainbow.
The red, orange and yellow falcon
brings Viracocha, the creator of all things, news of your death.
Viracocha,
do not let go of the white llama
descending from heaven every night
to drink up the overflowing waters of the sea.
Let the earth be overrun.
Do not let go of the white llama
shining in the starry night.
Better still, sacrifice the llama
upon the altar of heaven.
Let its blood run
through the stardust of the galaxies,
and not the blood of your favorite son!
With your slingshot,
throw the blood of the white llama
at the snowcapped mountains,
but not the blood of your son!
Viracocha, can you hear me?

When will the gods make sacrifices?
The hour of your justice has arrived.
Stop the starry llama.
Viracocha, can you hear me?
Oh, creator, at the four corners of the world, without rival, you who have
given life and valor to men. Keep those who you have made happy and
healthy, out of danger, and let them live in peace. Where are you? In
highest heaven or down below? In the thunder, in the storm clouds?
Listen to me. Answer me.
Or do you want the Christians to strangle
and bury him
so that at nightfall the Indians can dig him up
and carry him tied to two poles,
through mountains and cliffs,
to Cuzco,
the center of your world,
and leave him there with the mummified bodies
of his ancestors
on display in the main square
to pay you tribute
in the month of the dead?
Is this what you want? To be rendered homage time and again.
Answer me, you, hiding in the storm clouds...

Answer me! This will be your final tribute.
For the last time you will see
the mummified Incas
on display in Cuzco
and the body of Atahualpa,
his pale, dark green body,
hanging in the main square
before your confused people.
Faster than the comet,
the green falcon,
the blue, violet, indigo falcon,
has crossed the heavens looking for an answer.

FELIPILLO'S DREAM

I at last took the cloak that covered Atahualpa today. He left it stained and discarded...
You are finer than silk, smoother and warmer than llama's wool. The men of my land wove you
day and night with the wings of bats and what for? Only so that this ungodly, haughty Inca
usurper could use you as his cover for one day and then discard you, sending you to be burned so
that no one else can touch or defile you.
Now, I wrap you around me,

cozy cloak,
luxurious cloak,
crafted by the peoples from Túmbez to Puerto Viejo.

I do not dress like an Inca or a noblemen. With you I turn into a bat and enter the chamber of the Child of the Sun. While the beautiful princesses still hold his food in their hands, exquisite food on golden plates, I fly by and snatch it, steal it, and snatch it in a fit of laughter, scaring everyone around me. The bat will have his revenge. The fateful bat has had his revenge. The sun grew black and abandoned his child to the curse of the night.

Oh, how great it is to witness your fall, failed Majesty!

If you had seen, as I have,

the towers of Seville,

the gardens of Granada

and the Holy image of the Virgin Mary

dressed in velvet,

decorated in pearls and gold

and so pure

in her pained expression

you would have seen, Atahualpa, how worthless we really are,

and how wrong!

Why are you trying to scare me? Don't try to silence me. Stop, you don't impress me. Your threats are useless to you now. Your days are numbered. Felipillo will be saved.

You know something? They gave me holy water and because of that you can do nothing to me, just as you could do nothing to Pizarro.

I have cried, Atahualpa, I have cried and I cry still thinking of the first time I knelt before Christ as a Christian. But you will never understand.

You want me to tell you things that you can understand? The Christians have hundreds of cannons, like the ones that were fired in Cajamarca and sent your armies into a panic. They have dozens of caravels that cross the expansive sea and for months and never sink. It is wondrous to see their formation of soldiers armed with steel weaponry.

I won't say a word about their women or about their flower-filled houses with balconies, courtyards and vestibules, or about so many other marvels you could never imagine no matter how much you tried. But I will tell you one thing: the Christians have these carriages... I don't know how to explain them... See... They tie two huge poles to horses like the ones you just met and put a box between them where a person can sit and the box lies on an axle with wheels, which are like two rings that spin and move as the horses walk. Some are very ornate and the society ladies ride in them to make their visits. Others are plain and are used to transport produce from the fields to the city. The Christians are superior to us, Atahualpa, and try as you might, you will never conquer them. They will always send more and more people over and they will crush you.

Who can understand this? Only someone who has seen it all with his own eyes. The Spaniards and me. Even if Atahualpa listened, he wouldn't believe me.

He would accuse me of tricking him.

You and your haughtiness!

You will fail, alone. I know what I'm doing.

This cloak is mine and no one will take it from me. My cloak, my beautiful, defiled cloak, I will wrap myself in you, together with that stubborn princess who still hand-feeds delicacies to the last Child of the setting Sun. The one who used to be a princess approaches, the one who believes she still is, who hears the hopeful rumors of liberation during the night, the one who has lost nothing of her arrogance as a sacrificial llama, as an adoring pagan, as a virgin deflowered by the rays of the lying sun, a man like me and everyone else.

The comedy is over. With me you will become a Christian. With me you will come down from your overwhelming pride to kiss God's holy ground, eat your daily bread, and love men like me. I will take you in the white caravels that creak in the wind and show you the wonders of faraway lands. For the first time in these days I want to see the daughter of a nobleman marry the son of a nobody. Wrap yourself up in my sacrilegious cloak. Sit close by me on the deck of the ship. You won't recognize the stars that gaze down upon us because they are different here. What do you care? These stars do not know the Sun and will not tell him anything about your flight. We are taking the Inca's sacred cloak to Spain, and it will hide us from these unknown stars like a rustic poncho.

Beautiful liberated princess, it won't be long before you're mine, marveling at all I teach you, for soon you will have forgotten this dying world. Father Valverde will see us wed. He is a true friend. I have risked my life with him. He baptized me himself and taught me a great deal. I believe he is a holy man and not any less the brave for it.

To be sure, there are things he does that I do not understand.

VALVERDE: Listen, Felipillo.

FELIPILLO: Bless me, Father.

VALVERDE: If you are deserving.

FELIPILLO: Where have I failed, Father?

VALVERDE: We will see.

FELIPILLO: Tell me, Father.

VALVERDE: You know that the reinforcements have arrived, Captain Almagro and his men.

FELIPILLO: I was aware of something.

VALVERDE: Do you know who Almagro is?

FELIPILLO: Yes and no.

VALVERDE: Governor Pizarro's associate.

FELIPILLO: I see, Father.

VALVERDE: And do you know what it means to be the governor's associate?

FELIPILLO: No, Father.

VALVERDE: It means he is coming to share in the treasure of Cajamarca... He is coming to receive his pay, as an associate who stayed behind in Panama, without ever having gotten his hands dirty, without even having been frightened as you and I were when thousands upon thousands of Indians poured into the plaza and we didn't know whether we would get out, the one or two hundred of us. If God had not helped us, and only He knows who deserves to be victorious, neither you nor I would be speaking right now. And Almagro would not be coming to ask for his share.

FELIPILLO: Yes, Father.

VALVERDE: Well, then. We have to give Almagro something to keep him happy. But the Devil lives in this man.

FELIPILLO: You don't say, Father.

VALVERDE: Yes, the Devil moves him against the Governor and I promise you war and more war if Almagro does not receive what Pizarro has.

FELIPILLO: Praised be the Lord!

VALVERDE: Now, it is up to you to take the Devil out of Almagro so that there will be peace among Christians.

FELIPILLO: Up to me, Father? But, I'm a nobody. Just a lowly interpreter.

VALVERDE: Remember, you helped a lot the time when Atahualpa entered the Plaza of Cajamarca in triumph and you translated for me that he did not want any other God. I told that to the Governor and he became furious, sallied forth and yelled, 'God speed!' and everything turned out to be in glory for the Christians.

FELIPILLO: But that's what Atahualpa said. I shouldn't get any credit for that.

VALVERDE: And if he hadn't said it?

FELIPILLO: I don't know...

VALVERDE: Well, I would have said the same thing and you would have translated it. One must understand what heaven has in store for us.

FELIPILLO: Yes, Father. But how can I serve you?

VALVERDE: If you were Almagro, what would make you happy?

FELIPILLO: I don't know, Father.

VALVERDE: Think about it.

FELIPILLO: Your Holiness said that Captain Almagro is the governor's associate.

VALVERDE: That's right.

FELIPILLO: That means he should receive the same.

VALVERDE: That's right.

FELIPILLO: So, Captain Almagro should be happy receiving the same.

VALVERDE: Very well, then. Since we want peace among Christians, it makes sense to give Almagro what we give Pizarro. That is to say he must be allowed to conquer more lands because there is no possible way to take away from Pizarro that which he has secured after so many conquests.

FELIPILLO: It seems that way to me.

VALVERDE: And to conquer more lands, he needs free reign... Now, who stands in our way?

FELIPILLO: Atahualpa.

VALVERDE: And what do you think?

FELIPILLO: The same as your Holiness...

The same as you, you cursed demonic priest who uses God to justify everything.

If I hadn't seen Our Lady of Sorrows with my very own eyes ...

But, how dare he, that devil!

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost...

God even knows how to make use of the Devil.

Felipillo, what did you get yourself involved in?

Wasn't that simplified cult to the Sun that shines upon us all, upon the Child of the Sun and the Virgins of the Sun, worth more?

Respecting the Inca elders, the herdsmen and suffering the humiliation of “this bridge is for the lords” and “this one is for the mortals” or “this woman is not for you” and “work for the lords and the Inca will provide everything.” Wasn’t it worth more? That’s fine for the people from Cuzco. But us, the inhabitants from the Coast, conquered, found to serve, or else sent exiled to populate these lands and taken over to the puna to freeze to death...

I don’t know...

FELIPILLO: Tell me what I should do, Father?

VALVERDE: What do you think, Felipillo?

FELIPILLO: The same as your Holiness.

VALVERDE: I see that you understand me. So that peace may reign in these lands miraculously conquered by a handful of brave men I need you to say that you heard that armies are forming to free the Inca. That should make Almagro and Pizarro see that they’ve got no choice but to kill Atahualpa so that mustering these forces has no purpose.

FELIPILLO: It seems clear to me.

VALVERDE: It is up to you to say so.

FELIPILLO: I do not know anything about this.

VALVERDE: Consider it said.

FELIPILLO: But, it’s a lie.

VALVERDE: I absolve you... and don’t be offended. I am doing this for the good of Christianity. Didn’t you ask for my blessing?... Get on your knees.... In the name of the Father... etc.

You do not know what it means to interpret the will of heaven. It means
delving into the darkest recess of the human labyrinth

to pick a flower growing there

clean it

and bring it in to the light of the day. Either I or someone else,

so that little by little it will be reborn and blossom.

I have plucked a blackened lily from the fetid manure and I start cleansing

it in the pure water running down off of the snowcapped mountain tops so

that I can bring it out to the sun some day. Either I or someone else, for

who am I?

One day it will blossom...

I confess, Felipillo, that frankly I do not know if it was worth it to come

this far. Everything was fine here and your people did not need us. One

day our peoples would have met. Maybe later, when your people might

have been stronger, and we not so greedy. But we know how to navigate

and believe the Earth may be round so we think we have arrived in Asia

and come across a new world of which we were unaware. That's how

things go. What's done is done.

Lie, Felipillo, I will absolve you. Let us sink together in the cataclysm of
our times.

FELIPILLO:

Why? Why do the Christians have doubt? I don't understand. God gave

them victory. They should just kill. Aren't they the victors? Why should

Atahualpa matter to them? That ungodly, haughty, usurping, polygamous,

brother killer... Am I not covering myself with his defiled cloak?.... And who am I? A captured Indian from the coast, baptized and Christianized... but if the Christians themselves have doubt, then who am I? A turncoat, a traitor, the foremost among the traitors from Tahuantinsuyo... Tell me, blessed cloak, how do you feel on my shoulders? Did you feel different on the shoulders of the Inca? What did you feel when the hands of a servant girl dropped you over the shoulders of the Child of the Sun? Did you start to shine? What did you smell like all of a sudden? Did you become weightless? Did you stop being furry? Did you become the materialized rays of the Sun?

And why do I feel you for what you are, the wing of a bat? I have seen the bones and corn stalks the Inca has touched thrown into wicker baskets to be burned once a year. They are like everyone else's and the dogs want to gnaw through and through. Enough with the stories!

Father Valverde says that God wants peace. And why doesn't He have it if He wants it? He says it's to test the mortals. He's right about that. He who is not tested acts without thinking. The designs of divine providence are unknown. With this other myth Christianity will last a thousand years. It will never be proven false. Maybe that demonic Father Valverde is a saint, who takes on other peoples sins to save Christianity.

How could Atahualpa hope to conquer a people who are both demonic and saintly? I wish they had never captured me! Now they want to put the death of Atahualpa on me! How do I know what Almagro and Pizarro

have decided to do together? I only know Atahualpa cannot do a thing to me. Not because I am baptized, but because he is under sentence. So if they do accuse him of amassing people to free him and they kill him for this, why should I care? Let everything go to hell at the same time! Let there be no more Incas, no more elders, noblemen, and let everything belong to everyone, like the Christians preach! What would I lose? Better yet, what would I gain? I would gain a lovely white llama who hates me and I would take her on a ship, on the deck, hidden from the stars, I would make love to her beneath the sacred cloak turned poncho like any other.

PIZARRO: Felipillo, how many men is Rumíñahui getting together?

FELIPILLO: Between thirty and sixty thousand, governor. Men are arriving from Atacama, Tihuanaco, Tomebamba, Liribamba and even all the way from Caranqui and Atuntaquí.

PIZARRO: Are you sure, Felipillo?

FELIPILLO: Yes, sir, just as sure as I am of seeing you.

PIZARRO: Who told you?

FELIPILLO: General Calicuchima himself, when they were torturing him. He took me for one of the Inca's counselors. He didn't know that I was with you, sir. I asked him in the teary voice of someone crying for the freedom of his master. So he was moved and he told me just what I am now telling you.

PIZARRO: So, why didn't he tell me?

FELIPILLO: Because you asked him about gold and not about men.

PIZARRO: I also asked him about men.

FELIPILLO: Well, you did not press him enough. If you had pressed a little more the words would have come out all by themselves. But you are slipping, sir. When you conquer, you conquer. Let me take care of it like Father Valverde asked me to so that peace will reign among Christians, for these kingdoms were living in heresy and would have died if the Christians had not arrived.

PIZARRO: All right, Felipillo. I see that I can trust you. I hope you won't need to be punished!

FELIPILLO: Trust me, Governor.

Atahualpa is dead. And if he has not yet died, he will die. Torch the fields and the ants will scatter. The Inca's armies, too, are running off in all directions over the highest peaks of the Andes. But it is funny to see how others bring gold as promised, pots, idols and silver plates from temples so that everything can be melted into legal tender. Gold will not rescue Atahualpa even if he fills the room where he is imprisoned because if he could, it would mean he had much more. Even though Pizarro was happy with his share, Almagro will want his own, and once Almagro is happy, someone else will come and ask for more, and then another, and another.... Why would they want this to end? It will end when the gold runs out and there are no more mountains or hills or deserts populated by wild-eyed natives who will ask directions on their way through the unknown mountains they do not know that used to be one road, one kingdom, one way of being, one way of life, one way of speaking.

Atahualpa is dead and I am taking his servant girl with me. When the ship is sinking, it is better to carry off the treasures than to leave them for pirates. I am taking one of the Inca's servants, the daughter of a powerful lord in Quito, which the Spaniards have not yet conquered. And she

is a real princess because she smells of country flowers and of volcanic slopes and not of bitter perspiration like the daughters of fishermen.

I am taking with me a princess I could never have imagined. It will be hard for her to like me, but the long voyage should tame her. She only knows how to serve and respect the Inca. I am not asking for so much. I am a half breed, half Indian, half Christian. Not by blood, only by customs. And I am proud of that. I bet that not long from now there will be many of us. I am the first half breed.

That wicked Father Valverde has taught me a lot since the time the two of us both walked into the plaza to greet Atahualpa. What if we had laughed when we saw each other?

Back then I didn't know him very well.

But now I do...

Atahualpa is getting men together

His generals come by to ask him for advice.

Fifty thousand well armed men

are getting ready to attack the Spaniards and annihilate them.

But, what's this I see?

Volcanoes are erupting.

Cotopaxi itself burns in the darkness as if to punish its own for trying.

There is no salvation.

Not even through Rumiñahui's slyness.

The Spaniards cross deserted fields of ash to conquer Quito, an open, abandoned city.

They have killed Atahualpa.

They broke his spine and beat him to death instead of burning him alive.

If he did not amass troops, he tried.

Anyway, he is a usurper.

A condor blotted out the sun with its wing this morning.

And the caravels sail on, bringing people in and taking them away.

Cuzco was conquered and is being re-populated.

Houses and churches are being built with the stones of the temples.

Nothing will be left.

The ships take people and gold.

Father Valverde is fleeing with weighted down trunks.

He thinks I can't see him. He could be wearing a hood and I'd still recognize him from here.

What will he do with all that gold?

Atahualpa is going, too. Pizarro wants him to meet Carlos V. The Father, the Inca and I with my princess on the same ship. We will reminisce. If we do not run into any pirates, we will celebrate our arrival. I will translate for Atahualpa before the emperor... No, don't grab my throat... my lord. Inca. No, I did not betray you. It was that hooded priest hidden behind his trunks filled with gold from our temples... Don't throw me overboard... I'll return the cloak and your servant girl... The sea is filled with sharks that sneeze, whose spiky jaws lined with sharp teeth gaze upon you in the whirling water... Let go of me, my lord... have mercy on me as the Christians had on your Majesty, following my advice... Let go of me, my lord... Let go of me... Thank you, my lord. Atahualpa, you slipped up just like Pizarro... you no longer know what you are or what you can do... This world belongs to half breeds like me... You are going farther away, Atahualpa... you have died... the sun himself killed you to be able shine for others.

No, father, I don't want gold. I won't say anything, don't worry. I'll stay in Panama. I won't leave the islands. You go on to Spain. I prefer to live hidden with my princess or, if not with her, then with the daughter of a fisherman... Let me live as best I can, forgetting about what happened. Let me live like the wicked half breed I am, neither Christian nor Indian... I am tired. Don't kill me, father! I'll take the gold and sign the receipt. Rest assured of my silence. I'll stay on the Devil's island... don't kill me, father... Thank you, father... Yes, father, I know that Atahualpa died after a fair trial...

Yes, Father, I know that your Holiness has not fled...

and I also know that Rumiñahui will be defeated

and that Almagro will kill Pizarro

and that thousands of Indians like me

will drag themselves along like animals for centuries upon centuries... Amen...

I am tired.

Let me live

On sleep and forget!

Let me forget the creaking cables on the black caravels that brought and will continue to bring so many people so that blood gushes out of flaming galley windows!

Stop the slaughter! These wild horses are kicking my brothers...

Don't let them draw and quarter me!

Stop the horses!

Oh, to forget!... I'm tired.

Let the half breed bat sleep,

Half mouse, half bird,

on the roof of a ruined palace!

**FOR ONE MILLION THREE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED
PIECES OF GOLD OR PIZARRO'S PUNISHMENT**

For the church, ninety silver coins, two thousand two hundred pieces of gold.

For Hernando Pizarro, one thousand two hundred sixty seven silver coins, fifty seven thousand two hundred twenty pieces of gold.

For Hernando de Soto, seven hundred twenty four silver coins, sixteen thousand seven hundred forty pieces of gold.

For Father Juan de Sosa, army chaplain, three hundred ten silver coins, seven thousand seven hundred seventy pieces of gold.

For Juan Pizarro, four hundred twenty point twenty silver coins, eleven thousand one hundred pieces of gold.

For Pedro de Candía, four hundred seven point twenty silver coins, nine thousand nine hundred nine pieces of gold.

For Gonzalo Pizarro, three hundred eighty four point fifty silver coins, nine thousand nine hundred nine pieces of gold.

For Miguel Estete, three hundred sixty-two silver coins, eight thousand nine hundred eighty pieces of gold.

FRANCISCO PIZARRO: You have complied, Atahualpa.

 The room was filled as you had said.

 The gold was melted down and distributed.

 Better if your brother had complied.

 He wanted to give us three times as much.

 That is why you had him killed.

 Admit that you had him killed.

 You were afraid that he would give us more

to let him live
and we would kill you instead.
It's all your fault. Now the treasures are buried
where no one will find them.
You killed your brother
and you want us to spare your life.
Brother killer, you will never reign again.
You are heartlessly ambitious,
usurper, an assassin.

The accused admits to having killed his brother, Huáscar, the legitimate heir.

The accused admits that he is the illegitimate child of Huayna Capac.

The accused admits that he has waged war against his brother.

PIZARRO: And who am I to judge him?

Fifty-seven thousand two hundred twenty pieces of gold for Governor Francisco Pizarro,
for himself and for his interpreters and horses, and two thousand three hundred fifty
silver coins.

PIZARRO: Who am I to judge a king?

Who am I to sentence him as a criminal?

I am victorious.

“Have pity on my children
for I commend them to you”,
that dog told me.

He raised his hand as they were tying him down,

and held up three fingers,
he entrusted three children to me.
The truth is, I wasn't the one who killed him.
My brother, Hernando, had gone.
Hernando de Soto the good, had left to find out
whether Atahualpa was gathering troops.
and returned too late
with the news that he was doing no such thing.
Almagro was the one who killed him
so his greed could grow unchecked.

"The Governor, likewise, sets aside twenty thousand pieces of gold for the men who
came with Captain Almagro to help pay for the costs of transporting their cargo ..."

Get up, Atahualpa,
Don't mind the chains.
You will not die.
This blackish green comet
is but an omen.
You know only pagans and barbarians
believe in signs from the sky.
As Christians, we do not believe in omens.
Only the will of God must be done.
As Christians we'll see to it the will of God is done.
Stop this sadness.

Trust me. You have complied and so will I.

“The accused confesses to being an idol worshiper and to making personal sacrifices to his gods”.

ATAHUALPA: “I know very well that he who speaks through my idol is not the true God
for he gave me so little help...
so little help...”

VALVERDE: This pagan is tricking you, Pizarro.
You’re getting weak.
What do you care about his children,
if it’s true that he had pregnant women killed
when he conquered Cuzco?
Stop being weak.
Is he or is he not an idol worshiper?

PIZARRO: He is.

VALVERDE: Did he or did he not kill his brother?

PIZARRO: It seems that he had him killed.

VALVERDE: Is he or is he not the illegitimate son of Huayna Capac?

PIZARRO: And I, who am I?
Didn’t I grown up in fields
where pigs grazed?

VALVERDE: You’re Christian, humble and illegitimate, but Christian nonetheless.

PIZARRO: We'll make him Christian. We'll baptize him with the name Francisco. Francisco like me. Francisco like that saint surrounded by animals. Is something stopping us from naming him Francisco?

VALVERDE: Nothing is stopping us, and if you like, we can give him your name. But he will still be a brother killer, a usurper and a polygamous traitor, and because of this, he cannot be saved.

PIZARRO: Why baptize him then?

VALVERDE: To save him from hell and from being burned alive.

PIZARRO: What difference does it make if we are going to kill him anyway?

VALVERDE: His body will be preserved.

PIZARRO: What does it matter?

VALVERDE: It matters to him. His Indians preserve the bodies of their ancestors in their temples. Huayna Capac's body was found and next to his that of a woman, seated, with her face painted gold and with a fan in her hand, whose job it was to keep the dust and flies away from the cadaver of her lord and master.

PIZARRO: We are going to kill him in any case.

VALVERDE: I absolve you, Pizarro.

PIZARRO: Will you sign the decree, Father?

VALVERDE: I will if you won't.

PIZARRO: Don't you care what they will say about us?

VALVERDE: They will say that at that time, and under those pressing circumstance, we had no other option.

PIZARRO: Are you always so sure of yourself, Father?

VALVERDE: The question is not relevant to this case. It's best that you don't vacillate.

PIZARRO: So the accused confesses...

To being the illegitimate child of Huayna Capac,

To having waged war against his brother Huáscar,

To having him killed

To having married many women,

To having conspired against the Spaniards,

To being an idol worshiper,

To having exacted tribute from his vassals after the Spaniards had entered his land,

and moreover, to having given his relatives and other people in his realm items stored in

public depositories, therefore misusing the assets of the Empire.

ATAHUALPA: "I know very well who all of you are and what you are up to. You have stolen clothes from the huts... I will not leave here until they have returned everything to me"...

"...The front lines began to enter the plaza in Cajamarca. A squadron of Indians preceded them dressed in colorful checkered uniforms. They were picking up the straw from the ground and sweeping the pathway. Three hundred men entered like boy soldiers, with their bows and arrows in hand, singing a song clearly not amusing but meant to be frightening for those listening to it because it seemed hellish. Behind them, three more squadrons came. Then many men came dressed in armor, with shields and crowns of gold and silver. Among them was Atahualpa, on a chair held aloft, covered in multi-colored parrot feathers, and adorned in plates of gold and silver."

“Eighty men bore him in on their shoulders,
all of them were dressed in lavish blue uniforms,
while he was dressed exquisitely,
a crown on his head,
a necklace made of huge emeralds around his neck
and sitting on his chair held aloft
on a very small seat
with a beautiful cushion.”

“...They brought him to the center of the battle in the plaza, in the midst of six or
seven thousand of his men there.”

“... All together we had one hundred sixty men. Sixty mounted soldiers and one hundred on
foot...

ATAHUALPA: Where are they? I will not leave here until they account for themselves,
comply, and pay for that they have done to my land.

PIZARRO: The accused admits to having misused the assets of the Empire and given
his relatives things belonging to the Empire.

There were many ways of seeing this...

PIZARRO: Shut up, you Devil’s scribe! Who is paying you? Didn’t you receive your
share of the gold? What do you hope to gain from Atahualpa’s death?...
Take up your arms, men! We will not permit such infamy. We are all
sons of bitches, Atahualpa, Pizarro, everyone. Bastards, turned
adventurers to overthrow and despoil empires, goddamn sons of bitches ...
We all fornicate with as many women as we wish. We murder and rob

anyone and everyone. Which of us wouldn't kill his own brother for gold?...We have all agreed to melt down the idols, chairs, silverware, jars and everything else that will ever go to museums so that people can remember what the art of this empire was like. We have all killed, robbed and pilfered, so how righteous are we to sentence someone who is worth more than we are? Send him to the Emperor! He will either be the Inca's judge or friend.

VOICES: Traitors... you are all traitors... How can you give such advice to Pizarro? How can you divide Christians over the life of a bloodthirsty pagan? Who are we, in the middle of the depths of these hills, to take sides over defending someone who is still capable of annihilating us? And these bars of gold which are the fruits of your labor, do you want to see them buried beneath your lifeless bodies? Do you no longer want to return to Spain covered in gold to take revenge on those who called you vagabonds? Can this savage Indian, this feathered shaman, make you forget your motherland? Do you want to lose all your riches for some pagan who murdered his brother and his people? You are all a bunch of traitors! Enough with this divisiveness among Christians! Let Captain Almagro's men conquer their own land. Let them make your own path for such a just cause. But all of you, return to Spain and enjoy what you have rightfully won. What do you think, father?

VALVERDE: Even though it is a test of Christian spirit that some well intentioned soldiers want to pardon the life of a sinner as great as Atahualpa, God in

His infinite mercy will pardon one who errs in such a complicated case, I believe that for us, whose mission in this conquest is to rescue souls for eternal paradise, I mean how our union and our example will be of greater use in this. So that if it is true that Atahualpa complied with what he had promised to give, it would nevertheless be unfair for him to pay off his great spiritual sins with earthly possessions. And judging this case, with the help and grace of God, it seems fair to save Atahualpa from being burned alive at the stake by baptizing him and in this way putting him to death as a Christian, since he has been made a believer through the holy waters of baptism.

Let us say the Our Father

So that the grace of the all powerful God

May descend upon our souls

And enlighten us at such a difficult moment

OUR FATHER...

PIZARRO:

I did not kill Atahualpa.

Valverde killed him.

“If you do not sign it, I will.”

“I absolve you,” he said to me.

“Isn’t that true?”

It is true, Pizarro. IT IS TRUE, PIZARRO. IT IS TRUE, PIZARRO...

Atahualpa embarrassed you with the fingernail that you could not read,

But you would not have killed him for that.

You were angered but you did not cease to see that he was more noble than you.

How could you forget about the pigs that you herded over your desolate land!

Atahualpa is a king. Eighty men bore him aloft in a golden chair on their shoulders.

Thousands of subjects paid him tribute. Hundreds of servants from the four corners of the world rendered him homage. You vanquished him treacherously, through your shrewdness, with your raggedy soldiers on their way to die. And you were lucky. You weren't the one who killed him.

Valverde killed him over faith,

Almagro killed him over gold,

Felipillo killed him over lust.

Others killed him over fear.

WHO KILLED ATAHUALPA?...

WHO KILLED ATAHUALPA?

PIZARRO:

I didn't want him to be killed.

I wanted to send him to Spain...

This plaza isn't what it once was,
the bloody and glorious testament
to my never before seen victory.

"I entrust you with my children.

I have three.

Will you promise to give them refuge?

Pizarro, will you make me this promise?"...

Then two sturdy negroes

took hold of him

and sat him down violently.

VALVERDE: "I baptize you, FRANCISCO ATAHUALPA,

In the name of the Father, the Son, and

The Holy Ghost... Amen"

"Francisco Atahualpa, the law you have just

accepted condemns you to die for your sins. Amen"

A cry of agony shattered the terrifying silence

In the plaza,

The silence of heaving bosoms that are witnesses to the great
disasters of history.

It was a scream such as had never been heard before,

a resounding scream with metallic reverberations

that seemed to originate in the depths of the mines,

a horrific scream

because never before,

all at once,

had an entire people been killed.

It shattered the silence of the plaza,

reverberated over the mountain tops,
echoed through the valleys,
slipped along the beaches.
Nothing but this scream could be heard across the whole
continent...

This is the scream that so pains you, Pizarro.
With this scream the Inca robbed you of your victory.
Already this plaza does not smell like it used to:
Of gunpowder and blood all mixed up
that reminded you of your victory;
of leather, of good times, of wine,
of damp soil, of a land fully conquered,
of sweat, of men, of a hearty appetite
for victory, for glory, for treasure,
for a well deserved rest.

This plaza turned pestilent, repulsive,
Once the one-eyed face of that greedy bastard
came around the corner
with his reinforcements behind him.
with Almagro came hatred
and that formidable scream that pains you so
began to take root in the Inca's soul.
Later there was the visit and torture of

Calicuchima

“If I had been by your side, you would not be

captive”, the faithful captain said to him,

Wearing his pack on his head

To show respect.

Then there was the bringing of the great table

Where the throne sat

And the gold coins with figures

Of the sun and moon,

Snatched from the temple,

And the melting down of the treasure of gold

Into bars and tiles of gold,

The difference between a loving glance

on the half closed eyes of a corpse.

The scream grew louder. Its roots continuing to borrow deeper.

Then they called him bastard, usurper,

brother killer and thief

which was the limit.

The scream grew so much that the Inca could

scarcely suppress it.

He read in your eyes that you would not give

His children refuge,

For there aren't only three but millions.

PIZARRO: Everyone shut up, shut up.

I don't want to hear that cry.

I will give refuge to your children, whether there are three

Or ten million.

We will leave them your land, we will teach them to cultivate it,

We will buy what it yields.

We will build cities with flower-filled patios and glass-tiled bell towers.

Ladies will wear their finest attire on Sunday to go to mass, and along the shady avenues gentlemen will give them compliments. The bells will ring, as they ring in Badajoz, Medellín or Trujillo, for a happy and redeemed people. Hear the bells. Hear them ring. They ring through the air. Ring, ring, ring heavy bronze bells, until that barbaric cry cannot be heard, that powerful scream from an oppressed throat...

The garrote consists of a pole to which a metal band is fastened in the shape of a collar. To tighten the collar a screw with large blades, like a lever, must be turned with a cross-shaped crank that saves time and energy.

Owww....

Stop tightening it, Let go, you damn executioner!

No, don't kill him.

I can't stand it. It's not what I want.

Leave him alone.

Leave him alone... everyone go away... go away...

Everyone out... or this sword will kill

anyone who comes close...

Don't ask any questions... Not you, Father,

or you, Almagro.

Everyone out, I said.

And everyone withdrew. You could see

how scared they were of me.

I was left alone with the Inca.

As the circle widened,

as they started retreating and

entering their homes,

I was left alone with the Inca.

CHORUS: That was when you, Pizarro, in this deserted plaza, on this moonless night,
approached Atahualpa and took his hand. He was sweating. You wiped his face.
Your lips felt the cold sweat of death all over his forehead. It is bitter and cold.
The metal band cut through the skin on his neck. You tried to loosen the screw.
It creaked but would not loosen. You hurt him more with each attempt, "What a
worthless machine!", you said, "Be patient". The screw did not loosen. "I will
not send you to Spain. We will continue this adventure together. We will both
govern. You will teach me to understand your people. I will show you the skills
we have discovered. We will make your people strong, brave like you, bold like
me. No more poverty, the two of us will govern so that the meeting of our worlds
will be history's finest hour".

But the screw did not loosen and the collar kept hurting him more and more.

PIZARRO: “Don’t scream, don’t scream, I tell you. The cry is driving me crazy. Do not scream. Have pity on me.

I am losing my mind.

Silence.

Silence or I’ll strike you.

Won’t you have pity on me?

I can’t hear you anymore.

Silence...

I can’t hear you anymore. You’re not speaking. You’re not screaming.

Are you dead?

Atahualpa, speak, scream!

You dog! Did you die?

The vultures are already descending. Go away, *ushcu*. I will kill you all. You will not touch his body. You will not come near him. This is the body of your king. If he were alive you would not fly without his permission. How dare you, now that he is dead. I will keep watch all night. Go on, fly, come down, narrow the circle, I will club you, you cursed animals! Morning will come and the Indians will awaken to bear him aloft in a golden chair for leagues and leagues, crossing rivers and mountains, until he rests with his glorious ancestors.

No, you’re not taking him. I want you to bury him here. No, not here where they have killed him...

... Over there, where the golden chair paused and he rose and proudly said,
“Where are they?”... We were hidden, lying in wait. He was truly furious not to
see us. I want them to bury him right here, on the very spot where I placed my
hand on him. How brave I was! This was Spain’s greatest hour.

I want them to bury me there too, because I will never accomplish such a feat
again. This conquest is lost. We are all going to kill each other for glory and for
power and gold.

I hope my body will be saved from the buzzards!

I hope my glory will last so they bury me next to you, right on the spot where I
first held out my hand to you!

Your hand is cold.

Why do I not kill myself? Why am I not brave enough to kill myself, holding my
hand out to you. Day would dawn and they would find us dead, our frozen hands
clasped together for eternity, unable to separate us. They would have to bury us
together in a great coffin, there where we came against each other.

Coward, I am a coward.

Is there no one who will kill this coward?

Let an eagle, a condor from these mountains descend, to rip out my heart and tear
me to pieces!...

I want to die with the king I have defeated,

I want to die with a king

I want to die like a king.

What’s all this about, Pizarro?

Die like a king

because you vanquished a king!

Boldness will not make you noble.

Not one condor will descend,

Nor will a blackish green comet cross the sky.

No one will kill you.

What's all this about, Pizarro?

Kill yourself, like a peasant, if you can.

PIZARRO: Do not touch this body,
cursed animals.

I will beat you down all night, that is if daybreak ever comes.

The sun will mourn for centuries,
before his dead son.

I will beat you down at night for centuries.

I will die fighting
your wings of darkness
your necks, claws, feathers, beaks.

I will tear you up in bits, cursed birds,
until I come across a mountain
of torn up birds.

Other buzzards will eat me
beneath the darkness of their wings
And once I am devoured,

the Sun will come out to shine
upon the untouched body of his child.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bassnett, Susan. Translation Studies. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Bassnett, Susan. "Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre." Ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto and Sydney: Multilingual Matters, 1998. 90-108.
- Bermúdez-Gallegos, Marta. "Oralidad y escritura: Atahualpa traidor o traicionado?" Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana 19.38 (1993): 331-44.
- Cieza de León, Pedro. The Discovery and Conquest of Peru: Chronicles of the New World Encounter. Ed. and trans. Alexandra Parma Cook and Noble David Cook. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.
- Claude Demarigny: Auteur Dramatique. Ed. Claude Demarigny. 1 Oct. 2005.
<<http://www.claudedemarigny.free.fr>>.
- Demarigny, Claude. "Cajamarca." Teatro internacional 7 (1979): 9-47.
- Centro Latinoamericano de Creación e Investigación Teatral. Ed. Juan Carlos Gené. 1 Oct. 2005.
<<http://www.celcit.org.ar>>.
- Demarigny, Claude. "Cajamarca." L'Avant Scene Theatre 737(1983): 9-22.
- Exod. 20: 2-17. The Holy Bible, King James Version. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984.
- Incas. Ed. Maria Rostworoski. 1 Oct. 2005.
<<http://incas.perucultural.org.pe/english/index.htm>>.
- Javier, Francisco. "Apuntes sobre la puesta en escena." Cajamarca. By Claude Demarigny. Teatro internacional 7 (1979): 4-7.
- Landers, Clifford E. Literary Translation: a Practical Guide. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto and Sydney: Multilingual Matters, 2001.

Lefevere, André. Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992.

Library of Congress. 1 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.loc.gov>>.

Newmark, Peter. A Textbook of Translation. New York: Prentice-Hall International, 1988.

Podol, Peter L. "Contradictions and Dualities in Artaud and Artaudian Theater: The Conquest of Mexico and the Conquest of Peru." Modern Drama 26.4 (Dec. 1983): 518-27.

Podol, Peter L. "Dramatizations of the Conquest of Peru: Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* and Claude Demarigny's *Cajamarca*." Hispanic Journal 6.1 (Fall 1984): 121-29.

Seed, Patricia. "Failing to marvel: Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word." Latin American Research Review. 26.1 (1991): 7-33.

Today's Missal. Oregon: OCP Publications, 2005.

Vázquez-Ayora, Gerardo. Introducción a la traductología. Washington, DC: Georgetown UP, 1977.

Zatlin, Phyllis. Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: a Practitioner's View, Chapter 4. Clevedon and Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2005.

Zuber, Ortrun. The Languages of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama. Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1980.

POLYEUCTE, THE MARTYR
A Christian Tragedy

By Pierre Corneille (1642)

A version by Gordon Carver
© 2007

Copyright 2007 by Gordon Carver
23 Garden Place
Brooklyn, NY 11201
mrgordoncarver@gmail.com

Biographies

Pierre Corneille (1606 –1684) was the foremost French playwright of the first half of the Seventeenth Century, who established much of the Neo-Classical style which his famous younger peers, Molière and Racine, continued. He was given a rigorous Jesuit education and at the age of eighteen he began to study law. His first dramatic efforts, written while still a magistrate, were Comedies, although his hugely popular tragi-comedy *Le Cid* (1637) brought him notoriety when it became the subject of a heated debate under Cardinal Richelieu's newly formed Académie Française. *Le Cid* was accused of violating the classical unities, and although he defended the play vigorously, Corneille was overruled, prompting him to return home to Rouen. After a small hiatus, Corneille returned to writing classical tragedies and produced *Horace* (1640), *Cinna* (1641), and *Polyeucte* (1642), three plays based on Roman subjects which strictly follow the classical unities. Corneille continued writing, admittedly under the shadow of Racine, until late into life. His final play was the tragedy *Suréna* (1674), after which he retired from the stage. He died at his home in Paris in 1684.

Gordon Carver is a translator, director and dramaturg. Gordon, who is English, was born in Nairobi, Kenya, grew up in Hong Kong and Oxford, and was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge and Yale University, where he recently received his MFA. He is currently completing his doctoral studies at the Yale School of Drama, translating Corneille and Racine plays in both genres of comedy and tragedy. Gordon currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, where he is the Artistic Director of the new writing theatre company, Spankin' Yanks (www.spankinyanks.com).

Note on the Translation:

This version of *Polyeucte* this version of the play has never been fully produced, and will certainly benefit from having trained actors read it out loud. Should any readings take place which bring to light any helpful insights into the script and its playability, please do email your comments to me at mrgordoncarver@gmail.com.

Translator's Note

In trying to make this play accessible to a modern audience I felt much the same way about Corneille as Artaud did about Sophocles. In his essay 'No More Masterpieces,' Artaud remarks:

But all this is clothed in language which has lost contact with today's crude, epileptic rhythm. Sophocles may speak nobly, but in a manner that no longer suits the times. His speeches are too refined for today, as if he were speaking beside the point.

Corneille's language is beautifully, aggressively formal. Much of his audience's pleasure was derived from savouring his linguistic virtuosity, as he fits long theological arguments or discursions on military honour into delicately balanced twelve syllable rhyming lines, each with their perfect medial caesuras and exquisite sonic precision. This, so I have reckoned, is not the attraction or the entry point for the vast bulk of today's modern theater-goer, who will, to be frank, get bored and impatient with too much rhetorically ornate language.

The crude, epileptic politics of modern times is, I think, stunningly captured by Corneille in this play. There are few plays which examine so intelligently the overlap of public politics with private interest, or so vividly question the structure of authority. Evangelical politics within a distant colonial outpost of a large empire, dealing with suicidal fundamentalists who threaten insurgency – all this, to my mind, screams of our own topical political concerns. Beneath the linguistic surface is a vast emotional core, with scene after scene arranged with such economical drive there is no time to catch breath as the reversals accumulate. The meeting of two lovers separated, a wife pleading with her husband not to kill himself, a man in prison praying to his God, a father sentencing his own son-in-law – this is the stuff of drama which Corneille's alchemy works on.

To strike the balance between Corneille's neo-classical formalism and the modern sensibility of an English speaking audience, I have opted for an unrhymed pentameter line, the familiar blank verse of the Jacobean and Restoration poets. I've given myself licence to change some of the imagery deployed, often in an attempt to heighten the description and emulate something of a Jacobean delight in violence and the darker sides of the psyche. From the Restoration writers I have borrowed my somewhat idiosyncratic conventions of presentation, and some of the refined Chivalric vocabulary. Like them, I tend to capitalize for the actor key words in a line - particularly abstract nouns such as 'Love' or 'Glory' – which may naturally lend themselves to a certain vocal emphasis. I've also freely elided syllables for scansion, so 'Nearchus' and 'Emperor' both can sound as two syllables, when written 'Near'chus' or 'Emp'ror'. My hope is that in freeing the words from the obligations of rhyme, in trimming a little of the baroque decoration, and in substituting more modern colloquial phrases, the verse will flow with a swift rhythm and provide the actors a playable text.

Glossary

“Corneille used language not so much to illumine character as to heighten the clash between concepts... Action here is reaction. These plays concern not so much what is done as what is resolved, felt, suffered. Their formal principle is symmetry: presentation, by a poet who was also a lawyer, of one side of the case, then of the other, of one position followed by its opposite.”

– Encyclopedia Britannica

There are certain key words in Corneille’s French that cannot easily be rendered into a single English word; the many connotations the French suggests can be more weighty, more charged, and more numerous than the English equivalent allows. I have tried below to give a brief description of some of the different associations the French words have, and, with examples from the play, I’ve tried to explain with a rough working definition how those concepts might have been understood by Corneille’s contemporary audience. The concepts usually arrive as oppositional pairs, striking different bass notes between which the harmony of an argument gets played out.

GLORY (*la gloire*) – This is a word which pops up in almost every character’s mouth. It is a mixture of Honour, in the Shakespearean sense, valour, divine immanence, and moral virtue. It seems to be a quality that is accrued to a person after a type of struggle, a competitive act or a test of character, and can be ‘won’ by both women and men. Severus, as reported by Albin in Act 1, accrued *gloire* through his military exploits in defeating the Persians. Equally, Pauline’s demand that Severus cease from seeing her (despite the pain this causes her) is a preventative measure to preserve her own *gloire*. If won, *gloire* seems to remain externally associated to a person’s reputation, ineradicable against the passage of time, a guarantee of immortal fame throughout history. As such it is any Hero’s ultimate ideal, the goal and springboard for their every action. The Emperor’s ancestors six hundred years on still exude their *gloire*. The word also has a theological charge, since Roman gods and the Christian God alike both have their own respective *gloire* to be upheld and championed. Nearchus encourages Polyeucte to “Lay bare His Glory, give up all your blood!”, while Polyeucte draws a distinction between earthly and heavenly glory in his refutation to Felix, “If dying for an Emperor is great,/How much more glorious to die for God!” I chose the word Glory, rather than the more familiar, near-synonym Honour, in the hopes that the actors could re-galvanize the word and load into it some of these lofty, swirling connotations.

DUTY (*le devoir*) – This word features most prominently in reference to Pauline, denoting the immovable, external standard of duty which keeps her permanently in obedience to her father’s will, and, even after Polyeucte’s conversion, firmly committed to the dictates of her marriage. *Devoir*, however, is not just a social standard exclusively held over women, but also governs the decisions of Felix and Severus. The former excuses his execution of Polyeucte on account of his *devoir* to the Emperor, while Severus, in what confirms *devoir* as a more abstract metaphysical dictate, proclaims he will oppose the Emperor’s policies of Christian torture– “All his power/Means nothing to my Duty or my Glory.” Duty is often opposed to the temptations of Passion, and decided by Reason for the pursuit of Glory.

REASON (*la raison*) – The faculty in men and women which *rules* over their actions, it is located in the head and is the defining attribute which helps separate humans from beasts. Frequently in this play the word *raison* is associated with sovereignty or other images of power, against which the lower, unruly faculty of Passion *revolts* – taking on a loaded political import which has much to do with the dynamics of the power structures Corneille is examining. It is *raison* which grants Pauline the cold, determined ability to overcome her love for Severus. One explanation for Polyeucte’s extreme behaviour is his loss of *raison*, but as Polyecute points out, *raison* is not always in alliance with Faith – “Faith’s a gift from Heaven, not from Reason.”

PASSION (*la passion*) – In this play *passion* is associated most with love. Used a lot by Pauline to describe the feelings she overcomes for Severus, in that instance it connotes both her heady attraction to his many distinguished merits, as well as her physical, sexualized attraction to his body. Situated in the torso, or heart, passion is figured as something often dangerous, wild, in need of containment and shaping through the guiding force of Reason.

Conventions of Etiquette

Both the Third Century Roman society which his play represents and Corneille's own Seventeenth Century French society had highly developed conventions of etiquette, used to acknowledge, celebrate and defer to the rigid hierarchy of power. Competing for power in this play are the two off-stage presences of the Roman Emperor on Earth against the Christian God in Heaven. Beneath them is a top-down feudal stratification of the ruling class (comprised of aristocratic Politicians and Warrior-Soldiers striving towards an Heroic ideal) above a servile class. I have tried to hint at this convention by establishing a small linguistic difference in the forms of address used between characters. Members of the same rank or class will address each other as 'Sir' or the chivalric and potentially affectionate 'Madam'. Characters of an inferior rank will generally refer to their superiors as 'My Lord', a subtle but open recognition of their indentured position.

One consequence of this developed, even stylized, atmosphere of etiquette is the noticeable force of its violation. When, in moments of extreme passion or anger, conventions are slighted or ignored between a person and his interlocutor, the breaking of that convention carries an additional sting. I am slightly overemphasizing this function of etiquette for two reasons. First, to highlight something of the nature of the large social, political and spiritual gap which lies between Corneille's world and our own worldviews – in very broad terms a change from a sacred, heroic, feudal view to a secular, mercantile, largely pro-democratic view. Second, to note with regret that Corneille's many nuances of *register* in his French forms of address may not always come across in English. In other words, I encourage actors to freely explore the host of differences it may make to laden a 'My Lord' with more or less wry irony (for example), a 'Sir' with more or less disdain, or a 'Madam' with more, or less, erotic charge.

Polyeucte
by Pierre Corneille.

Characters:

Felix - Roman senator, Governor of Armenia.

Polyeucte - an Armenian noble, son-in-law to Felix.

Severus - a Roman Knight, favourite of the Emperor Decius.

Nearchus - an Armenian noble, friend to Polyeucte.

Pauline - daughter to Felix, wife to Polyeucte.

Stratonice - companion to Pauline, Armenian.

Albin - friend to Felix.

Fabian - servant to Severus.

Cleon - friend to Felix.

Three Guards.

The Scene is at Melitina, capital of Armenia, an outpost of the Roman Empire under the rule of Emperor Decius (AD 249-251).

The action takes place in the Palace of Felix.

Act 1

Scene 1 (*Polyeucte and Nearchus*)

- Nearchus: What! Will you dally for a woman's dream?
Can such weak tricks trouble your massy soul?
Can this your war-worn, war-proof heart wobble
At dangers dreamed - dreamt up - by a woman?
- Polyeucte: I know what dreams are, and how skeptically
Men should treat them. Dreams are wild distortions
Born from the knotted vapours of the night,
Illusory shadows which dawn dispels.
But you have no idea what a wife means,
You're blind to her sway over the whole soul,
When, after attraction's first fervid glow,
Marriage at last ignites the yearning flames.
Pauline, irrationally overwhelmed with fear,
Believes she saw in her dream my death.
She opposed my plan with her crying -
I discount her fear, I yield to her tears -
She drew out my pity but not my alarm,
And my heart, softened, (not brittle with fear)
Dared not displease its owner – my own wife.
Is time so pressing, Nearchus, we must
Muffle a lover's sighs? Just one day's delay
Will silence her current worries, that's all.
- Nearchus: But show me, where is your firm guarantee
Tomorrow you'll have such life or resolve?
Did God, whose palm cradles your life and soul,
Loan you strength tomorrow for today's vows?
He is all-just and all-good, but His grace
Is not a treasure lent perpetually.
Hesitation is a spendthrift, luring
Grace astray, repelling her and hard'ning
Our hearts. God's arm, so bountiful with Grace,
Soon becomes miserly, lavishing
His deed-inspiring holy ardour less
Plentifully, and with fewer results.
That same force which hurried you to run to baptism,
Wanes already, deformed and fading fast.
With only her sighs she makes you forget -
How God's flame flickers and is soon snuffed out.
- Polyeucte: How little you know me! This zeal fires me too,
Desire increases with a goal's delay.
Her tears, which I view with a husband's eye,
Leave me in heart no less Christian than you.
But to achieve our faith's holy calling -
It washes our sins in a cleansing stream,
It purges our souls and unseals our eyes,
It hands back our lost rights into heaven –

Though this is more precious to me than Empire's pomp,
This one, supreme good is my only aim,
Yet to satisfy a just, holy love,
I think I can relax and wait one day.

Nearchus: Just so will Satan work his tricks on you!
When force fails him, he resorts to cunning.
Jealous of the good intentions he strives to ruin,
When sabotage fails, he moves to delay.
Hurdle upon hurdle he'll make you jump –
Today it's tears, tomorrow something else.
This dark portentous dream is the opening
To Satan's mischievous game of illusions.
He'll try every tactic, both threats and prayers;
He strikes ceaselessly, and never surrenders;
He trusts he'll get what he's never yet got,
Thinking that what is deferred is half crush'd.
Smash down his first blows! Let Pauline go weep.
God rejects a heart mastered by the world,
Which looks behind, and, unsure of its choice,
When His voice calls, obeys another's voice.

Polyeucte: If I love God, can I love no one else?

Nearchus: We can love all things, this He has ordained.
But, to speak with you plain, this Lord of Lords
Demands our first love and our first honour.
Since nothing equals his supreme majesty
You must love Him first, and through Him alone.
Discard, to please God, wealth, and rank, and wife.
Lay bare His Glory, give up all your blood.
How far you are from this perfect ardour
I wish for you, and which you must put on!
Tearful-eyed I speak, my friend, Polyeucte.
In these times, when we are hated everywhere,
When our persecution is thought State service,
When the harshest tortures befall a Christian,
How will you be able to survive this pain,
If you cannot even resist these tears?

Polyeucte: You won't unnerve me. These wounds Pity makes
Scar the noblest hearts, not signs of weakness.
Fair eyes sway my peers too, Nearchus –
We, fearless of death, fear to hurt others.
If I must soon bear crueler punishments,
Converting them to charms, delicious woes,
Your God – I dare not yet call Him my own –
Will supply me strength and make me Christian.

Nearchus: Hurry, then, to be one!

Polyeucte: Yes! I'm running, Nearchus!
I burn to carry His glorious banner.

But Pauline is so troubled by her dream
She cannot agree to let me leave her.

Nearchus: Her worries will make your return more sweet.
In an hour at most you will dry her tears away,
An hour of anticipatory tears
Honeys a dear husband's return the more.
They're waiting. Let's go.

Polyeucte: Please quiet her fears,
Calm the wild griefs circling round her soul.
She's coming.

Nearchus: Run away!

Polyeucte I can't.

Nearchus: You must go.
Flee an enemy who knows your weakness,
Pinpoints it effortlessly, slays you on sight,
Whose fatal blow seduces as it kills.

Scene 2 (*enter Pauline and Stratonice*)

Polyeucte: Since we must, let us flee. Goodbye, Pauline, goodbye,
In an hour at most I'll be here again.

Pauline: What task could be so urgent you must leave?
Is it about honour, or about life?

Polyeucte: About much more.

Pauline: What then is your secret?

Polyeucte: You will find out one day. I leave you reluctantly;
But I must go.

Pauline: Do you love me?

Polyeucte: I do
Love you Pauline – Heaven be my witness –
A hundred times more than my own self,
But...

Pauline: But my heartache cannot move you!
You have secrets which I'm not allowed to know!
What show of love! In the name of marriage,
Yield to my entreaties just this one day.

Polyeucte: Are you frightened by a dream?

Pauline: These omens are trifles,
I know this. But I love you, and I do worry.

Polyeucte: For an hour's absence you should not worry.
Goodbye. Your tears take a great toll on me,
I now feel my heart ready to revolt,
And only with flight can I resist you.

Scene 3 (*exit Polyeucte and Nearchus*)

Pauline: Go, ignore my tears, run, and throw yourself
To the death the gods foreshadowed for me.
Follow the deadly agent of your fate,
Which may lead you into assassins' hands.
You see, Stratonice, what times we live in,
This is all our power over men's wills,
This is all we've left: their quotidian love,
And their whispered vows. While they remain lovers,
We remain Queen, with sovereign sway of all -
Until their insurrection. Once married,
It's their turn to play King, and rule us all.

Stratonice: Polyeucte still loves you as much as ever.
If he's not been all that frank with you here,
If he's left despite your tears, it shows his
Prudence. Not wanting to distress you more,
Assume, as I do, it's best he kept his secret.
Trust him enough to have a sound reason.
It's good that a husband hides a few things:
He'll feel like he's free, and he's not demeaned
By giving account for his every step.
You two share one heart, which feels the same wrongs.
But you know this heart beats in different ways.
The law of wedlock which binds two as one
Does not dictate that he tremors when you do.
What makes you afraid, need not frighten him,
He is Armenian, and you are Roman.
And you should know by now what difference exists
'Tween our two nations' attitudes on things.
A dream for us here is easily laughed off,
Exciting neither hope, nor fear, nor scruple.
But a dream in Rome holds great authority
As a faithful mirror of true destiny.

Pauline: However suspect dreams are with you here
I believe your dismay would equal mine
If the same horrors invaded your mind,
If I'd only told you half their outline.

Stratonice: Sometimes telling your woes can bring relief.

Pauline: Listen, I need to fill you in with more,
So that, to better grasp my sad story,
You know my weakness and my former love.
A woman of honour admits without shame

The strokes of passion that reason overcame.
Only through battle does virtue show its strength,
The heart untested by trial stays hollow.
In Rome, where I was born, my unlucky face
Captivated a valiant Roman knight.
He was called Severus – pardon these sighs
This name so dear to my desires still uproots.

Stratonice: Is that the man who recently gave up his life
Saving your emperor Decius from his foes?
His death snatched victory from their hands,
Switching Fate from the Persian to the Roman side.
Is he the man no one could find amongst
The battle's stinking, scattered piles of dead?
The man whose noble deeds caused Decius
Extravagantly to decorate an empty tomb?

Pauline: Yes, that was Severus. Never has Rome
Seen a nobler heart, or man more honest.
Since you clearly know him, I'll say no more.
I loved him, Stratonice. He well deserved it.
But what use is merit when means do lack?
Honour was his wealth, poverty his fault,
A block too great for a virtuous lover
To shift against a father's iron will.

Stratonice: What a chance to prove your rare constancy!

Pauline: Say rather my foolish, base resistance.
Whatever gains a daughter reaps from this,
It's only worthwhile for those who wish to fail.
Despite my weighty love for Severus
I expected a husband of my father's choice,
Ever ready to obey his final word.
Never did my reason allow confession
Of the delicious treason of my eyes.
He possessed my heart, my desires, my thoughts.
I did not hide my hurt from him at all,
Together we would bemoan our misfortune.
He had no hope, only my tears for pay.
Despite these dulcet, favourable sighs
My father and my duty were inexorable.
So I left Rome and this perfect suitor
To follow the Governor, my father, here.
Severus, in despair, joined the army
To win undying fame with noble death.
The rest, you know. How I first arrived here,
Beheld by Polyeucte, grew dear in his eyes.
Since here he is topmost nobility,
Father was thrilled he chose me for his wife,
Particularly as such an alliance
Would promote his power and his standing.
He blessed his love, concluded the marriage.

And I, seeing myself destined for his bed,
I dutifully gave to his affections
All that the other had by inclination.
If you still doubt this, judge me by the fear
Which you see racks my soul on this sad day.

Stratonice: It's self-evident how much you love him.
But what is this dream that alarms you so?

Pauline: I saw the luckless Severus last night,
Vengeance in his hand, his eyes blazed anger.
He wasn't wearing the pitiful shrouds
Of a sorrowful specter snared in a tomb.
Nor was he marked with those glorious wounds
Which stopped his life short but began his long fame.
He appeared triumphant, just like Caesar
Riding his chariot victorious into Rome.
After I'd recovered from his sight's shock,
He spoke: "Waste the kindness you owed to me
On whom you please, you ungrateful woman.
By today's close you will lib'rally sob
For the husband you picked instead of me."
I shuddered at these words, my soul quaked.
Next, an impious crowd of Christians, seeming
To bear out this deadly new prophesy,
Hurled Polyeucte at his rival's wrathful feet.
At once I called my father for his help –
Alas! This above all else causes me despair -
I saw my own father, dagger in hand,
Poised, ready to pierce Polyeucte's bare chest.
Panic right then blurred this image for me,
Polyeucte's blood had sated their dread rage.
I know neither how nor when they murdered him,
But I know everyone helped in his death.
This, this was my dream.

Stratonice: A sad dream indeed.
But your soul must take guard against these scares.
This vision, on its own, might arouse some horror,
But not enough to merit true terror.
Can you fear a dead man, or a father
Who treasures your husband, and is prized in return?
Didn't your careful father give you to him
To win for himself here firm, certain support?

Pauline: He said as much to me, laughs at my nerves,
But I fear the Christians with their plots and spells -
They may swoop like Vultures round my husband
To avenge all the blood my father's shed.

Stratonice: Senseless, impious, sacriligious is their sect -
They use magic in their sacrifices!
They only use their rage to smash our altars,

They rampage against gods, not mortals.
Every brutal torture we've tried on them
They endure without a word, and die elated.
Though for some time we've deemed them enemies of the State,
Not one of them has tried a single assassination.

Pauline: Hush now, my father's coming.

Scene 4 (*enter Felix and Albin*)

Felix: My daughter,
How your dream plunges me in terror!
I fear its predictions may be coming true.

Pauline: What's just happened to alarm you like this?

Felix: Severus is not dead.

Pauline: What danger in that?

Felix: He is the Emperor Decius's favourite.

Pauline: After saving his life from the foes' hands
You should grant him his shot at eminence.
Fate, so often fickle to noble hearts,
Sometimes decides to treat good men fairly.

Felix: He's coming here himself.

Pauline: He's coming!

Felix: You'll meet him soon.

Pauline: This is too much! But how do you know this?

Felix: Albin met him in the nearby countryside,
A crowd of courtiers swarmed around him -
Clear proof of his power and his high rank -
But, Albin, tell us all his men told you.

Albin: You know what happened on that glorious day
When through Severus's loss we won good fortune.
When Severus freed the captured Emperor,
Rallying back his demoralized troops.
But Severus fell outnumbered by the foe.
You know the honours performed for his ghost,
Since no one found his body amongst the dead.
The King of Persia had taken his body,
Wishing to scrutinize the man's face
Whom he had seen battle with such bravery.
The wounded body was put in his tent,
Though he seemed dead, all who saw him were envious.
He soon began to show signs of life there.

The magnanimous King delighted to see it –
Though this was the man who'd caused his great loss –
He honoured his courage and applied a
Secret cure, which healed Severus within the month.
The King offered jewels, titles, and a bride
To entice him – he tried a thousand times.
The unsuccessful King praised his loyalty,
And sent word to Decius for an exchange.
At once the Emperor, brimming with joy,
Offered back the Persian King his brother
With a hundred officers to choose from.
So valiant Severus returned to camp,
Receiving the reward his virtue had earned.
The Emperor's favour was his best prize.
New fighting broke out, surprising the Romans -
Severus's response enhanced his glory.
He alone kept order, and won victory.
Victory so noble, so decisive,
They offered us tribute and we made peace.
Decius, who loves Severus like a son,
Sent him after this success to Armenia.
He's come here bearing the triumphant news,
To sacrifice to the gods in gratitude.

Felix: O gods! How far do my prospects tumble!

Albin: This is all I learnt from his aide-de-camp,
I ran straight here, my lord, to tell you the news.

Felix: No doubt, my daughter, he's come to marry you.
The sacrifice is just an idle ruse,
It's a cunning deceit caused by his love.

Pauline: That might be true. He used to love me dearly.

Felix: How far will his old resentment push him?
How much damage can his just rage inflict,
Now he has access to so much power?
He'll ruin us, my girl.

Pauline: He's above that.

Felix: You're trying to comfort a wretched father.
He'll ruin us, my girl! How regret pains me,
Why didn't I love his naked virtue?
Oh, Pauline! Sure, you obeyed me too well.
Your duty betrayed your fine bravery.
How cherished now would your rebellion be!
It would have saved me from this sorry state.
My only hope from now on lies in you,
And the absolute power he delivered to you.
Manage his love for you to favour me,
Extract from his raw wound my remedy.

Pauline: Me! Am I to meet this conquering hero,
Must I come before his penetrating eyes?
Father, I'm a woman, I know my weakness.
I already sense my heart veer his way.
It'll make me, I fear, despite my oath
Breathe out some sighs not fitting family honour.
I shall not see him.

Felix: Calm your soul a little.

Pauline: I might still love him, I'm still a woman.
I dare not test my virtue's strength, knowing
The grip his past influence had on me.
I shall not see him.

Felix: You must see him, girl.
Would you betray your father and family?

Pauline: Since you order me, I must obey you.
But know well you're exposing me to danger.

Felix: I know your virtue's strength.

Pauline: I trust it'll win,
I do not fear the battle's sure result.
I fear the long, tough internal struggle.
Already my senses wage their revolt.
But since I must fight a beloved enemy,
Let me now arm myself against myself.
I need a moment to prepare for this.

Felix: I'll give him welcome outside the city's walls.
Gather, meantime, your startled strength. Remember
You alone can determine our destinies.

Pauline: Yes, once more I'll wield the knife you demand
And cut out my own love at your command.

End of Act 1

Act 2

Scene 1 (*Severus and Fabian*)

- Severus: Now – while Felix prepares the sacrifice –
Now let me feed my devouring hunger,
Now let me see Pauline. I'll worship her
Liquid eyes as I should worship Juno.
I've not kept from you why I'm here –
The rest's an excuse to bring me to her.
I have come to sacrifice – her beauty
Is my altar, and my immolation
Will be my heart, my honour, my life's days.
- Fabian: You shall see her, my lord.
- Severus: How you buoy me up –
My precious Goddess agrees to see me!
But does her heart still echo my desires?
Does it still hold the vestige of our love?
Was she distressed or delighted to hear
I'd arrived? Will our meeting match my hopes?
For I would die first, before I abuse
These letters from Decius, promising her
To me – he wrote them for Felix, just in case,
Not to lord it and triumph over her.
Not once has my heart countered her desires:
If my cursèd luck has changed her fate's course,
I'd conquer my own self, and let her go.
- Fabian: You shall see her, that's all I can tell you.
- Severus: Why this shaking? Why these heartfelt sighs?
She no longer loves me? Tell me all, now.
- Fabian: Will you trust me, my lord? Don't see Pauline.
Carry your honourable caresses
Elsewhere, to some higher destination.
In Rome you'll find a multitude of loves,
And, with your honour and new-won power,
The greatest there will squabble to have you.
- Severus: Do you believe my soul could be so base?
Or that I'd ever question Pauline's worth?
Her conduct has been inimitable,
All my ambition's triumphs belong to her.
Come now, Fabian, your talk has put me out.
Let's go place my rich fortune at her feet -
I stumbled on it by chance in battle
Whilst seeking, for her love, a glorious death.
Therefore, I'll argue, I owe her my rank,

The Emp'rors favour, in short, all I have.

Fabian: No, I beg you not to see her again.

Severus: That's enough! Give me an explanation -
Did she seem cold when you asked her to come?

Fabian: I'm afraid to say. She is...

Severus: What?

Fabian: Married.

Severus: Some help, Fabian. Surprise lands me a blow,
So swift, so stunning, I'm left here reeling.

Fabian: My lord, remember your noble valour.

Severus: Steadiness now is a difficult thing –
The strongest hearts are rocked by similar sounds,
The most virtuous man's vigour would vanish.
Death's shadow is more welcome than such news
To any soul kindled with Love's pure flame.
Your revelation leaves no room for hope.
Pauline is married!

Fabian: Yes, for two weeks now.
Polyeucte, Armenia's prince of princes,
Savours the sweet taste of their new marriage.

Severus: At least I cannot fault her for her choice.
Prince Polyeucte springs from the blood of Kings.
Yet that's cold comfort for my hopeless curse.
Pauline, I'll see you in another's arms!
Heavens, you gave me back involuntary life,
Fate, you puffed up the promise of my love -
Take back your sour, curdled, fetid gifts,
Return me back to Death's oblivion.
Let me see her now in this sorry place,
Let me confirm my death with a last goodbye.
May my heart, too full with love for her, sink
In peace, flooded over with her image.

Fabian: My lord, pause and think...

Severus: Thought has been passed by.
Can Chaos frighten a desperate heart?
Didn't she say she'd come?

Fabian: Yes, but...

Severus: No more.

Fabian: You will cause Pauline even sharper pain.

Severus: Pain from a wound I do not want to heal.
I only wish to see her, and sigh, and die.

Fabian: Seeing her you'll surely lose all control.
A lover in loss is no longer kind –
At such meetings passion lends him licence
To blurt out barb'd insults and violent threats.

Severus: Don't judge me so. I still respect her.
My violent despair still holds her cherished.
What reproaches could I abuse her with?
I have no rights, she promised me nothing.
She's not false, or frivolous, or wanton.
Her father, duty and my fate betrayed me.
But her duty was just, her father right.
To my fate I'll chalk up this betrayal.
A little less wealth, a little sooner,
Would have won him over, and have saved me.
Too much wealth, too late, and I can't get her.
Now let me see her then, and sigh, and die.

Fabian: Yes, I'll reassure her you're still in control -
Strong and calm despite this cruel misfortune.
She feared, like me, these first sudden outbursts,
Torn from a lover by unforeseen loss.
A loss already felt so violently,
Its brief return can only aggravate.

Severus: Fabian, I see her.

Fabian: My lord, remember now...

Severus: She loves another! She's some other's wife!

Scene 2 (*enter Pauline and Stratonice*)

Pauline: Yes, I love him, Sir, I will not pretend.
Let everyone else try to delude you,
Pauline's honest, and speaks with an open heart.
Your rumoured death played no part in your loss -
Had the Gods married me to my own choice,
I'd have run to you, in all your virtue.
The poverty you faced when I first met you
In no way marred your merit's richness.
I discovered in you such magnificence
That I chose you over the wealthiest Kings.
But, since my duty bound me to strict laws,
Whatever choice my father put to me -
Even had you earned your new-won power,
Even had you attained a sparkling crown,

Even if I'd seen you and loathed father -
I would have sighed, but I would have obeyed.
My reason, sovereign over my passion,
Would have outlawed sighs and banished hatred.

Severus: How lucky you are! A handful of sighs
Is all it takes to ease your troubled mind.
So. You're perpetual Queen of your desires,
Like resolute granite against great change.
You'll alchemize the feelings in your mind
To pure indifference, perhaps contempt.
Your certainty, much like a surging tide
Rolls liking to disdain, and love to hate.
If only a drop of your icy virtue
Would thaw and flow to soothe this battered heart!
A sigh, or a teardrop of true regret
Might already have cured me of your loss.
My reason may besiege my love's fortress,
Dismantling it, block by block, to nothing.
Let my conduct in love now copy yours -
I will find comfort in another's arms.
You too precious woman, you bewitcher,
Is this how love works? Did you ever love me?

Pauline: Sir, you know I loved you. If my soul could
Snuff out all my love's remaining embers,
O Gods, what punishments would I escape!
Queen Reason, it's true, masters my passions,
But, whatever authority she's got,
She reigns not with Peace, but with Tyranny.
Although my exterior shows no feelings,
Inside me's Riot and Revolution.
How is it you still can mesmerize me?
Your merit's great, but my reason's still strong.
I see you, and the old embers catch fire.
How much more do you now stoke my desires,
Now you're bejeweled with power and glory,
Now your every entrance grants victory,
Now you surpass in life the eminence
My love's hope had once imagined for you.
But my Duty, the same that won in Rome,
Anchors me here to another man's hand.
Duty's power still wards off your strong charms -
Though it rives my soul, it never ebbs.
And it's this same virtue, cruel to our desires,
You used to praise, even as you cursed it.
Rebuke it again, but praise its rigour,
Which triumphs over both your heart and mine.
Admit that duty any less robust
Wouldn't merit Severus' great love.

Severus: Ah! Madam, forgive my blind despair which
Knows nothing but exceeding misfortune.

I dubbed unfaithful, took as criminal,
What is your Duty's most sublime struggle.
Please, reveal far less to my saddened mind
Th' immensity of your worth, and my loss.
Hide, for pity's sake, your virtue's rare blaze,
Which lights our division and my love's fire.
Show me just one blemish of yours, to help
Lessen my grief's loss, and weaken my love.

Pauline: Ah! This virtue, though never once vanquished,
Shows my too sensitive soul too plainly.
These my hot tears and base sighs confirm it,
Wrenched out by the cruel memory of our love.
Your dear presence is too taxing for me,
You leave my duty too few defences.
But if you value this virtuous duty
Keep my glory safe and cease to see me.
Spare me these tears which, to my shame, stream down.
Spare me this blaze I smother with regret.
In short, spare me these sweet, sad encounters
Which only aggravate our twin torments.

Severus: Must I now forgo my life's only joy?

Pauline: Avoid a meeting we both find painful.

Severus: Is this love's prize? Is this my labour's reward?

Pauline: It's the only cure to heal our sorrow.

Severus: I wish to die from mine – recall it with love.

Pauline: I wish to heal mine – my glory's at stake.

Severus: Ah! Since Glory has pronounced the sentence,
My anguish must surrender to its claims.
What won't your glory impel me to do?
You nurture yours, as I should nurture mine.
Farewell: I'll go seek the throb of battle
To win immortal fame with noble end,
To meet with Honour, through my proud quietus,
The hopeful expectations of my youth -
Providing I've got life enough, after
This assault by Fate, still to seek my death.

Pauline: While I, since your mere image tortures me,
I'll shun the sight of your funeral bier.
Alone in my room, nursing my remorse,
I will sit and secretly pray for you.

Severus: May the just Gods, content with my ruin,
Grant Polyeucte and Pauline joyful bliss!

Pauline: May Severus find, after such cruel luck,
Happiness worthy of his great valour!

Severus: He found it in you.

Pauline: Father's law shackled me.

Severus: Duty, you've sown my destruction and despair!
Adieu, you virtuous, bewitching creature.

Pauline: Adieu, my most star-crossed, most perfect love.

Scene 3 (*Exit Severus and Fabian*)

Stratonice: I'm sorry for you both. I'm still in tears.
But at least you can put your mind at ease –
You see now your dream is obviously false,
Severus didn't come here for vengeance.

Pauline: Let me breathe a little, for pity's sake.
Don't heap more fear onto my suffering!
Allow my troubled soul a moment's rest -
You'll overload me with fresh misery.

Stratonice: What! Still afraid?

Pauline: I'm trembling, Stratonice.
Although there's little cause for my terror,
My idle fear keeps sketching in my mind
Images of horrors that I saw last night.

Stratonice: Severus is noble...

Pauline: Despite his restraint,
Polyeucte, drowned in blood, clouds my mind's eye.

Stratonice: You've just witnessed his rival wish him well.

Pauline: I even think, were it called for, he'd help him.
But, whether I am right in this, or wrong,
His presence here still terrifies me.
However much Virtue drives his being,
He's strong, he loves me, he wants me as his bride.

Scene 4 (*Enter Polyeucte and Nearchus*)

Polyeucte: Enough tears now love, it's time they were dried.
Time your suffering ceased, time for fear to end.
Despite that false portent sent by your gods,
I'm still here, madam, and I'm back with you.

Pauline: The day's still long, I've still cause to be scared:

Half of the dream has already come true –
I thought Severus dead, yet I've just seen him.

Polyeucte: I know, but that still doesn't bother me.
I'm in Melitina, in my home land,
And, whatever power Severus holds,
Your father rules here, and men look up to me.
Nor can I think that a heart such as his
Gives any reason to fear treachery.
They told me he had just come to see you,
So I came here to pay him full honours.

Pauline: He has just left, in a sad, disturbed state:
I made him pledge not to see me again.

Polyeucte: What! Do you think Polyeucte is jealous?

Pauline: That would disparage me, and you, and him.
I want peace of mind. His looks are dangerous.
The toughest virtue should run no risks –
If you want to get burned, you play with fire!
I'll frankly tell you all, with an open soul:
Once a man of true worth sets your heart ablaze,
His proximity will always bewitch,
He'll make you blush and lose control. Much worse,
It hurts to resist, it hurts to stay pure.
Although virtue does beat down these hot flames,
Victory's bitter and the fight is shameful.

Polyeucte: Virtue most perfect, duty most sincere.
Severus must swim in an ocean of regret!
You've forsworn true love to make me happy!
How precious you are to my loving heart!
The more I see my faults and gaze on you,
The more I'm amazed...

Scene 5 (*Enter Cleon*)

Cleon: My lord, you're needed -
Felix now requires you at the temple.
The calf's been chosen, people are kneeling,
The sacrifice waits only your arrival.

Polyeucte: Go, we'll follow. Madam, will you come too?

Exit Cleon

Pauline: My presence will disquiet Severus.
I'll keep my word and stay out of his sight.
Farewell. You'll see him there – ponder his power,
Remember how much influence he has.

Polyeucte: Go; his prestige gives me no cause for fear.

Since I've learnt that his nature is noble,
We will battle only in gallantry.

Scene 4 (*Exit Pauline and Stratonice*)

Nearchus: Where are you going?

Polyeucte: The temple - I've been summoned.

Nearchus: What! You're going to pray with the Pagans?
Has it slipped your mind that you're now Christian?

Polyeucte: Has it slipped from yours, my proselytizer?

Nearchus: I loathe their false gods.

Polyeucte: I also detest them.

Nearchus: Their cult's blasphemous!

Polyeucte: I find it morbid.

Nearchus: Then shun their altars.

Polyeucte: I want them toppled,
I'll knock their temple down or die trying.
Let's on, Nearchus, let's on so all can see us
Whip Idolat'ry, showing what we are.
It's heaven's wish, it's what we must fulfill.
I've just pronounced it, and I'll keep this vow.
I give thanks to God, whose Grace you showed me,
For this great chance He's quickly brought to light.
His Mercy, ready to crown me, sees fit
To test the faith He just bestowed upon me

Nearchus: You are too zealous! Show some moderation.

Polyeucte: For the God we love, Zeal has no limits.

Nearchus: You'll meet your death.

Polyeucte: I'll seek it for His sake.

Nearchus: And if your heart weakens?

Polyeucte: He'll be my strength.

Nearchus: Christ does not bid you throw yourself to death.

Polyeucte: The merit's greater, if done willingly.

Nearchus: You don't need to volunteer, just wait and suffer.

Polyeucte: Without self-sacrifice, you'll suffer regret.

Nearchus: But, in the temple, your death is certain.

Polyeucte: But, in heaven, my prize has been prepared.

Nearchus: It's won by living a good, holy life.

Polyeucte: My Sins, while living, might disqualify me.
 Why gamble with that which death makes certain?
 Where is death's sting, if it unlocks Heaven?
 I am a Christian, Nearchus, utterly devout.
 The faith I've embraced demands its full due.
 Fleeing's for cowards, or those with dead faith.

Nearchus: Cherish your life, it's prized by God Himself.
 Live to champion Christians in this land.

Polyeucte: My death's lesson will be their best defence.

Nearchus: Then you wish to die?

Polyeucte: You wish then to live?

Nearchus: I can't pretend I want to come with you.
 I fear I'll succumb to the pains of torture.

Polyeucte: He who treads firmly does not fear a fall:
 God supplies the weak His infinite strength.
 If you've any fear you may deny God,
 You deny Him already, in your soul.
 To suspect Doubt's possible splinters Faith.

Nearchus: To fear nothing, smacks of arrogance.

Polyeucte: I count on God's Grace, not on my weak self.
 It's not me though, but you I must convince.
 What's holding you back?

Nearchus: Christ himself feared death.

Polyeucte: Yet sacrificed Himself – as we both should.
 We'll build Him altars from the rubble of
 Idols. You must – these were your very words –
 Discard, to please God, wealth, and rank, and wife.
 Lay bare His Glory, give up all your blood.
 Alack! What happened to that perfect love
 You wished for me and now I wish for you?
 If it's still there in you, aren't you jealous
 That I, newly Christian, reveal it more?

Nearchus: You've just been baptized, and it's His pure Grace
 Driving you on, uncorrupted by Sin.

Brimming intact in you, Grace overflows –
What can't be done, when you feel its torrent?
But this same Grace is diminished in me,
Numbed repeatedly by a thousand sins,
So, when called upon, it is so torpid
That nothing seems possible in my eyes.
I've become slack, these are coward's words,
Brought on as punishment for my past faults.
But God, in whom one's faith should never waver,
Sends me your example to shore me up.
Let's on, Polyeucte, let's on so all can see us
Whip Idolat'ry, showing them what we are.
Let me be your example in suffering,
As you've been mine in Christian sacrifice!

Polyeucte: Now I recognize Near'chus. God sends you
This Ecstasy, and I do weep for joy.
Let's waste no time, the sacrifice awaits.
Let's march there to uphold our true God's cause,
Let's trample over their superstition
That lightning flashes from a rotting tree,
Let's go enlighten their deadly blindness.
Let's smash their gods of stone and metal,
Let's surrender our lives to this celestial zeal,
Let us champion God – He'll arrange the rest.

Nearchus: Let's make His Glory blazon out for all,
Zealous in our answer to God's great call!

End of Act 2

Act 3

Scene 1 (*Pauline, alone*)

Pauline: What fluttering doubts, what murky tempests
Revolve in chaos within my mind's eye!
Sweet Peace – that word's still so unfamiliar -
How slowly your blest rays enlighten me.
My worry breeds a thousand ebbing waves
Which swell and break upon my battered heart.
No hope flows there, to cling to as a raft,
No fear juts out, to stop me on a rock.
My mind, pursuing its every fancy,
Sees now my happiness, and now my ruin -
It follows these vague notions so poorly
That neither hope nor fear can dominate.
Severus obsessively fills my sight:
His virtue gives me hope, his envy, fear.
Nor dare I think that with mere indifference
Polyeucte can look here on his rival.
Since Hatred's natural between rivals,
Their meeting may lead easily to a fight.
One man sees the other, with what he thinks his,
The other sees him bridling in despair.
However noble their other motives,
One's raw with envy, one nurses his resent.
Each man perceives the shame of his affront –
One smarts from his sting, one's braced to be stung –
By this each man's patience is eaten up,
Digested into anger and mistrust,
Which, nourishing both husband and lover,
Despite themselves, poisons all to hatred.
And, seizing both husband and lover together,
- But what monster cancers my imagination!
How badly I now treat Polyeucte and Severus,
As if the virtue of these famous men
Could not liberate them from common vice!
Both their two souls, mastered by self-control,
Are both too precious-made for such cheap acts.
They'll meet at the temple as men of honour.
No good! They'll meet, and this is much too much.
What benefit will my husband retain
In staying here in his Melitina,
If Sev'rus sets on him the Roman Eagle,
If father's rule bends to a new favourite,
And promptly he repents his choice of husband?
What little hope I have glimmers faintly,
In its first sparks it dies, smothered by fear.
What should have fueled my hope, just destroys it.
Gods! Please grant that my fears be unfounded,
And let me know the outcome.

Scene 2 (*Enter Stratonice*)

So, Stratonice,
How did the solemn sacrifice turn out?
Did these two princes meet at the temple?

Stratonice: Ah! Pauline!

Pauline: Have my prayers been cast aside?
I see on your face such a saddened look.
Did they fight?

Stratonice: Polyeucte, Nearchus,
The Christians...

Pauline: Tell me, the Christians...

Stratonice: I can't.

Pauline: You've steeled my soul for some terrible news.

Stratonice: You'll never have more reason to prepare.

Pauline: They've murdered him?

Stratonice: That would be a blessing.
All your dream is true, Polyeucte's no more...

Pauline: He's dead!

Stratonice: No, he lives. But, o, futile tears!
His great bravery, his divine soul,
Have lost their worth, not fit for life nor you.
He's no longer your same cherished husband,
He's a common enemy of the State,
He's a common enemy to the Gods,
A criminal, rat, rebel, fanatic,
Coward, traitor, parricide, terrorist,
A malign cancer to decent people,
Sacrilegious scum, in a word, a Christian.

Pauline: That word's enough without this torrent of insults.

Stratonice: Are these names, applied to Christians, so wrong?

Pauline: He's all you say, if he's taken their faith,
But you speak to me, and he's my husband.

Stratonice: Think only of that God whom he adores.

Pauline: I love him out of duty, which still lives.

Stratonice: He's provided you good cause to hate him.
He's betrayed our gods, so could betray you.

Pauline: I would love him still, had he betrayed me,
And if at so much love you're astounded,
Know that my duty's not linked to his.
Let him fall short, I know I must keep mine.
What! If he loved elsewhere, would I be free
To copy, on cue, his adultery?
Though he's now Christian, I won't be repelled –
I can love the man and loathe his mistakes.
But what rancour has been roused in father?

Stratonice: A secret rage, overwhelming anger,
Though there's still a chink of friendship for him
Through which some Pity shines on Polyeucte.
He's not yet going to pass full sentence
Till he's been shown Nearchus tortured first.

Pauline: Nearchus took part?

Stratonice: He seduced Polyeucte –
This is the rotten fruit of their friendship.
This snake, before, against Polyeucte's will,
Ripped him from you, dragged him to baptism!
This was their secret, that great mystery
That your questioning love could not find out.

Pauline: You blamed me then for questioning too much.

Stratonice: I couldn't predict this catastrophe!

Pauline: Before I surrender my soul to grief,
I must assay what my tears will achieve.
In my role as wife, or daughter, I hope
My tears will bring round husband or father.
If my weeping moves neither of these men
Despair will be my only companion.
Tell me though what happened at the temple.

Stratonice: Desecration beyond anything yet!
Just thinking about it makes me shudder -
I risk blasphemy in its narration.
Hear this brief tale of their brutal insolence.
The priest had only just obtained silence,
And turned himself towards the Eastern sky,
When they began their contemptuous jibes.
At every stage of the ceremony
They jostled to parade their dementia,
Mocking relentlessly our sacred rites,
Scorning arrogantly our worshipped Gods.
The whole crowd murmured, Felix was angry,
But they just piled on yet more blasphemies!
"What!", said Polyeucte, yelling to the crowd,
"Do you worship gods made of wood and stone?"
I'll skip here the list of obscenities

They both vomited out against Jupiter –
Adultery, incest, and things much worse.
“Hear me!” he then said, “Hear me, everyone!
The God of Polyeucte and of Nearchus
Over Earth and Sky is Absolute King –
Sole Authority, sole Master of Fate,
Sole Divinity, sole Universal End.
It is our Christian God whom you must thank
For the victories He granted Decius.
He Alone decides a battle’s outcome –
He can raise Decius up, or crush him down.
His goodness, justice, power are immense,
He Alone punishes, Alone rewards.
In vain you worship Impotent Monsters!”
With these words they smashed the wine and incense -
Once they’d hurled the sacred goblets on the ground,
Without fear of Felix, or the Gods’ ire,
With equal violence they stormed the altar.
Heavens! Has ever such a sight been seen?
We witnessed the mightiest gods’ statues
Toppled and destroyed by a faithless hand.
The rites were disturbed, the temple profaned,
And a riotous crowd, who feared Heaven’s
Fury, fled the place in desperate chaos.
Felix...but here he comes, he’ll tell you the rest.

Pauline: How his face glowers, full of emotion!
How upset, how indignant he appears!

Scene 3 (*Enter Felix*)

Felix: How could such damned insolence dare come out!
In public! To my face! He will now die!

Pauline: Let me, your daughter, now plead at your knees.

Felix: I mean Nearchus and not your husband.
Though he’s defiled his name of son-in-law,
My soul still inclines to him with kindness.
His crime’s magnitude and my displeasure
Haven’t erased that love behind my choice.

Pauline: I’d expect no less from a good father.

Felix: My righteous anger should devour him up!
For you must realize just how ugly
Is this your husband’s sacrilegious rape!
Stratonice must have told you all by now.

Pauline: I know he must see Nearchus tortured.

Felix: He’ll learn the lesson I teach forever
When he observes his corruptor punished.

Watching a friend suffer your bloody end
Stirs up the fear of death, the will to live.
So tightly does this fear grip round your soul,
No man who looks on death can still crave death.
Example's always clearer than a threat.
His thoughtless zealotry will soon cool down,
And you'll soon see his foolish, anxious heart
Beg me pardon his grievous blasphemy.

Pauline: You believe his great courage will waver?

Felix: At Nearchus's expense he must grow wise.

Pauline: He should, but, oh! Look where you're driving me!
What dire jeopardy my husband faces
If on his change of heart all my hopes stand –
Hopes I'd thought a good father would bolster.

Felix: Your lucky I've gone so far as to agree
He might be saved, if he repents at once.
Equal crimes deserve equal punishments –
In judging their same guilt so differently
I've betrayed justice for a father's love!
I've made myself a criminal for him –
I expected from you, despite your fears,
More words of thanks than these complaints I hear.

Pauline: Thanks for what? To you, who gives me nothing?
I know the Christian temper and his mind –
He'll stay obstinate right up to his end.
To wish he'd repent is to seal his death.

Felix: His holds his own pardon, the choice is his.

Pauline: Grant it outright.

Felix: He must choose to end this.

Pauline: Don't abandon him to those fanatics!

Felix: I abandon him to the Law I must uphold.

Pauline: Is this how a father-in-law helps a son?

Felix: Let him do for himself as much as I've done.

Pauline: But he's blinded.

Felix: And enjoys being so –
He loves his fault so much he sees no fault.
To love a vice so much turns vice to virtue.

Pauline: Father, in the gods' name...

Felix: Don't call on them!
These gods are the reason his death's required.

Pauline: They hear our prayers.

Felix: Good, let him pray to them!

Pauline: In the Emp'ror's name, whom you represent.

Felix: I wield his power, but it's lent to me
To deploy with care against his enemies.

Pauline: Is Polyeucte one?

Felix: All Christians are terrorists.

Pauline: Don't you apply that cruel precept to him –
By marrying me his blood joined your blood's course.

Felix: I see his crime but am blind to his rank.
When terrorism combines with sacrilege
Both blood and love forfeit all privilege.

Pauline: How harsh and strict!

Felix: Far less than his crime's due.

Pauline: How true my horrific dream's becoming!
Don't you see losing him you lose a daughter?

Felix: Gods and Emperor outrank family!

Pauline: Our double loss won't make you change your mind?

Felix: I have both gods and Decius to dread.
But wait, we've not yet got cause for despair.
Do you think he'll persist in his blindness?
If earlier it seemed he rushed to his death,
It was merely a new Christian convert's zeal!

Pauline: If you do still love him, give up your hope
That he'll change his beliefs twice in one day.
Not only have Christians past proved tougher,
But you imagine him too capricious.
You underrate Polyeucte's iron resolve.
This was no fault learnt at his mother's knee,
Imprinted on him without prior thought.
Polyeucte's a Christian out of clear choice.
He entered the temple with stony purpose.
Assume he'll behave like all the others:
Death for them holds neither shame nor terror,
Their Glory derives in trashing our gods.

Blind to earth's riches, they dream of Heaven,
Believing their death opens up its gates.
Torture, or rape, genocide, no matter,
Pain's relished by them as we do Pleasure.
For it leads them to their one desire's goal –
To die obscenely – it's called martyrdom.

Felix: Good! Then Polyeucte will get just what he wants.
No more arguments.

Pauline: But, father...

Scene 4 (*Enter Albin*)

Felix: Is it over?

Albin: Yes, my lord, Nearchus has been punished.

Felix: Our Polyeucte was there to watch him die?

Albin: He watched it, but alas, with envious eye.
He longed to follow, rather than recoil –
The scene served only to harden his heart.

Pauline: I said as much. Once more I'll try, father,
If ever my devotion gave you joy,
If ever you have prized it, if ever you've cherished it...

Felix: You love too well, Pauline, a worthless husband.

Pauline: I had him from you. My love is blameless.
It's my glorious tribute to your choice.
I poured out for this the most radiant love
A well-born soul could ever claim to feel.
In the name of my unflinching duty,
Which I've always upheld as my birth's edict,
If you rule me, even over my love,
I should overrule you just once in turn!
By your just power whose abuse I now fear,
By that exquisite love I had to crush,
Don't cut off your favour – it's dear to me,
It costs me so much I think it's precious.

Felix: Your entreaty cloy. Though my heart's tender,
I'll show pity only at my own price.
Exploit your tear's efforts for better means,
To try to soften me wastes tears and time.
I've tamed Pity, and I want it known
That I'll quash pity the second I'm coerced.
Prepare yourself to meet this Christian wretch,
To ply your best efforts, once I've tried mine.
Go, don't further test your loving father,
Strive to rescue your husband from himself.

Very soon I'll have him brought here for you,
But, now, leave us – I want a private word.

Pauline: Grant him pardon...

Felix: Leave us alone, I say.
Your tears do offend as much as grieve me.
Apply all you can to convince Polyeucte,
You'll do better if you harass me less.

Scene 5 (*Exit Pauline and Stratonice*)

Felix: How did he die, Albin?

Albin: Brutally, Sir,
Braving his tortures, with disdain for life,
Without remorse, murmur, or the least shock,
In obstinacy and cold resistance,
The usual Christian way, blasphemies on his lips.

Felix: And the other?

Albin: Like I said, hard as rock.
Far from being crushed, his heart seems stronger.
We had to drag him by force from the scaffold.
He's in the prison where I saw him lead,
But you are very far from breaking him.

Felix: Where's my luck gone?

Albin: We're all sympathetic.

Felix: No one knows the worms gnawing at my heart,
Thought upon thought bombards my soul's true peace,
I'm torn apart by worry after worry.
I feel love, hate, fear and hope all at once,
Now Joy elates me, now Grief brings me down.
I am wracked by feelings I can't describe:
Violent ones circulate, as does pity,
A generous impulse I daren't act on,
Even vicious schemes which make me ashamed.
I love this fool I chose as son-in-law,
But I hate this folly that's blinded him.
I will mourn his loss and wish to save him,
But I must still uphold the gods' glory.
Their anger terrifies me, as does Decius,
My governor's post, my very life's at stake!
So either I'll soon risk my life for him,
Or, soon, I'll let him die to save myself.

Albin: Decius will excuse a father-in-law's love,
Besides, Polyeucte springs from honoured stock.

Felix: His rule to punish Christians is rigid –
The more popular, the more dangerous.
For public outrage, there's no concession,
For, should I conceal my family's crimes,
By what Authority, or Law could I
Condemn in others what I condone at home?

Albin: If even his rank won't sway your judgment,
Then write to Decius so he can decide.

Felix: Severus would ruin me, if I did that.
His power and hatred are chief concerns.
Had I delayed in punishing this crime,
Though he's noble, though he's magnanimous,
He's still human, and I've caused a grudge.
Oh, his anguished soul must boil with contempt,
Must hiss desperate to find Pauline married,
Must itch for my end through the Emp'ror's wrath.
Revenge knows no limits for an insult
And such a chance would tempt the mildest man.
Maybe (and I've grounds for my suspicion)
He's warmed already by some new hope's flames,
And, thinking soon he'll see Polyeucte dead,
He calls back that love he's hardly banished.
Do you think his ire, surely now implacable,
Will not damn me for shielding a guilty man,
Especially since my leniency would mean
He'd see his longings dashed a second time?
Shall I confess a squalid thought to you?
I kill it, it grows back to seduce me.
It rides gleeful upon Ambition's back,
And my sole defence is I abhor it.
Here, Polyeucte's my family's bastion.
But if he died, and Sev'rus married Pauline,
Through that I'd weld myself such a fortress
My gains from here would swell a thousand times!
This thrusts into my heart a wicked glee –
But I hope you'll see me struck by lightning
Before I'd ever act on such vile thoughts,
Or prostitute my honor with such deeds.

Albin: Your soul's too noble, your heart is too good.
But are you resolved to punish this crime?

Felix: I'll head to the prison and try my best
To break his will with the horrors of death.
After that we'll see what Pauline can do.

Albin: What will you do if he remains stubborn?

Felix: Don't ask that! If faced with such a grim choice,
I'll have to take action, but don't yet know what.

Albin: I should warn you, as a loyal servant,
The town's rebelled already for his cause.
They don't wish to lose through the law's rigour
Their best hope, and their last royal blood-line!
I'm not sure his prison's secure enough –
I left it ringed round by a restless mob.
I'm worried they might force it.

Felix: We'll move him.
Bring him here where he'll be kept more secure.

Albin: You move him, and drop hints of a pardon –
That will disperse the crowd's rising anger.

Felix: Let's go. If he keeps with that Christian sect
In secret we'll end him – they won't suspect.

End of Act 3

Act 4

Scene 1 (*Polyeucte, Cleon, three other Guards*)

Polyeucte: Who's here now, guards?

Cleon: Pauline's asked to see you.

Polyeucte: Pauline! This is the battle I fear most!
Felix, I trounced you here in this prison,
I scoffed at your threats, met you undismayed.
Now in revenge you unleash your best weapon –
I fear the scaffold far less than her tears.
Lord God, you see the perils here I run,
In my pressing need help me gather strength.
And you, dear friend, released victoriously,
Gaze down in glory on my trials below.
Dear Nearchus, to beat a foe so strong,
Lend from Heaven a firm helping hand.
Guards, would you dare do me one last service?
I won't ask you to soften my tortures,
Nor will I bribe you to help me escape,
I'll stay here quietly under close guard,
But might one of you bring Severus here?
You could do this for me without any risk –
If I could tell him an important secret
He'd live happier, and I'd die content.

Cleon: If that's your wish, I'll go find him at once.

Polyeucte: Severus will reward you, since I can't.
Go, lose no time, and return here promptly.

Cleon: I shall be back, my lord, soon as I can.

Scene 2 (*Cleon exits. The guards withdraw to the back of the stage.
Polyeucte's verse below perhaps spoken or sung to a simple melody.*)

Polyeucte: Your bitterness chokes, you delicious spring,
Why don't you let me be, you sugared Lust?
To me these habits of flesh and earth cling
Shamefully, chained to me though to them I'm lost.
Leave Honour! Leave Pleasure! You've declared war!
All your happy felicity,
Is steered by instability,
Like a glass splintered on the floor,
Once perfect crystal, now no more,
Such is your flawed fragility.

Do not hope, then, it's after you I sigh;
In vain you assail your weak charms on me;
In vain you flaunt this kingdom to my eyes
Where God's enemies do proudly run free.

God, for His part, assails with His just blows -
Battering the proud with this reward:
The parries of His righteous Sword
Smite His prosperous, guilty foes.
How much more acute are their woes,
The more He is by fools ignored.

Blood-thirsty Tiger, ruthless Emperor,
God soon will finish your sadistic rule,
Watch as He throws you to your torturers!
The Goths for all Christians will wreck your downfall.¹
Wait just a little, you'll be overtopped.
Nothing now will avert your fate!
The Thunderbolts which lie in wait
Above the clouds, ready to drop
On your crown, will not now be stopped
With words of regret tried too late.

Let Felix feed me to your hungry claws,
Let him be dazzled by this new upstart,
Let him buy with my death a new son-in-law,
Let him fawn, and reign, and play a slave's part.
I'll not object, to death I'm well resigned.
World, you've lost for me all your lure.
My new Christian heart so pure
Burns with a flame wholly divine,
And I now see Pauline's consigned
To block me from Salvation's shore.

Sweet Holy Succour, o Heavenly force,
You flood my heart now eager to receive.
What soul, when it feels your Holiness course,
Of other passion ever can conceive?
You promise something, and yet give more fair:
Your gift of Grace is permanent,
And this lucky death I've been sent
Serves as your final way to bear
All Christians to their earned share
Of everlasting contentment.

(End of Aria.)

I feel your divine flames lick round my heart,
Warming me to withstand Pauline's demands!
Here she comes! My heart fired with holy zeal
Tastes no more her intoxicating charms.
My eyes, now bright with celestial lustre,
No more are transfixed by her loveliness.

¹ A prophecy by Polyeucte. Decius, noted for his harsh measures against the Christians, had his brief reign of two years cut short through ambush by the Goths, to whom he was betrayed by his lieutenant Trebonianus Gallus in A.D. 251.

Scene 3 (*Pauline enters.*)

- Polyeucte: Pauline, what's the purpose of your visit?
Have you come to oppose or support me?
Does this selfless gesture of your pure love
Intend to give aid, or bring on defeat?
Do you come here in hatred or in love,
As my opponent, or a dear partner?
- Pauline: You've no enemies here besides yourself.
Only you hate yourself, though loved by all,
You alone strive to bring about my dream –
Stop wishing yourself lost, and you'll be saved!
However criminal your doings were,
You're innocent if you pardon yourself.
Think of the blood-line from which you were born,
Of your valiant feats, your rare qualities.
The Public love you, Decius respects you,
You're son-in-law to the Province Governor.
My husband's name is not so slight to me,
I cherish it, though it seems now you don't.
With all your exploits, with your noble birth
And power, recognize our hopes in you,
And don't give up to an executioner
The promise of your eminent future.
- Polyeucte: I ponder weightier things. I know my own worth,
And all the hopes which brave men place in me.
They're only pursuing passing profit,
Which Trouble disturbs, and Danger upsets –
Death robs our profits, Fortune toys with them.
Sit today on a throne, tomorrow roll in dung.
Their jewels of Profit arouse such envy
Few of your Caesars can relish them long.
I have ambition, but for nobler ends.
Their riches die, but mine shall last forever:
An assured happiness immeasurable,
Beyond Envy's reach, or Fortune's clutches.
Is my cheap life too much to pay for this?
This life which can, on a whim, soon be snatched,
Life which gives only glimpses of pleasure
And leaves you ever unsure of your next?
- Pauline: These are your ridiculous Christian dreams –
How deep their lies have been indoctrinated!
For bliss so immense, your life blood's not much,
But is that blood your own to sacrifice?
Life never is owned, but granted on loan –
The day you're born your life is contracted:
You owe it to the public, State, and Emperor.
- Polyeucte: For them I'd happily lose it in war –

I know what joys, what glory that would bring!
The Emp'ror's ancestors are still lauded,
His name, now championed for six hundred years,
Won Decius the whole Roman empire!
I do owe my life to State and Sceptre
But I owe more to God who gave me life.
If dying for an Emperor is great,
How much more glorious to die for God!

Pauline: What god?

Polyeucte: Hush! He can hear your every word!
He's not the same as your make-believe gods,
Senseless and deaf, impotent and deformed,
Of wood, marble, gold, or any trinket,
He's the Christian God, He's mine, He's yours,
Neither Earth nor Sky knows any other.

Pauline: Adore Him in your heart, but keep it secret.

Polyeucte: So I'd be heathen and Christian at once!

Pauline: Pretend just for a while, till Severus leaves,
Allow my father's good grace to save you.

Polyeucte: My God's good Grace is much, much more precious:
He's shielded me from dangers as I've run,
Never letting me turn back or waver,
His favour crowned me at the course's start.
With His wind's first breath, I've been blown to port,
Racing straight from baptism to my death.
If I could make you grasp life's emptiness,
And what utter bliss follows after death...!
But why try commending hidden treasures
To minds that don't yet know the touch of God?

Pauline: Cruel man! But now my grief is bursting free
To flood your thankless heart with just rebukes.
Is this your great love? Are these your true vows?
Don't you have any tenderness for me?
I've left unsaid the miserable grief
Your death will throw me, your heart-broken wife.
I thought true love would argue it for me
And that love's core in you was not hollow.
But where is that burning love I've fought for
With which you made vows, and which I returned?
Now you discard, forsake and murder me,
Can Love wring not one tear or sigh from you?
Liar, you're abandoning me gladly –
You won't even hide it, you want me to see! –
And your heart, numb to these my sad appeals,
Imagines a happiness free of me!
Is this then the revulsion marriage brings?

Now that I'm all yours, do I disgust you?

Polyeucte: Alas!

Pauline: You could barely utter that word!
Even if it marked your turn towards repentance,
You won't believe me, but I would rejoice!
Take heart, he's moved! His eyes are dewed with tears!

Polyeucte: I weep, and would to God my tears would move
Your obdurate heart to give way at last!
The image of you forlornly grieving
Plucks from my eyes these doleful tears of love.
If, in Heaven, sorrow can still be felt,
I will cry there for you and for your pain.
And if in that place of light and glory,
The all-Just, all-Good God will hear my prayer,
If He'll consider a husband's sad plight,
On your deep blindness He'll shine His daylight.
Lord, through your mercy, grant she remain mine.
She's too virtuous not to be Christian.
You chose to make her nature too upright
For her not to know You, not to love You,
Or to go on as a damned slave to Hell,
And die yoked to Satan, as she was born.

Pauline: Deluded man, what have you dared to say?

Polyeucte: That, with my blood, I may yet buy you back.

Pauline: I'd sooner...

Polyeucte: It's useless to resist Him:
God touches our hearts when we least expect.
You've not yet experienced His radiance,
But it *will* come, though I don't yet know when.

Pauline: Leave these fantasies, love me.

Polyeucte: I do love you,
Much less than God, much more than my own self.

Pauline: For our love's sake, don't abandon your wife.

Polyeucte: For our love's sake, come join me on my path.

Pauline: Leaving's not enough, you want my Soul too?

Polyeucte: Heaven's not enough, I want you there too.

Pauline: Hallucinations!

Polyeucte: No, celestial truth!

Pauline: Baffling blindness!

Polyeucte: No, clear Eternal light!

Pauline: You prefer death to your wife Pauline's love!

Polyeucte: You prefer the world's delights to Heaven!

Pauline: Go, Cruelty, go die – you never loved me.

Polyeucte: Live content on earth, let me to my peace.

Pauline: Yes, I will leave you be, you needn't worry,
I'm going...

Scene 4 (*Enter Severus, Fabian and the Guards.*)

Pauline: Severus? What brings you here?
Is it possible your generous heart
Comes here to taunt an imprisoned man?

Polyeucte: You misjudge, Pauline, a man of honour –
He has come here at my special request.
Sir, I'm sorry for my rude petition,
I hope this prison will lend some excuse.
I have a treasure, too precious for me,
Which I hope you'll accept before I die.
Let me leave this Lady, whom Heaven's blest
With the rarest virtues ever witnessed,
In the most valiant, most honest hands
Of you, the world's favourite, best Roman-born man.
You are worthy of her, she's worthy of you,
Do not refuse her from her husband's hand.
If I fissured you, my death will fuse you.
That bright flame of love you felt still glows:
Give him your heart, accept her devotion,
Live happy together, die happy like me,
This is Polyeucte's last wish for you both.
So on to death. I've nothing more to say.
Guards, let's on. It's over.

Scene 5 (*Exit Polyeucte with the Guards.*)

Severus: It makes no sense!
I'm bewildered by his fervoured rashness –
Such fanaticism I've never seen,
I can hardly trust what my ears just heard!
His heart has adored you (but whose heart is so dull
To know you and not yield to adoration?)
You loved him back, as soon as you're his,
He coolly deserts you, worse, gives you away!
As if your sweet love were a poisoned gift,

He hands it himself to his own rival.
Sure, either these Christians have strange delusions,
Or their bliss must be infinitely deep,
Since, to get to it, they dare toss aside
What would cost a whole empire to purchase.
I would, if Time had been kinder to me
To reward my deeds with marriage to you,
I would only worship your sparkling eyes –
I'd make them my Kings, I'd make them my Gods! –
I'd have been ground to powder, burnt to dust,
Before I'd ever...

Pauline: Stop there! I fear this,
Lest your warmth, heated by your love's first fire,
Brings on some outcome unfit for us both.
Severus, you must hear what's in my soul:
My Polyeucte comes near his final hour,
There's only moments till his life will end.
You are the cause of this, though innocent.
I don't know if Desire, whispering in your soul,
Has raised up any hopes, upon his death.
You should know there's no kind of death so cruel
Which, head held high, I would not face for him.
Hell has no torments I would not endure
Rather than desecrate my spotless name
By marrying, after he's doomed, the man
Who's chiefly responsible for his death.
If you could believe my soul's so cankered,
My first love for you would freeze into hate.
You are magnanimous, stay so forever.
My father's inclined to give you anything –
He fears you, and to you I'll speak frankly,
He will execute Polyeucte for you.
Save this unlucky man, use your power.
Raise all your strength and lend him your support.
I know it's a lot I'm asking you for,
But the harder the task, the greater your glory.
Protect a rival of whom you're jealous –
Only you could be so magnanimous.
If your Glory needs another reason,
Look on this woman whom you once did love,
Whose love perhaps still inside you rustles,
She'll owe your virtue all she cherishes.
Dear Severus, remember who you are.
Farewell. Decide alone what you will do –
If you're not the man I dare hope you'll be,
Let me not know, and I'll still honour you.

Scene 6 (*Exit Pauline.*)

Severus: What is this, Fabian? What new thunderbolt
Blasts my happiness and chars it to dust?
Like a mirage that's close and far away –

I find that all's lost when I thought I'd won.
Fickle Fortune, obsessed with taunting me,
Aborts my hope as soon as it is born.
Before I've even prayed, I am refused,
I'm always depressed, shamed, and confounded
To see my whorish hope come out again,
And sluttishly parade her goods at me!
That it's Pauline who, in her dire distress,
Teaches me lessons in nobility!
Her soul's as noble as it's unlucky,
But it's as inhuman as it's noble.
Pauline, you wield your grief as a weapon
To bludgeon this heart you already rule.
Not only must I lose you but give you away
To help my rival, though he's left you.
I must perform all this cruel, selfless work
To save him from death, just to give you back!

Fabian: Leave this thankless family to their fate.
Let Fate mend the rifts 'tween father and daughter,
Polyeucte and Felix, husband and wife.
What prize can you hope for from this cruel task?

Severus: The honour of proving to her just soul
That I'm her equal, and worthy of her,
That she's meant for me, that Fate's been unjust
In malevolently dividing us.

Fabian: Forget your accusations against Fate,
Think about the dangers this task implies.
The risks are huge, my lord, think on it well.
What folly! You want to save a Christian!
Will you counter that deep-seated contempt
Decius heaps on their faithless faction?
That would, for him, be such a monstrous crime,
It might ruin you despite your high favour.

Severus: These words might convince ordinary men.
Decius may control my life and my fortune,
But I'm still Severus! All his power
Means nothing to my Duty or my Glory.
My slumb'ring Honour roars, I must feed it.
Whether Fate treats me well, or with disdain –
Since Fate is always unpredictable –
If I die with Glory, I'll die fulfilled.
Here in private, I'll speak my mind to you.
This Christian sect's not as bad as rumoured,
Why they are demonized I do not know,
And on this point I think Decius is wrong.
Being curious, I've come to know them well:
They are thought Sorcerers, Slaves to Demons –
On this superstition they're executed
For their secret rites of which we're ignorant.

But our Good Goddess and Eleusian Ceres
Have the same secret cults in Rome and in Greece.
We tolerate everywhere, without risk,
All kinds of deities, except their God –
All Egypt's monsters have temples in Rome!
Our ancestors turned men to gods at whim,
And we've inherited their foolishness:
We fill the sky with all our emperors.
Don't you wonder how so many mortal men
Could really metamorphose into Gods?
The Christians have One God, He rules all things,
His single will creates all He decides.
But, if I dare speak frankly between us two,
Our gods often seem in disagreement,
And – let their anger crush me before you –
We've far too many of them to be true.
Moreover, Christians lead innocent lives:
They detest vice, and cultivate virtue,
They even pray for us who persecute them.
And in all that time that we've tortured them,
Have they mutinied? Have they rebelled?
Have Roman soldiers ever been so loyal?
Wild in battle, they endure our butchery,
And, fighting like lions, they die like lambs.
I've too much pity to stand idly by,
Let's start with Polyeucte, let's go find Felix!
I will satisfy with this one action
Pauline, my Glory, and my compassion.

End of Act 4

Act 5

Scene 1 (*Felix, Albin and Cleon.*)

- Felix: Albin, did you see Severus' trick?
Or notice his hatred? Or my distress?
- Albin: I saw in him only noble honour,
And see in you only a strict father.
- Felix: How badly you've read his heart by his face!
In his soul he hates me and shuns Pauline –
If he once did love her, today he thinks
A rival's hand-me-down is far beneath him.
He pleads for Polyeucte, begs, bullies me
With ruin, if I don't grant the pardon.
Playing at compassion, he thinks he'll sway me,
But this false masquerade is too transparent.
I know from the court what Politics is,
I know, more than him, all its subtleties.
His storming and feigned fury is a sham,
I know what things he'll tell the Emperor.
To do what he asks I'd commit a crime:
Sparing Polyeucte, I'd become his pawn.
If he were dealing with some young novice,
The trap's well-set, and no doubt it would work,
But an old fox isn't so wet-behind-the-ears,
He knows the game and all of its deceptions.
I've come across so many tricks like this,
I could teach Severus some of my own.
- Albin: Gods! Your mistrust is tying you in knots!
- Felix: Survival at court's a careful science:
Once a man has reason to begrudge you,
Your entire friendship should be held suspect.
If Polyeucte doesn't forsake his cult,
Whatever plans his advocate may have,
I will follow my orders exactly.
- Albin: Pardon, pardon him, my lord, for Pauline!
- Felix: The Emperor would never allow that.
Such a risky move would not keep him safe –
My mercy would only get us both killed.
- Albin: But Sev'rus promised...
- Felix: Albin, that's no good,
I know how much Decius loathes Christians –
In defending them Sev'rus will bait him,
And will no doubt be doomed alongside us.
There is though one more tack I'd like to try.

Bring Polyeucte here. If I send him back,
Should he stubbornly resist this attempt,
On leaving, he must be executed.

(Exit Cleon.)

Albin: Your edict's harsh...

Felix: It's a necessity
If I'm to prevent chaos descending.
I see the people primed to take his part,
As you yourself just now did caution me.
If their fervour for him gets out of hand,
I don't know how long I could control it.
Maybe tomorrow, by tonight, by dawn,
I'll witness what I have no wish to see.
Then Severus immediately for revenge
Would blame me in some slanderous report.
I must stop that blow, which would be fatal.

Albin: Your predictions smack of paranoia –
You see on all sides, threats, loss, catastrophe.
Be certain his death will outrage the mob,
And your remedy will make them desperate.

Felix: After his death they can murmur in vain,
And if any violence does break out,
Their insolence will wear out in two days.
I will have done my duty, regardless.
Here Polyeucte comes, let's try to save him.

(Enter Polyeucte with Cleon and Guards.)

Soldiers, stand outside and guard the door well.

Scene 2 *(Felix, Polyeucte, Albin.)*

Felix: Why do you detest life so, Polyeucte?
Does your Jesus and his Christian law
Declare you must forsake your family?

Polyeucte: I don't hate life, I love living on earth,
But not like a slave under this regime.
I'm happy to give back this gift from God,
This is what Christ and Conscience do dictate.
And I'll show you all the way to lead life,
If you've courage enough to follow me.

Felix: What! Leap with you into that dark abyss?

Polyeucte: Rather, accompany me to Glory.

Felix: Give me some time at least to know this faith –

Serve as my guide, and make me Christian.
Don't refuse to give me your instruction,
Or you yourself will answer to your God.

Polyeucte: Don't mock Him, Felix, He will be your judge.
You'll find no place to hide from His justice.
Kings and Beggars hold equal rank for Him,
All those whose blood's on you, He will avenge.

Felix: I will shed no more blood, and, come what may,
I'll let Christians keep their faith and live.
I'll defend them.

Polyeucte: No, no, persecute them,
Be the instrument of our happiness!
We're rewarded by the cruelest tortures.
God, who repays strong faith a hundredfold,
Crowns his persecuted with His best gifts.
But you'll struggle to grasp these mysteries,
Only God's converts can understand them.

Felix: In true honesty, I want to be Christian.

Polyeucte: What's now keeping you from this sacred goal?

Felix: The awkward presence...

Polyeucte: Of whom? Severus?

Felix: Only for him have I feigned this fury.
Pretend just a while, until he's left us.

Polyeucte: Felix, is this now spoken honestly?
Offer your idols and paganish gods
This poisoned honey which your words do ooze.
A true Christian fears nothing, hides nothing,
He'll trumpet his faith across the whole world!

Felix: This zeal for your faith only misleads you,
If you'd embrace death, rather than teach me.

Polyeucte: I cannot fully articulate it –
Faith's a gift from Heaven, not from Reason.
It's there that soon, seeing God face to face,
I'll more easily for you procure His Grace.

Felix: But losing you will drive me to despair!

Polyeucte: You will soon have a better replacement.
By ditching one son-in-law, you'll gain another,
Whose accoutrements will suit your taste more.
To you my loss will be advantageous.

Felix: Stop needling me with insinuations.
I've shown you much more patience than you've earned.
My clemency that's bent at each your jibes,
Has, at this insolence, finally snapped.
I'll now avenge myself and all my gods.

Polyeucte: What! How soon your words and temper have changed!
Zeal for your gods comes flooding back again,
As all your Christian hopes vanish! By
Accident I've drawn from you some honesty.

Felix: How could you presume, whatever I swore,
I'd follow your new prophet's fraudulence?
I humoured your madness to snatch you back
From the shameful abyss you're stumbling down –
I wanted to gain time and spare your life
After that tell-tale had gone far away.
But I've wronged our all-powerful gods too much:
Choose to sacrifice with incense, or with blood.

Polyeucte: My choice still stands firm. But I see Pauline,
O Heaven!

Scene 3 (*Enter Pauline.*)

Pauline: Which of you will murder me?
Both of you together, or each in turn?
Can I not sway either Nature or Love?
Will neither father or husband hear me?

Felix: Speak to your husband.

Polyeucte: Live with Severus.

Pauline: Tiger, murder me without your insults.

Polyeucte: My love, through pity, tries to comfort you.
It's clear what deep pain your soul is now in,
And only another's love will heal you.
Once that outstanding man kindled your love,
His presence still should ignite some affection.
As you loved him, he still loves you, his flame...

Pauline: What have I done to earn this cruelty?
Can you now wound me, despite my loyalty,
With that same vast love I smothered for you?
Imagine me strangling my own love and
Burying it, so yours could take its place.
What brutalities my heart took for you,
To purge itself of first love's memories.
If ingratitude does not rule your heart,
Endure some small sacrifice for my sake.
Learn from me to crush your inner feelings,

I'll be your guide out of your dark blindness.
Let me unlock your life from your own grip,
But after always live enslaved to you.
If you can rebuff these righteous demands,
At least look on my tears and hear my sighs –
I adore you, don't drive me to despair.

Polyeucte: I've said already, and will say again,
Live with Severus, or come die with me.
I see your tears, I honour your loyalty,
But, however hard my love pleads for you,
If you aren't Christian, I'll not know you.
Felix, enough, resume your righteous rage,
And punish my outrageous insolence.

Pauline: Ah! Father, his crime deserves punishment,
But if he's lost reason, you still have yours.
Nature is too strong and her affections
Are permanently rooted in our blood.
A father's always a father – this truth
I still dare to use to prop up my hope.
Look on your daughter with a father's eye –
If this loved terrorist dies, I'll die too.
The gods will judge his tribunal lawless,
Since it blurs his guilt with my innocence,
And, through my death, such excessive rigour
Turns a lawful sentence into State crime.
Our destinies, made one by your own will,
Demand we share in gladness and sorrow,
And you too will be cruel in the extreme
If you rupture what you helped to unite.
Two new-joined hearts cannot withdraw themselves,
To separate them you must rip them apart.
But you are sympathetic to my pain,
And look on my tears with paternal love.

Felix: Yes, daughter, a father's still a father.
There's nothing can erode this sacred bond.
I've a feeling heart, and you have pierced it,
I'll join with you against this granite man.
Ill-starred Polyeucte, can you be such stone?
Can you alone give your crime no pardon?
Can you view these tears with indiff'rent eye?
Can you view such love and remain unmoved?
Are we no longer your wife and father-in-law,
One deprived of love, the other of friendship?
To take back your role as son and husband,
Will you have us both begging at your knees?

Polyeucte: How petty are all your histrionics!
After two attempts at threatening me,
After you made me watch Nearchus die,
After you've tightened the shackles of Love,

After you've played at wanting baptism,
To try and oppose God with God's own cause,
You now join forces! Ah! Satan's own tricks!
How many times must I beat you to win?
Your resolutions are very shaky,
Make up your mind at last, since mine's made up.
I worship One God, universal Lord,
Under whom quakes heaven and earth and hell.
A God who loves us with Infinite Love,
Who died in ignominy for our sins,
Who, as a mark of His eternal love,
Would sacrifice Himself for us each day.
But why speak to those who can't comprehend?
See the blind errors you dare to defend:
All your gods are stained with the blackest sins,
There is no crime your gods do not pass on,
Prostitution, adultery, incest,
Theft and murder, every transgression
Is offered as example by your gods.
I profaned their temple, smashed their altars –
I would do it again, if I had to,
Before you Felix, before Severus,
Before the Senate, before the Emperor!

Felix: My mercy at last gives way to fury:
Worship them, or die!

Polyeucte: I'm Christian.

Felix: Dog!
Worship them, I tell you, or give up life.

Polyeucte: I am Christian.

Felix: Are you? Stubborn fool.
Soldiers, carry out the order that I gave.

Pauline: Where have you sent him?

Felix: To death.

Polyeucte: To Glory.
Darling Pauline, adieu. Remember me.

Pauline: I'll always follow you, I'll die with you.

Polyeucte: Follow me not, till you leave your blind ways.

Felix: Take him away! Guards, follow your orders!
Since he wants to die, I'll help him perish.

Scene 4 (*Exeunt Polyeucte with Guards, followed by Pauline.*)

Felix: My hand was forced, Albin, but I had to do it.
My good clemency would have ruined me.
Let the public now exhibit their rage,
Let Severus thunder, blast, and strike home –
With this now done, I've secured my safety.
But weren't you shocked at his icy hardness?
Have you seen a heart so impenetrable?
Or heard impieties so abhorrent?
At least I can comfort my wounded soul,
Knowing I tried ev'ry way to soften him –
You even saw my blasphemous postures.
Sure, without those last horrific insults,
Which filled me at once with anger and shock,
I'd have found it tough to master myself.

Albin: One day perhaps you'll curse this victory,
Which holds, I can't say what, a deed too black,
Unworthy of Felix or a Roman,
To spill your own life-blood with your own hand.

Felix: Once Brutus and Manlius did the same –
Their glory was not diminished, but grew.
When those ancient heroes saw their bad blood,
They slit their own sons' throats to purge it away.

Albin: Your zeal misleads you, and, though it's now hot,
When once you feel it cool inside your breast,
When you first see Pauline in her despair –
Then you'll be rocked by her tears and her moans...

Felix: You remind me she's followed that traitor,
And whatever despair she might display
Could disturb my order's execution.
Go then, run to take charge, see what she's done.
Break down any problems her grief poses,
Remove her, if you can, from this sad sight,
Try to console her. Go, don't hesitate!

Albin: There's no need, my lord, she's here now herself.

Scene 5 (*Enter Pauline.*)

Pauline: Savage Father, finish, finish your work!
This second victim is worth your fury.
Now add your daughter to your son-in-law!
Before you is the same crime, or virtue,
Let your barbarity take its full toll.
My husband, dying, helped God's light shine down.
His blood, which your butchers have splashed on me,
Purified my sight and opened my eyes.
I see, I know, I believe, the fog's cleared –
With this blessed blood you behold me baptized.
I am now Christian – need I say more?

Execute me to keep your rank and wealth!
Quake before Severus, dread Decius,
If you don't wish to wilt, my death must come.
Polyeucte calls me to this happy death,
I see Nearchus and him stretching out their arms.
Lead, lead me to your gods whom I abhor.
They toppled only one, I'll smash the rest!
You'll see me there violate all your fears –
Defy the fictive lightning of Jupiter.
I will, in holy revolt to filial law,
For once show you my disobedience.
This is not Grief that makes me so bold,
This is Grace speaking, not my mad despair.
Need I repeat? Felix, I'm Christian.
Assure, through my death, both our destinies.
This blow for both of us will prove precious,
Promoting you on earth, and me to God.

Scene 5 (*Enter Severus.*)

Severus: Unnatural father, cursed politician!
Slave to Ambition and imagined terror!
Polyeucte's now dead! With your cruelties
Do you think you'll keep your paltry titles?
The rewards I'd offered you to spare him,
Instead of saving him, brought on his death!
I begged, threatened, I could not make you budge.
You thought me two-faced, or scant in power!
Well! At your own cost you'll see Severus
Never boasts what he cannot accomplish.
When you're demolished, then you'll understand
Your destroyer could have been your ally.
Continue your faithful work for the gods,
Demonstrate your zeal with scores more horrors.
Farewell, but when the hurricane blasts you,
Do not wonder from where the blows rain down.

Felix: Stop, Sev'rus! Let my conciliatory heart
Hand you your revenge without a struggle.
Don't charge me any longer of trying
To keep, through cruelty, my paltry titles –
I place their tempting lustre at your feet.
I dare dream now of more soaring honours.
Some secret force compels me to rise up.
I yield to these transports I've never known,
And through a movement I cannot fathom,
My fury's transformed to Polyeucte's zeal.
No doubt it's his innocent blood which prays
For his killer to Omnipotent God.
His love spreads over our whole family,
Pulling up father after daughter.
His martyr's death makes me a Christian,
I granted him bliss, he wants to grant mine.

So this is how Christian revenge works!
What gentle fierceness with an end so sweet!
Give me your hand, Pauline. Bring out your chains!
Offer your gods these two new-made Christians.
I'm one, so is she – slake your rage on us.

Pauline: What elation to have my father back!
This good fortunate completes my happiness!

Felix: Daughter, the glory of this is all his.

Severus: Who would not be touched by this tender sight?
This transformation is a miracle!
No doubt you Christians, whom we hound in vain,
Keep in you something surpassing human:
They lead their lives with so much innocence,
That Heaven repays them with gratitude.
To rise up stronger, the more they're tortured,
Is the mark of an uncommon virtue.
I've always admired Christians, despite what's said,
My heart's ached at every death I've seen.
Perhaps one day I will know them better.
Meanwhile, all people should choose their own god,
To serve in their own fashion, without fear.
If you're now Christian, don't fear my hate –
I love them, Felix, and don't wish to turn
From protector to their persecutor.
Keep your power, take back your eminence,
Serve both your God and our Emperor well.
You'll witness his campaign of terror end,
Or soon Decius will come to hate me.
His unjust hatred's hurting him too much.

Felix: May Heaven, through you, soon end this terror,
And recompense your much deserving work
By filling you with its celestial peace!
As for us, let's rejoice in our blest change:
Let's first go give ours martyrs burial,
Kiss their sacred bodies, place them in hallowed ground,
And let God's name across the earth resound!

End of Play

Performing Arabic plays on the Israeli Hebrew stage (1945-2006) - some case studies and reviews ¹

Dr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi

*Arabic-Hebrew translation, School of Cultural Studies, Tel Aviv University, Israel (2000).
Academic affiliation: Dept. of translation & translation research, Bar Ilan University, Israel.
Research interests: history and practice of Arabic-Hebrew literary translation; translating for drama and music stage performance - textual and cultural perspectives. Practising translator (Arabic-English-Hebrew), es. drama & poetry.*

Preface

Arabic plays in Hebrew translation are rarely performed on the Israeli Hebrew stage. Israeli Hebrew theater has occupied a major position in local Jewish culture since the advent of Zionism in Palestine (Lev Ari, 1989) performing original Hebrew plays as well as a great variety of world drama. Arabic drama has, however, been absent from its mainstream activity except for a single case, *Chatting On the Nile*, (an adaptation of a novel by Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfooz at the Haifa Municipal Theater, 1982). The reasons for this are many. First of all, in the source Arabic culture, drama is a relative latecomer to modern Arabic literature (Landau, 1958; Moreh, 1992). Many plays are declamatory and ideational rather than performative, since they are often written by writers, thinkers and poets who are not dramatists. This may make them unacceptable to Western oriented theater where stage action usually predominates over mere speech and where watching a theatrical piece is perceived as an event of pleasure rather than duty. Messages do exist in Western drama, but, with the exception of such ideological writers as Brecht, are often combined with other theatrical devices rather than presented as long strings of speech. Some Arab playwrights are, therefore, not aware of the standards of Western drama that require stage action in addition to speech. This may make their plays appropriate material for

¹ The present article reflects my personal experience as well as my keen academic interest. For the last 35 years (1972-2007) I have been actively involved in the translation of Arabic literature and drama into Hebrew, as a translator and interpreter trainer, scholar (Amit-Kochavi 1973; 1996; 1999; 2000; 2003; forthcoming) and Hebrew translator of Arabic plays for publication and stage performance. Out of nine such plays, two have been published (1978; 1989/1991), five performed (1978; 1983; 1984; 1987; 2006) and two used for simultaneous interpreting (2000a; 2000b). My article is therefore an evidence written by a witness and participant who has been trying to let Israeli theater audiences learn something new about the theater in Israel's neighboring Arab countries.

reading and academic research rather than stage performance according to the target cultures' norms, or necessitate textual truncation or adaptation of such long monologues in translation to make them more acceptable for target audiences. Next, there is the instability and relative scarcity of Arab theater audiences (Amit-Kochavi, 1973). Last but not least, in many Arab countries both overt and covert censorship makes free theatrical expression difficult for Arab theatrical practitioners. All of these aspects of the source culture put together affect the repertoire available in Arabic drama for translation and performance in Western oriented cultures that enjoy greater freedom of speech and a vast choice of world drama.

Some additional problems emerge on the receiving end, Israeli Hebrew target culture, and further encumber its performance and reception of Arabic plays. Israeli familiarity with Arabic theatrical texts is limited for a number of reasons. First, Israeli Arabic, literature and drama departments at universities, colleges and drama schools, all of which regularly train both Jewish and Arab students, seldom include Arabic drama in their curriculae, if at all. Few Israeli scholars are interested in the subject in the Arabic source language, and the scarcity of published translations makes their use by Hebrew speaking lecturers difficult. Second, texts of those Arab plays successfully performed in such Arab cultural centers as Cairo, Beirut and Damascus are not easily available for Israelis in either academia or theater, since Israel is still at a state of conflict with most of its Arab neighbours. In fact, there is little cultural exchange in such fields as literature, theater, cinema, or music. This applies even to Israel's contacts with those Arab countries - Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority – with which Israel has signed peace accords. Translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew and vice versa, therefore, mostly reflect individual rather than institutional efforts on both sides (Amit-Kochavi 1996; 1999; 2000; Kayyal 1998; 2006). Third, most Israeli Jews have little or no command of Arabic and are hardly familiar with Arabic culture. What little familiarity they possess often comes through negative ethnocultural stereotypes augmented by the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict (Amit-Kochavi, 1999). Arab characters are often negatively depicted by Israeli Hebrew literature (Domb, 1982) and drama (Urian, 1996), as well as by other performative arts (Amit-Kochavi, 1999). This makes the

occasion of the performance of any play of Arab origin, whether local Israeli or pertaining to Arab drama in general and to Palestinian drama in particular, a political act per se, regardless of the contents and message of that particular play. Despite close geopolitical proximity between Israel and the Arab countries, performing an Arabic play is considered as a case of transformation from a distant culture, not unlike the performance of a Shakespearean play in Chinese (Lai in Zuber-Skerritt, Ortrun (ed.) 1984), French (Heylen 1993), German, Hebrew and Yiddish (Abend-David, 2003).

In spite of all of these deterrent forces, some Arabic plays **have**, however, been translated and performed on the Israeli Hebrew stage for a number of reasons, combining political and social ideology with personal goals. The following case studies, describing three out of 45 cases, will try and illustrate why, how and by whom this was done.

1. From Egypt to Palestine - three performances

1.1 The Tree Climber

The Tree Climber was written by Egyptian writer / playwright Tawfiq el-Hakim (1898-1988), translated by the present writer in 1972 and both performed and published some years later, in 1978. It was translated as the final project of my translation studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where I had studied English, Arabic and Theater Studies. Wondering why I, an ardent theater goer, had never seen an Arabic play performed in Hebrew, I bravely but naively decided to try and fill this void and start an Arab niche on the Israeli Hebrew stage. Since my academic education did not include familiarity with Arabic drama, I consulted Abu Farid (Morris Shams, 1930 -), an Egyptian Jewish immigrant who was at that time head of the drama department in the Arabic section of The Voice of Israel, the official Israeli radio station. Having been an actor and director in Egypt, he suggested *The Tree Climber* to me, helped me translate it, and later served as cultural consultant in the performance of the play. Abu Farid was most helpful with regard to props, costumes and the folk tune for the opening song from which the title of the play is derived. He taught the actors how to sing it and the play opened with the song

heard backstage in the original Egyptian Arabic dialect, gradually changing into Hebrew as the stage lights were put on. This symbolised the transition of the play as a whole from Arabic into Hebrew and from Egypt to Israel. Once the text was translated and revised, the question of a suitable theater to perform it in had to be faced.

The Tree Climber is a complex play, combining crime, humour and mysticism. It is influenced by the plays of Ionesco, which the playwright used to watch during his law studies in Paris during the 1930s. It depicts a childless elderly couple: Bahadir Efendi, a retired train inspector, and Sitt Bahaanah, his homemaker wife. Each of them is so obsessed with his/her own concerns as to be completely out of contact with each other. The husband loves his garden, especially a particular tree [pertaining to the feminine gender in Arabic] under which lives Ash-shekha Khadra [=The Green Lady], who is both a green lizard and the guarding spirit of that tree. The wife is incessantly knitting a green sweater for her stillborn daughter. The borderline between reality and mystery is further blurred by the character of a derwish [= holy man] who eventually manages to persuade the husband to kill his wife after she returns from an unexplained absence and bury her under the tree, fertilizing it so that it may give a different kind of fruit each season.

The play is extremely witty and funny, full of stage action and variegated dialogue spoken by different characters, each of whom uses their own typical style. The maidservant uses simple, down-to earth phrases that are distinct from the police inspector's official style, and from the derwish's mystical utterings. There is absolutely nothing political, the presence of which might deter Israeli theaters from performing it, about this well written play. Professionally speaking, it's a worthy challenge for any director and actor troupe to try and express both its rich local Egyptian atmosphere and multilevel style and messages.

And yet, getting it performed in Israel was not an easy task, since its Arab-Egyptian identity made several Israeli Jewish theaters, unfamiliar with plays of such an origin, treat it with suspicion and hostility. It was rejected by three major Israeli mainstream theaters puzzled by its obvious similarity to French absurdist plays earlier performed in Israel. For repertoire decision

makers in those institutions any Arab was an “other”, and they were surprised to find out that an Egyptian playwright could write like their own admired European role models. They disregarded the fact that cultures may get in touch with one another and consequently influence one another, and that modern Israeli Hebrew drama itself is no exception to this rule.

The play was finally performed thanks to a stroke of luck. Orna Porat, actress and founding mother of the Israeli Child and Youth Theater, accidentally saw a copy of the translated play in a friend’s hands just as she was looking for an Arabic play. Returning from an international youth theater festival held in Iran at the time, she realized that Israel was part of the Middle East and wished to have an Arabic play performed in her theater. A special group of actors and actresses, including several ones of Oriental Jewish origin, probably considered as more appropriate than Israeli born ones to play Egyptian roles due to their own Middle Eastern origin, was enlisted for the occasion and *The Tree Climber* was performed for an adult audience. Egyptian president Sadat’s historical visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and the ensuing change in Israeli Jewish attitude towards Egypt, combined with the high quality of the play, the excellence of its performance and consequent critics’ applause, all made it a great success in Israeli terms, running for more than 200 nights. Next it was published in the theatrical magazine *Bamah* (*Bamah* 78, 1978), accompanied by an academic article by a university professor familiar with el-Hakim and his work.

1.2 The Journey

Whereas *The Tree Climber* was originally written as a play, *The Journey* (1987) was a collage of Arabic literary texts adapted for stage performance that shared the theme of Palestinian refugee suffering since 1948. This single actor play was initiated and acted by Yoseph Shiloah, who had earlier become famous in Israeli Hebrew culture by acting in comic popular films where he was stereotyped as a ridiculous figure with a funny Persian accent (although he was really of Kurdish Jewish origin and had graduated from the prestigious Tel Aviv University theater department). At the time, Israelis were beginning to take a renewed

interest in the Palestinian plight, but few Palestinian literary texts had been translated into Hebrew since mainstream publishers, though not politically affiliated to any party, considered such texts as a financial risk. Only two Palestinian novellas, *Men in the Sun* and *What is Left for You*, both by writer and political activist Ghassan Kanafany, had been published in Hebrew translation (1978) by Mifras (1978-1993), a small privately owned publishing house that published only translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew (Amit-Kochavi, 1999). Shiloah adapted for stage performance parts of *Men in the Sun*, as well as some poems by Palestinian poets Mamoud Darwish and Sameeh el-Kasem, and parts of *A Difficult Journey up the Mountain*, the autobiography of Palestinian poetess Fadwah Touqan, fully translated into Hebrew only much later (Mifras, 1993). The texts by Darwish, el-Kasem, and Toukan were translated by several different translators who were all active translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew. The collage, then, depicted the Palestinian condition, emphasizing the complex suffering of the Palestinians as refugees longing for their lost homes and homeland, ignored and despised by their Arab brethren who refused to integrate them in some Arab countries. In the case of Touqan this was further supplemented by the additional plight of the Palestinian woman doubly oppressed by both traditional Arab society and the Israeli conquest of the West Bank in 1967.

All of these texts combined high literary quality with intensive dramatic contents. This, further emphasized by Shiloah's superb acting, turned *The Journey* into a touching and unique theatrical experience. Tayseer Elias, one of Israel's best Oud [= lute] players, accompanied the play's action with Arabic music and Shiloah, symbolically carrying on his back a heavy weight, representing the yoke of both Palestinian suffering and Israeli conquest of Palestinian territories, commanded the stage, alternating between the different roles and texts. Despite the overall high artistic performance of the play, highly applauded by theater critics, Shiloah bitterly failed financially since he had no official sponsor for his project. Beit Liesin, a small Tel Aviv theater, let him use its name and space for rehearsals. Tzavta, a theatrical framework pertaining to the left-wing Mapam party, a long time advocate of Israeli-Arab peace and coexistence, let him

perform in their smallest Tel Aviv hall. However, Israel's main venue to stage subsidized performance in the periphery, Omanut la-Am [= Art for the People], refused to include his collage in their annual programme due to its political contents and support of the Palestinian cause, considered by Israeli political consensus as a permanent threat for the State of Israel rather than as a sad human tragedy, as depicted by the play. Shiloah had reached the personal artistic goal he had set himself to prove to be a talented actor who successfully realized a complex textual and theatrical challenge. However, he took his financial failure so hard as to leave Israel for a few years in an attempt to escape both debt and humiliation and to try to earn money elsewhere. Since his return he has resumed acting in Hebrew but has not attempted to repeat the experience of *The Journey*, nor has any other Jewish actor up until now.

1.3 The Pessoptimist

Another prominent and more successful attempt at single actor performance of translated Arabic texts was made by Arab actor Muhammad Bakri, one of Israel's most talented and highly admired actors in both Hebrew and Arab theater and cinema (Horovitz, 1993). Like Shiloah, Bakri's aim in performing his play combined personal, political and artistic goals. Bakri, an Israeli Arab himself, chose to perform a stage adaptation of *The Pessoptimist*, a complex novel by Israeli Arab politician-writer Emile Habibi, due to its literary success both in the Arabic original (1974) and in Hebrew translation (Mifras, 1984). The novel is a brilliant satire of the way Sa'id Abu Nakhs [= Unfortunate Felix] can fit into the young state of Israel as an Arab who had escaped to Lebanon during the 1948 war and returned illegally across the border. He accomplishes his goal only at the price of his dignity, by becoming a subservient fool.

The novel is brilliantly written, bitter, and extremely funny, containing many dramatic moments fit for the stage. Its Hebrew translation had been warmly applauded by Israeli literary critics who admired the excellent Hebrew used by translator Anton Shammas, an Israeli Arab who, like Bakri, had made himself a name in both Arab and Jewish cultures as a journalist, television host, poet and translator. In fact, most of the Jewish critics had failed to recognize the

poignantly bitter criticism expressed by Habibi since they were fascinated by Shammas' command of the language. This made him, so to speak, a legitimate member of the predominant Israeli Hebrew culture, (Hever, 1992) a position that he could not have occupied through his equally brilliant command of Arabic, which, though officially Israel's second language next to Hebrew, occupies a low position in Israeli Jewish culture, since it is automatically seen by most Israeli Jews as the Arab enemy's language (Landau, 1987).

The Hebrew version played by Bakri, prepared by Rami Livneh, made use of Shammas' translation, with some modifications necessary to let Bakri play different characters, including women, as well as Sai'd, the hero and narrator of the play.

In performing such a play, then, Bakri was able to combine a professional challenge with the opportunity to command the stage all by himself and identify with both Sa'id and Habibi, himself a proud Israeli Arab who relentlessly strove to help those Palestinians who remained in the country after 1948 rebuild their national pride, identity, language and literature. By alternately acting in Arabic for Arab audiences and in Hebrew for Jewish ones Bakri, who had often expressed his Arab national affiliation in media interviews, was able to reach a large variegated audience, both for Israeli Jews who are in the habit of going to the theater and for Arabs that seldom have the opportunity of watching a play performed in their own town or village.

It is worth noting the this project was originally initiated within the framework of the Haifa Municipal Theater, located in Haifa, a mixed Jewish-Arab city with a long history of coexistence between Jews and Arabs (Amit-Kochavi, 2006). The availability of a number of Arab actors and actresses in this theater, especially from the mid-1960s, up to the 1980s, had made it possible for them to create a special framework that performed in Arabic for Arabic audiences. Bakri's project resulted from this uniquely tolerant atmosphere, not shared by other mainstream theaters in Israel, that let Arabs act in both languages, thus promoting their careers in the predominant Hebrew culture while striving for their own people and culture. *The Pessoptimist* was a great success and ran for about 10 (!) years (1986-1996) all over Israel in

both languages, performed in professional theater halls as well as in such temporary locations as schools, community centers and open spaces.

2. Enchanted, bewildered and condescending - critics' reception of the plays

Plays are performed for audiences. Direct audience reaction includes attendance of the performance, followed by applause, disappointment or indifference. The long term success or failure of a performance may be financially measured by the number of times it was performed, the size of the audiences that watched it and the financial success - or failure - of that particular project. What, however, may be more relevant for the present article is the verbal expression of the impressions of reviewers working for the written press who, considered by their employers and readers as a professional authority, may both represent a part of public opinion of the performance and affect it. The following are some examples of such reactions to the performance of Arabic plays on the Israeli Hebrew stage as published in some prominent Hebrew dailies by such professionals.

2.1. Praise and condescension

Most of the Arabic plays performed on the Hebrew stage were fine literary and dramatic texts performed by first hand professionals, with some of whom Israeli audiences and critics were already familiar, as explained above. There is little wonder, then, that critics' reviews of those performance were often highly laudatory. What is, however, noteworthy is the fact that some of these reviews, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, when Arabic plays were just beginning to be performed on the Hebrew stage, expressed surprise and wonder at the fact that Arabic culture was at all capable of producing works worthy of being performed for the Israeli Hebrew speaking audience, familiar with world drama. Thus, for example, *The Tree Climber* (1978) was generally applauded for its textual and dramatic complexity and its playwright Tawfiq el-Hakim was described by the Hebrew press as "One of the most prominent and important Egyptian writers" (*7 Nights* magazine, *Yediot Aharonot* daily, 8.10.78). This particular

play also enjoyed the positive political turn of mind by Israeli Jews towards Egypt, following President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem (1977) and the consequent peace treaty between the two countries (1979). And yet the following review by Idit Na'aman (*Na'amat* magazine, July-August 1978) may be read as the expression of Israeli Jewish suspicion of anything Arabic, although this particular critic strongly criticizes this negative view of Arabic culture:

... Our spontaneous view of anything labeled as 'Egyptian Arabic culture' is largely based on curiosity with regard to a terra incognita, further involving... a certain amount of condescension... similar to that sympathizing (and somewhat humiliating) condescension experienced by a member of an enlightened culture in his attitude to a member of a different one, whether we choose to name it a developing culture or a backward one.. Therefore when one watches the first Egyptian play on the Israeli stage... it is highly advisable to enlist all of one's open eyed and open eared curiosity and leave all of one's condescension behind. Tawfiq el-Hakim's play *The Tree Climber*... is far from evoking such condescension. At best it may amaze the people of Zion who believe in the stereotyped backwardness of all of those who dwell on the banks of the Nile, by its "Western" modernity, style, rhythm... [and] brilliant parallel dialogues... All of these seem to be taken out of a Western modern Ionesco- like absurd play. Only the fragrance, colors, symbols and ... mysterious Derivsh indicate a clear Eastern orientation... How, then, does one absorb this East?... The same way as we accept any exciting modern play coming from the West.

This is a frank first-hand testimony by a member of Western-oriented Israeli culture.

Eighteen years later, (!) in 2006, Michael Handelsalz, a prominent theater critic reports about a festival of Arabic drama in Hebrew translation held at the Arab-Hebrew theater in Jaffa. The title of his review is "A tour of a terra incognita", using the same term as that used by Na'amaan in her review in 1978. He provides a detailed professional review of two of the plays he has watched (out of nine plays performed over a week), expressing his admiration of the

complexity of the texts and the high quality of all the performances, played “with just and dedication.” And yet he opens his review by saying:

A special project of performing contemporary Arabic drama in Hebrew is an important step which at the same time raises some questions and makes one wonder.

This very attempt at introducing theater audiences to what the “others” write emphasizes the way we consider such materials as strange and foreign (*Ha'aretz*, 10.5.06).

Nearly twenty years after *The Tree Climber*, the Arabic identity of the texts still makes this critic feel that they are strange and distant, and their performance is considered as something rare and special rather than another cultural option open to Israeli audiences. This feeling is strong, despite the fact that similar plays had been performed in similar fringe settings, some of which he must have watched as a critic and judge in theatrical festivals. Similar views have been repeatedly expressed by other Israeli Hebrew cultural agents with regard to translations of Arabic literature in general and of Arabic drama in particular despite the scant but persistent presence of translated Arabic texts in Hebrew literature and theater (Amit-Kochavi, 1999) and the praise accorded to many of them by theatrical reviews. Arabic theater, then, continues to be regarded by Israeli Hebrew culture as foreign, probably due to the overriding alienation between Israeli Jewish culture and its neighbouring Arab cultures that mutually continue to stand for the enemy and the alien Other due to fear, lack of direct cultural contact and consequent ignorance.

2.2. Political reactions

Political reactions to performed Arabic plays have been varied. In isolated cases overt attempts were made to prevent a certain play from being performed altogether. Thus, for example, the political theme of *The Pessoptimist* made the members of the Israeli censorship committee, still active at the time, pay a visit to the Haifa Municipal Theater during rehearsals to get a first hand impression of its nature before finally giving permission for its stage performance (*Maariv* daily, 7,10.86). Although the performance was approved, this action taken by the

censorship committee is rather unusual in Israeli cultural life which generally enjoys full freedom of speech. In another case regarding the same play, Avi Farhan, chairman of the extreme right wing political party *Hathiyah* [= revival], managed to cancel the Hebrew performance of the play in the small town of Yavneh on Jerusalem Day, (*Ha'aretz* daily], 15.5.88, probably by talking to the local authorities of that town on whom access to halls and other public facilities depends. Jerusalem Day is a memorial day celebrating the conquest of East Jerusalem by Israel during the Six Days' War in 1967. Annually celebrated through official ceremonies and discussed by teachers at Israeli kindergartens and schools, it is celebrated on 28 Iyyar (according to the Jewish calendar). Farhan must have found the choice of a Palestinian play for performance on this date inappropriate. It is noteworthy that he actually managed to persuade the local authorities of that town to cancel the performance while both he, a private person, and the authorities, not being members of the Israeli censorship, had no legal right to do so and had probably neither read the play nor watched it.

Palestinian suffering depicted in this play evoked mixed feelings in critics' reviews. Elyakim Yaron (*Maariv*, 14.10.86) and Michael Handelsalz (*Ha'aretz*, 15.10.86), two of Israel's most prestigious theater critics at the time, considered it as a case of "human protest" in a broad universal sense rather than the particular suffering of a particular nation, the Palestinians. This evasion helped them express human sympathy towards the hero of the play without taking a political position that might have proved to be unacceptable to their readers. Aharon Megged, a venerated veteran prose writer and journalist, expressed a mixture of sympathy and understanding of the Arabs' need for an expression of their national plight, yet considered the play as constituting serious danger to the right of Zionism to exist (*Ha'aretz*, 27.2.87). In saying this Megged was sharing the paranoiac fear expressed by many Israeli Jews at the very mention of the words "Arab" and "Palestinian" which represent for them a vivid threat of total annihilation of the Jewish people, psychologically reinforced by the Holocaust during which a third of the Jewish people was annihilated.

Hava Novak, the permanent theatrical critic of *Davar* at the time, (*Davar* daily, 12.12.86) went even further, and considered the suffering of the Palestinian Other as reflecting the historical suffering of the Jewish self. She actually compared Habibi's satire with the bitter humour of Yiddish writer Scholem Aleichem, famous for his depiction of Jewish life in Russia and America during the late 19th century and early 20th century. All of these critics, then, saw a particular piece of art through their overall personal and national view of the Israeli-Arab conflict and were therefore unable to take a purely professional position towards the play and its performance.

Concluding remarks

Hebrew translations of Arabic drama have been scant despite sixty-two years of translation activity (1945-2007) and twenty-nine years of stage performance (1978-2007). Despite success (as in the case of *The Pessoptimist*) and awards won by individual actors in such fringe frameworks as the Acre Different Festival and Theatroneto [= netweight theater], and the talent and ambition demonstrated by Arab and Jewish actors, actresses and directors, the availability of Arabic plays for translation into Hebrew and translated Arabic literary texts for adaptation for stage performance, the overall impact of Arabic plays in Israeli Jewish theater and culture has remained arbitrary and peripheral. The failure of Arabic drama to occupy a position in Israeli Hebrew theater similar to that occupied by such other foreign language theatres as the French, German, Italian or Swedish, to name but a few, has little to do with quality and talent. Its source must be sought elsewhere, in the unresolved Israeli-Arab political conflict that makes mutual ties between Israeli and Arab theaters and between Arab playwrights and their Hebrew translators a dream far from being realized, with the few exceptions of such cooperation only stressing the predominance of the rule. Once that conflict is resolved, this writer will hopefully be able to write a companion article to the present one that will draw a happier picture of the position occupied by Arabic plays on the Israeli Hebrew stage.

Bibliography

- Abend-David, Dror (2003) - "*Scorned My Nation*", a Comparison of Translations of *The Merchant of Venice* into German, Hebrew and Yiddish, New York etc.: Peter Lang.
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (1973) - "An Israeli Arab Theater in Haifa", *Bamah* 59, 72-75. [in Hebrew].
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (1996) - "Israeli Arabic Literature in Hebrew Translation". *The Translator*, 2:1, 27-44.
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (1999) - *Translations of Arabic Literature into Hebrew, their Historical and Cultural Background and their Reception by the Target Culture*. (Ph.D. thesis), Tel Aviv University.
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (2000) - "Hebrew Translations of Palestinian Literature - From Total Denial to Partial Recognition", *TTR* XIII: 1, 53-80.
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (2003) - "A Comparison Between the Translation Practices of Two Different Translators in Translations of Arabic Plays Written in Dialect into Hebrew", in: Rina Ben-Shahar & Gideon Toury (eds.), *Hebrew - a Living Language* III, Tel Aviv: Hakkibutz Hameuchad, 247-262 [in Hebrew].
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (2006) - "Haifa - Sea and Mountain, Arab Past and Jewish Present as Reflected by Four Writers", *Israel Studies* 11:3, 142-167.
- Amit-Kochavi, Hannah (forthcoming) - "Arabic Plays Translated for the Israeli Hebrew Stage - a Descriptive-analytical Case Study", in: Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlessinger and Daniel Simeoni (eds.), *State of the Art in Translation Studies: An Homage to Gideon Toury*.
- Domb, Risa (1982) - *The Arab in Hebrew Prose 1911-1948*, London.
- Heylen, Romy (1993) - *Translation, Poetics, and the Stage. Six French Hamlets*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Hever, Hanan (1992) - "Hebrew written by an Arab pen - six chapters depicting Anton Shammas' [novel] *Arabesques*", *Theory and Criticism* 1, 23-38. [in Hebrew].

- Horovitz, Dani (1993) - *Like a Stuck Bridge: Conversations with Actors Muhammad Bakri, Salwa Naqqarah-Haddad, Makram Khoury, Khawlah Hajj and Saleem Daw*. Beit Berl and Hakkibutz Ha-Meuchad. [in Hebrew].
- Kayyal, Mahmoud (1998) - "Hebrew-Arabic Translations in the Modern Era: a General Survey," *Meta* 43, 86-94.
- Kayyal, Mahmoud (2006) - *Translation in the Shadow of Confrontation, Norms in the Translations of Modern Hebrew Literature into Arabic Between 1948-1990*, Jerusalem: Magnes. [in Hebrew].
- Lai, Jane (1984) - "Shakespeare for the Chinese Stage with Reference to *King Lear*", in: Zuber-Skerritt, Ortrun (ed.) (1984), 145-153.
- Landau, Jacob M. (1958) - *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Landau, Jacob M. (1987) - "Hebrew and Arabic in the State of Israel: Political Aspects of the Language Issue", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 67, 117-133
- Lev Ari, Shimon (1989) - "The Transition of Habimah Theater from Europe to Palestine," in: Zohar Shavit, ed. *The History of Jewish Settlement in Palestine, Constructing a Hebrew Culture*, part 1, (Jerusalem: The National Science Academy and Bialik Institute, 57-67. [in Hebrew].
- Moreh, Shmuel (1992) - *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World*. New York: New York University Press.
- Urian, Dan (1996) - *The Depiction of Arab Characters in Israeli Theater*, n.l.: Or Am. [in Hebrew].
- Zuber-Skerritt, Ortrun (ed.) (1984) - *Page to Stage, Theatre as Translation*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Appendix - plays translated from Arabic into Hebrew

(Ad. = plays adapted from translations of other literary genres; Au. = author; Dir. = director; Ed. = editor; Eng. = English translation; Pb. = published plays; Pl. = playwright; Pr. = performed plays; Pt. = poet; Sm. = simultaneously interpreted plays; Tr. = translated by; Ufp. = university final translator certificate project.)

1945 - *A Morning at the Health Department Clinic*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Menahem Kapeliuk, Pb. *Qeshet* [literary magazine].

1970 - *The Deluge*, Pl. Omar an-Nayyif, Tr. Tuvia Shamoosh, Pb. *Qeshet*.

1972/1978 - *The Tree Climber*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Ufp. [The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,] Pb. *Bamah* [theater magazine], Dir. Zippi Pines, Pr. The Israeli Child and Youth Theater, [Eng. *The Tree Climber*, Tr. Denys Johnson-Davies, Pb. Oxford UP, 1966.]

1976 - *Thorns of Peace*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Adinah Boussani, Ufp. [The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.]

1977 - *Kills and Revives*, Pl. Naguib Mahfooz, Tr. Shimon Ballas, Pb. *Iton 77* [literary magazine].

1978 - *Salvation*, Pl. Naguib Mahfooz, Tr. Sasson Somekh, Pb. *Bamah*.

1980 - *Thorns of Peace*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Sasson Somekh,

1981 - *Men in the Sun*, Tr. Daniella Brafmann and Yani Damyanos, Ad.+ Dir. Fuad 'Awwad, Pr. The Theater Department, Tel Aviv University. [Eng. *Men in the Sun*, Heinemann, 1978].

1981 - *A House Divided*, Pl. Tawfiq Fayyad, Tr. Rateb 'Awawdeh, Dir. Yitzhak Ne'eman, Pr. *Tzavta* [theater].

1981 - *They [Hem (Hebrew) - Humm (Arabic)]*, Pl.+Tr.+Pr. Neve Zedeq Theatrical Troupe, Dr. Joe Chaikin.

1982 - *Chatting on the Nile*, Au. Naguib Mahfooz, Tr. Michal Sela, Ad. Hillel Ne'eman, Pr. Haifa Municipal Theater. [Eng. *A Drift on the Nile*, Doubleday, 1933.]

1983 - *The Angels' Prayer* [a scene]. Pl.. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Pr. Beit Hegefen Theater.

1984 - *A Night in a Lifetime*, Au. Mahmoud Abbasi, Ad. Mahmoud Abbasi and Antoine Saleh, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Pr. Beit Hegefen Theater.

1985 - *Solomon the Wise*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Yoav Givati, Pb. *Bamah*.

1986 - *The Pessoptimist*, Au. Emile Habibi, Tr. Anton Shammas, Ad. Rami Livneh+. Muhammad Bakri, Pr. Bamah 2 - the Haifa Municipal Theater. [Eng. The Secret Life of Saeed, the Pessoptimist, Trs. Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor le Gassick, Third World Literature series, 1985.]

1987 - *The Journey*, Au. Ghassan Kanafani, Pts. Mahmoud Darwish, Samih el-Qasem, Trs. Daniela Brafman, Yani Damianos, Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Haddas Lahav, Dani Horoviz. Ad. Yoseph Shiloah and Moshe Kalif, Dir. Moshe Kalif, Pr. Beit Liesin Theater.

1989 - *Water Soldiers*, [an anthology of Israeli Arabic literature], ed. Naim Araidi, Ad. and Dir. Tzvika Korman, Pr. Acre Different Theater Festival.

1989 / 1991 - *Food for Every Mouth*, Pl.. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Pb. *Apirion* [literary magazine], *Bamah*. [Eng. *Direct to the Poor*, Trs. Sheldon Annis and Peter Hakim, 1988.]

1992 - *The Anchor*, Au. Hanna Mina, Tr. Rami Livneh, Ad. Muhammad Bakri, Dir. Muneer Bakri, Pr. Teatroneto.

1992 - *Umm ar-Rubabika* [= The Old Rag Lady], Pl. Emile Habibi, Tr. Sasson Somekh, Dir. Yousuf Abu Wardah, Pr. Acre Different Festival.

1993 - *Jaber's Head*, Pl. Sa'd Allah Wanous, Sm.+ Pr. Beit Hagefen Theater. Acre Different Theater Festival.

1993 - *Remembering Forgetfulness*, Au. Mahmoud Darwish, Tr. Salmaan Masalhah, Ad. + Pr. Rateb Awawdeh, Pr. Theater Department, Tel Aviv University and Hakibbutz Stage.

1994 - *Season of Migration to the North*, Au. At-Tayyib Saleh, Tr. Tuvia Shamoosh, Ad. Muhammad Bakri+Uriel Zohar, Pr. Acre Different Theater Festival. [Eng. *Season of Migration to the North*, Heinemann, 1969.]

1994 - *The Night and the Mountain*, Sa'eed Makkawi, Tr. Siham Daoud, Pr. The Jerusalem Khan Theater.

1994 - *When the Men Are Playing*, Pl. Sa'd Allah Wanous, Tr. Moshe Haham, Pb. *Bamah*.

1995 - *The King is The King*, Pl. Sa'd Allah Wanous, Tr. Salmaan Natour, Pr. The Arab Theater.

1996 - *Harvest Nights*, Pr. Mahmoud Diyyab, Tr.+Sim. Doron B. Cohen, Pr. Beit Hagefen Theater,

1997 - *Objects Left Behind*, Pl. Emile Habibi, Tr. Sasson Somekh, Pb. Iton 77 [literary magazine].

1997 - *O Moon, Wash Your Face*, Pl. Anton Shammass, Tr. Anton Shammass, Sim. Hannah Amit-Kochavi+'Isaam Abu Doleh, Pr. The Arab Theater.

1998 - *Mad Sa'doon*, Pl. Lenin ar-Ramli, Tr. Gavriel Rosenbaum, Pb. Gamir [publishing house].

1998 - *The Oedipus Comedy, You Who killed the Monster*, Tr. Gavriel Rosenbaum, Pb. Gamir.

1998 - *The High Gate*, Nabeel Yanis, Tr.+Sim. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Beit Hagefen Theater.

2000 - *The Elephant and the Trousers*, pl. at-Tayyib Siddiqi, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Sim. Hannah Amit-Kochavi+Ghassan Jammal, Pr. Beit Hagefen Theater.

2000 - *Badi' az-Zmaan's Maqammat*, pl. at-Tayyib Siddiqi, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi.

2003 - *Memory*, Pl. Adeeb Jahshan, The Arabic-Hebrew Jaffa Theater. Pr. Israel(i) Festival.

2005 - *The Impotents*, Pl. Riyad Masarweh, Dir. Riyad Masarweh, Pr. Acre Different Theater Festival.

2006 - *The Birds Build their Nests Between Her Toes*, Pl. Mu'een Bsiso, Tr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Dir. Denis Shema, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic theater.

2006 - *The Mask*, Pl. Mamdooh 'Udwaan, Tr. [from English] Varda Fish, Dir. Norman 'Isa, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater .

2006 - *Song of Death*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr. Yotam Ben Shalom, Dir. Oleg Radwinski. [Eng. The *Song of Death*, Tr. Denys Johnson-Davies, Heinemann, 1977.]

Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater.

2006 - *Ladies and Gentlemen*, Muhamad el-Marout, Tr.+Ad. 'Imaad Jabbareen, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater.

2006 - *He Never Died*, Hussein Baghrouti, Tr. Doron Tavori, Dir. Francois Abu Salem, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater .

2006 - *The Trial of the Man Who Didn't Fight*, Pl. Mamdooh 'Udwaan, Tr. Yotam Ben Shalom, Dir. Doron Tavori, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater.

2006 - *The Court Verdict*, Pl. Mahmoud Taymoor, Tr.+Dir. Guy Cohen, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater .

2006 - *A Cockroach's Fate*, Pl. Tawfiq el-Hakim, Tr.+Ad. 'Imaad Jabbareen, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater.

2006 - *Mad Sa'doon*, Pl. Lenin ar-Ramli, Tr. Gavriel Rosenbaum, Ad.+Dir. Yigal 'Azrati, Pr. A Thousand Night Festival, The Jaffa Hebrew-Arabic Theater.

.