

INTRODUCTION

This translation of Saint-Denys-Garneau's *Journal* is a notable event, not only insofar as it involves the wider diffusion of a literary work which well deserves to be known outside the sphere of its origin, but still more because it marks a new stage in the intellectual relations between English and French Canada. This, if I am not mistaken, is the first time a French-Canadian work of this kind has been placed before the English-speaking public. A number of our novelists, among them Gabrielle Roy, Ringuet and André Langevin, have already bridged the language barrier. But our essayists and poets have not, until now, been the subject of more than fragmentary translations. In the case of poetry the delay is of course easily accounted for; it is an extremely difficult and delicate task to transfer from one language to another the nuances of poetry, depending as they do on the colour, the cadence, the very form of the words. In this connection one may well study the correspondence between Anne Hébert and Frank Scott, recently published in *The Tamarack Review*, on the translation of *Le tombeau des rois*: only a discussion between one poet and another, going to the very root of the creative process, makes the transposition of a poem into a foreign language possible. If the *Anabasis* of St-John Perse, for example, has become so soon a poem of the Western world, it is owing to the inspired translations of T. S. Eliot and von Hoffmansthal.

The translation of the *Journal* presents similar difficulties. But the difficulties of such a work seem to me of less moment than its importance and significance in the cultural framework in which we are living. Here is a book which appears before the Anglo-Canadian public with none of the advantages of a foreign setting, with a true local colour. It is the record of a spiritual process which, even so, might have taken place in any country in the world. (When it appeared in 1954 a French critic could discover striking similarities between the tragedy of Saint-Denys-Garneau and the experience of Rimbaud.) If it illustrates the French-Canadian position, it does so at a new and unaccustomed level, as far removed from the commonplaces of regionalism as of sociological analysis.

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Gilles Marcotte, «Introduction», dans Saint-Denys Garneau, *Journal*, trad. par John Glassco, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1962, p. 9