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A SHORT, SELECTIVE HISTORY OF LITERARY TRANSLATION IN CANADA

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1. The status of literary translation in Canada

Literary translation in Canada has had a slow start, despite the linguistic conditions that would lead one to assume the contrary. Wouldn't it be natural in a country that has from the beginning accommodated several languages, the two most dominant languages being French and English, that literature would have been written in all languages and consequently translated? This was not the case, in fact, in the several centuries of literary production in both Canadian major languages: All in all only a little over thousand books

have been translated¹. This is a disappointing number for a country with a relatively high literary production. As Philip Stratford mentioned in 1983, and since then, the situation has changed a little but not that much, one does not really need the statistics. A look into a bookstore shows that "neither the classics of Canadian literature nor even all the best of current production are readily available in translation, by which I mean kept in print, in bookstores, in cheap accessible editions."²

Non-literary texts have been translated in vast numbers in Canada, indeed, translation and interpretation activities are commonplace, as well for individuals as for public and governmental affairs. The growth of the profession over the past thirty years shows, in Jean Delisle's words, a "dynamisme caractéristique".³ The numbers of literary translations though, compared to other, officially monolingual countries is far smaller. Denmark, for example, scored 949 literary translations in 1972, Canada was far behind with 9 translated books in the same year.⁴ Also in 1972, West-Germany published 1259 translations.⁵ In 1986, the *Index Translationum* listed the numbers of literary translation in the Netherlands as being 11 times higher than in Canada⁶.

The status of essential necessity that translation has in Canada thus does not include literary translation. This is by no means due to a general non-interest in books, the opposite is probably true, and literary texts are read in both languages. The assumption that one reason for literary translation being somewhat the "poor cousin" to functional translation and exists because of political circumstances might not be too far fetched, and will constitute part of the discussion in the following pages. I will try to draw a picture of

¹ Philip Stratford, "The Anatomy of Translation. Pélagie-la-Charrete," In: La Bossière, C. (ed.) *Translation in Canadian Literature* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1983), p. 123.

² Stratford, p.123

³ Jean Delisle, *La Traduction au Canada / Translation in Canada, 1534-1984* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1987), p.24.

⁴ Camille R. La Bossière, "Introduction" In: La Bossière, C (ed.), p.11.

⁵ *The Legal, Economic and Social Position of the Literary Translator in the European Economic Community* (Amsterdam: Commission of the European Communities, 1980), p.14.

⁶ Jean Delisle "Literary Translation" In: Baker, Mona(eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (London & New York: Routledge), p.362.

the evolution of literary translation⁷ since the time of the first official publications. Since I have to be selective the picture will not be complete. Nevertheless, I will try, at least partially, to trace back the formative forces of the development of literary translation in Canada.

2. The Early Years

E.D. Blodgett remarked that the country's literary translation history did not begin before 1960⁸, but some interesting observations can still be made about the few books of fiction translated before then. In the 18th century in Central Canada, two newspaper men were the first to publicly announce their favour for translation and to include it, despite the hardship involved⁹, in their *Quebec Gazette*, from June 21, 1764 on. They declared their intentions of including French, English, and prose translations from both languages in their paper.¹⁰ Thus they were the first ones in the "critical role played by newspapers in fostering translation between the two languages, especially by serializing novels".¹¹

Apart from these exceptions though, literary translation was limited to an insignificant number of works, and the few books that were translated were never published in Canada but instead later in France. Considering two of the titles, the first English novel: *History of Emily Montague* (1769), translated as *Voyage dans le Canada, ou Histoire de Miss Montaigne*¹² and Isaac Weld's *Travels through the States of North America and the*

⁷ I will not include essays even though they are sometimes seen as literary writing and consequently as literary translation

⁸ E.D Blodgett, 'How Do You Say "Gabrielle Roy"?' In: Boskier, C., p.13

⁹ Those two publishers realized that translating is hard work: "every paragraph with us requires at least triple the time" of non-literary translations. (May 29, 1764). In: Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), pp.630-631.

¹⁰ Tremaine, pp.630-631.

¹¹ Louis G. Kelly, "History of Translation" In: Koerner, E.F.K. & R.E. Asher (eds.) *Concise History of the Language Sciences* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1995),p.426.

¹² Translated by Madame T.G.M., 4 vol. (Paris: Leopold Colin, 1809)

Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada in the years 1795, 1796 and 1797,¹³ one can imagine why those books were published in France and not in Canada. Apart from the fact that translations were expensive at that time¹⁴, the interest for the "adventures" in the New World was far greater on the European continent than in Canada itself, where the new immigrants had to struggle to make their homes and had their very own daily life "adventures". One should bear in mind that during the same years though, from 1760 on, the first governmental translators were officially installed to translate edicts, proclamations, laws and ordinances of the English conquerors into French.¹⁵

3. Between 1800 and 1900

3.1. French into English

Till today, French books have always been translated in greater numbers into English than vice versa, in fact over twice as many¹⁶, the early ones being no exception. From approximately 1860 on, literary translation gathered momentum, even though some of the originals were written before that. For example, *Les Révélations du crime, ou Cambray et ses complices* by François-Réal Anger, published 1837, was translated 1867.¹⁷ In general though, when the French originals were successful, they were translated right away into English, as for example *Échappé de la potence: souvenirs d'un prisonnier d'État canadien*, published in 1862 and translated in the same year under the title *Escaped from the Gallows: Souvenirs of a Canadian State Prisoner in 1838*. David Hayne pointed out

¹³ Isaac Weld *Travels through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (1799), in French: 3 vol. (Paris: Imprimerie de Munier, 1800).

¹⁴ Tremaine, p.631.

¹⁵ Jean Delisle, *Bridging the Language Solitudes. Growth and Development of the Translation Bureau of the Government of Canada 1934-1984*. Translated by the Translation Bureau, p 5. (Publication of Secretary of State / Minister of Supply 1984) and Jean Delisle, *La Traduction au Canada / Translation in Canada 1534 - 1984*. (University of Ottawa Press, 1987), pp. 56-57.

¹⁶ *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (Oxford, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.1124.

¹⁷ With the title: *The Canadian Brigands: An intensely exciting story of Crime in Quebec, Thirty Years Ago!!*

that the immediacy of translation was usually due to either topicality or to the fact that it was thought to be of interest for the English reader.¹⁸

The most successful original during those years was Phillippe Aubert de Gaspé's novel *Les Anciens Canadiens*, published in 1863, and translated by Georgianna M. Penné the following year. It was retranslated 25 years later by Charles G.D. Roberts with the help of his secretary Annie Pratt, and then published by the New York publishers D. Appleton and Company¹⁹. Georgianna Pennée's original translation was, after a revision by Thomas Guthrie Marquis, again published in 1929 as *Seigneur d'Haberville*.²⁰ It is notable that not only the very early translations mentioned were translated by women, for example Madame T.G.M. for Frances Brooke's book, but that also the works of the 19th century had mostly female translators: Georgianna M. Pennée, and Annie Pratt as co-translator. The very successful romance *François de Bienville* by historical novelist Joseph Marmette in 1870 was translated by "a young lady of New York" as the New York citizen expressed it²¹.

According to David Hayne, the most prominent man in literature during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was Louis Fréchette, who was both a translator and a writer whose own work was also translated. He served as "an admirable bridge between the two language communities".²²

His books were also the first volumes of poetry that were translated from French into English, likewise his longer narrative poems for his magnum opus, *La Légende d'un peuple* (1887) as well as *Les excommuniés*, *Le drapeau anglais*, and *Fors l'honneur*, which were published in bilingual editions in 1883 and 1884, respectively. Fréchette also created the collections *Christmas in French Canada* and *La Noël au Canada: contes et récits*.²³

¹⁸ David M. Hayne, "Literary Translation in Nineteenth-Century Canada" In: La Bossière, C., pp. 35-36

¹⁹ quoted from Hayne, p. 37, In: E.M. Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts: A Biography* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943), pp. 102, 168.

²⁰ Hayne, p.37

²¹ *New York Citizen* (and Round Table) , Vii, 363 (June 10, 1871); Viii, 386 (November 18, 1871).

²² Hayne, p. 38

²³ Hayne, p. 38.

3.2. English into French

At around the same time that the production of literary translations from French into English picked up, greater numbers of French translation were produced. Shortly before these developments, in 1848, the assistant translator at the Legislative Assembly James Houston had published an anthology of Canadian literature and expressed his hopes concerning the formation of a national literature. In the same year, French was also recognised as official language next to English.

Earlier Canadian works were exported to either the United States or Europe for translation and publication. Now, beginning in the late 1850s, fiction and poetry from the US and Europe – countries where literary production was considerably higher than in 19th century Canada – were imported and translated for the French speaking population. The originals were mostly written in English, with a few rare exceptions, among them a poem from Germany: Goethe's "Der Erlkönig" (1860).²⁴ Besides the Goethe poem, poetry by Longfellow, Mackay, and Burns was translated, and published by “one of the most capable Montréal poets of the 1850s,”²⁵ Joseph Lenoir-Rolland, editor of the *Journal de l'Instruction publique*. The bilingual Louis Fréchette and the well-known writer Léon-Pamphile Le May were both recognised as important translators, and their translation of the above mentioned English poetry into French triggered a number of both negative and positive public reactions – a sign that they were read.

Rosanna Leprohon was a successful novelist during the mid-century²⁶. Five of her novels were translated. Two of them, *Ida Beresford* and *Ada Dunmore* were first published in newspapers²⁷, but later often republished. The newspaper *L'Ordre* was a publication of the catholic Union, and two of the translators were closely connected to the Union catholique. The success of Leprohon's books are probably also result of their adaptability to Catholic thought at that time. Hayne suspects it to be an example of

²⁴ Hayne, pp. 38-39.

²⁵ Hayne, p.38

²⁶ *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, p.1123-24.

²⁷ *Ida Beresford, ou la Jeune Fille du grand monde*, translated by Joseph-Édouard Lefebvre de Belle-Béchar, In: *L'Ordre*, I, 89 (27 septembre 1859) -II, 26 (21 février 1860) and *Ada Dunmore, ou Une veille de Noël remarquable*, translated by Auguste Béchar, In: *Le Pionnier de Sherbrooke*, VII,29 (18 avril 1873) -VIII, 8 (21 novembre 1873).

"religious politics" in the history of translation.²⁸

Another very successful novel was written by William Kirby: *The Golden Dog*. It was published in 1877 and had favourable reviews in both English and French journals and newspapers, enjoying wide public success.²⁹ Two months after the book was published one of the critics, B.Sulte, suggested the book be translated. It was seven years before the book was actually translated. Two attempts were aborted because of difficulties in financing, copyright, and finding a competent translator. The third attempt was successful, and like Leprohon's novels, *Le Chien d'Or* was first published as a series in an ultramontane newspaper (August 1884 - February 1885). It was the Montréal paper *L'Étendard*, owned by Senator François-Xavier-Anselme Trudel who had also given the translation project new impetus. His search for a competent translator ended when Le May accepted the work. The difficulties that accompanied that particular translation and publishing project shed some light on the major obstacles that were in the way of the dissemination of literature by translation in those days: Money, competency of translators, and public interest, which was often juxtaposed with political ideas. In the case of Leprohon's and Kirby's novels moral considerations played a significant role since it was to be printed in a religious paper.³⁰

3.3 Methods of Translation

Since the translator's technique and skills have a significant impact on the eventual success of the work, I will briefly sketch the perspectives considered in the 19th century, which also play a role in 20th century translation. The consciousness about the challenges for the translator grew, and the discussion about the "best" method of translation had begun in Canada.³¹ Le May wrote in the preface to his revised translation of Longfellow's *Evangeline*: "J'ai un peu suivi mon caprice. Parfois j'ai ajouté, j'ai

²⁸ Hayne, p.40.

²⁹ See: Elizabeth Brady's bibliographical essay in: *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, XV (1976), 24-48.

³⁰ A priest was consulted before the publishing of *Le Chien d'Or* who affirmed that the book was suitable for families and even for convents (Hayne, p.43).

³¹ It had already been in full fledge in England, Germany, France and the rest of Europe for a long time. Translated works were seen as a cultural exchange since Romanticism, and literary translation has long occupied a central position in cultural and literary exchange between nations.

retranché, parfois; mais plutôt dans les paroles que dans les idées"³². His translations of English poetry into French were criticised for his translation technique: O. Crémazie, an exiled Canadian writer in France wrote: "Je vous avouerai que je ne suis pas enthousiasmé de sa traduction d'*Evangeline*. C'est bien le plus vaste assortiment de chevilles que je connaisse".³³

While Le May as a translator was thought to be too arrogant by Crémazie, the works of other translators were not even recognized as translations but taken for French originals. Among them are J.T Lesperance's works, for example *The Bastonnais: A tale of the American Invasion of Canada* published in French as *Les Bastonnais*³⁴, in 1896, and was later several times republished. The most extreme method of adapting a novel by "canadianizing" it was practised by Frédéric Houde in his translation (1880) of Scott's *Kenilworth*. He assimilated it so well to (French-) Canadian location, names, time, and space that the original source was not revealed until 1914.³⁵

Contrary to Houde's hidden methods, Le May was forthright about, and convinced of, his technique. Le May's method was also Kirby's concern when he hoped that his friend B.Sulte would revise Le May's translation of his *Golden Dog*. In retrospect though, it can be said that Le May's rendering of *The Golden Dog* into the French-Canadian cultural frame by shortening and deleting passages, and by adding his own knowledge at times, was well received by the new audience. His translation's success continued into the early 20th century.³⁶

4. From 1900 to Today

Up to 1920, only 10 titles in English and 2 in French were translated and published in Canada.³⁷ Apart from the fact, that is a shockingly small production, it is also quite

³² Léon-Pamphile Le May, *Evangeline*. (1870, 2nd ed.).

³³ Letter to Casgrain, April 10, 1866, quoted from Hayne, p.39.

³⁴ Aristide Piché, *Les Bastonnais* (Montréal: C.O. Beauchemin & fils, 1896).

³⁵ "Curiosités littéraires: Roman canadien inédit par ...Walter Scott," In: *Le Nationaliste*, XI, 12 (10 mai 1914), p.1. Quoted from Hayne, p. 41.

³⁶ Hayne, p. 45.

³⁷ Philip Stratford, *Bibliography of Canadian Books in Translation: French to English and English to French*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1977), p.ii

obvious that the numbers for French and English are not evenly distributed. This imbalance will become more obvious in the latter 20th century, thus illustrating the political struggle between Quebec and English Canada in a specific way. The linguistic challenges of translating French into English and vice versa, which are deeply rooted in cultural differences between the societies, reflect the problems of communication between them. Thus, translation has become a metaphor for the cultural and political relations in Canada. More attention has been given to the question of translatability and also to specific aspects of culture and gender in translation. This is most evident in the feminist translation projects of the '80s. Furthermore, literary translation has entered the governmental "consciousness", a fact that has changed Canada's literary translation landscape considerably.

In the following section, I will give an overview of the translation production of the latter 20th century. Further, I will also refer to the roles of literary magazines, governmental funding, and the translators in that period of time. R. Giguère's lists of literary translations, divided into poetry, fiction, and drama, show that very few titles were translated between 1920 and 1960³⁸, and that some of them were translated much later than the original was published.

4.1. Poetry

The translation of poetry is an especially challenging task and since readers of poetry exist in fewer numbers than readers of fiction, and publishers show a certain reluctance to accept poetry, it might be considered a "frail" field in literary translation. But why in Canada? Compared to other countries, poetry is "consumed in astonishing amounts per capita."³⁹ In the end it is probably the publishers' refusal to take risks and the lack of governmental funding that have to be blamed for the fact that only 10 % of all translated literature is poetry.

For five years, an award that was specifically designed for the translation of poetry existed: the R. Scott Translation Award, presented by the League of Canadian Poets from 1985 to 1988. Winners were among others: Robin Skelton for the translation of George

³⁸ Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find as detailed information about the early 20th century as for the 19th, which was thanks to Hayne's essay. I am sure that period would be an interesting field for further research, if just to compare the production and the politics behind translation activities before and after the government started the funding programs.

³⁹ R. Ellenwood, "Some actualites of Canadian literary translation", In: La Bossière, p. 67

Faludy's poetry, and Arlette Francière who translated poetry by Michel Beaulieu. Other than that, poetry translations from both languages have been supported and driven on by the poetry magazine *Ellipse*, published by the University of Sherbrooke from 1969 on.

4.1.1. English to French

English-to-French poetry translations before 1960 are extremely few in number. One book of poetry by Robert Service was translated 1907. According to Giguère, three English-Canadian poets were translated in the sixties: L. Cohen, D. Lee, and J.R. Colombo, and four of these were published in Paris.⁴⁰ Giguère states that "Les anthologies québécois traduisant des poètes canadiens sont tellement rares qu'il ne vaudrait pas la peine d'en parler si ce n'était du recueil de 1975 où J. Brault "non-traduit" six poèmes de M. Atwood et huit de G. MacEwen",⁴¹ (in his Anthology *Poèmes des quatre côtés*) both important writers from Toronto's literary community in the sixties and seventies. Other poets were translated in *Liberté 60* and *Ellipse*, among them P.K. Page, Al Purdy and Jay MacPherson. Up to 1981, approximately fifty English-Canadian poets have been published in translation in *Ellipse*, making it the most active promoter for translation of poetry. According to R. Giguère though, the problem of competence still constituted a problem in those years.⁴²

In the period from 1981 on, during which the translation of other genres were greater numbers, poetry was still seldom translated into French, and most of it was published in the nineties. Among them were Louise Desjardin's translation of Atwood (*Politique de pouvoir*, 1995) and Frank Caucci's translation of Mari Di Michelle's poetry (*Pain et chocolat*, 1996).⁴³

Ellipse still holds the role of promoter of poetry in translation. It devoted thematic numbers to specific themes, for example contemporary love poetry, the poetry of

⁴⁰ Giguère, p.48

⁴¹ Giguère, p. 49

⁴² R. Giguère "Translations English to French. To 1981" In: Oxford Companion to Canadian literature, p. 1124-25.

⁴³ Patricia Godbut "Translations: English to French 1982-1996" In: Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, p. 1126.

Montréal, and a special issue on the translation of poetry.⁴⁴ Larry Shouldice, who was a prize-winning translator and for many years the editor of *Ellipse*, died in the late 80s and "deprived Canada of one of its most accomplished and gifted practitioners of the art of literary translation".⁴⁵

4.1.2. French to English

As to be expected, more poetry was translated from French into English than vice versa. Between 1900 and 1940, 22 volumes of poetry by 14 poets were translated, 8 of which were published between the two World Wars. Giguère mentions several anthologies devoted to Québécois poetry in the seventies. Names that appeared most frequently were those of the generation named "Hexagon", which consisted of the poets Giguère, Henault, Miron, P.-M. Lapointe, J. Brault and others. Of the overall number of poetry oeuvres translated between 1940 and 1970 (18 authors in 26 books), 14 were written by the Hexagon generation. For the seventies, N. Brossard's anthology for Coach House Press constituted the main publication of French poetry in English translation.⁴⁶ Brossard was also among the poets who were translated in the seventies. The magazine *Ellipse* was the place where a number of original poetry, some of them from earlier in the century, was published from 1969 on.⁴⁷ According to Giguère though, most emphasis in thematic numbers was given to the poetry written in the sixties and seventies.

O'Connor mentions D.G. Jones as an accomplished translator of poetry in the '80s and '90s for the translations of poetry by Lapointe and Miron. In total, approximately 2 volumes of poetry were translated annually in the period between 1980 and 1995 by English language translators.⁴⁸ The first Council of the Arts award for translation of poetry was received by Frank Scott for his translations of 12 poets from Québec in 1977: *Poems of French Canada*.

⁴⁴ *Ellipse*, no.39, 1988, no.56, 1996, and no. 21, 1977.

⁴⁵ O'Connor, p. 1131.

⁴⁶ Giguère, pp.48-50

⁴⁷ Giguère, p. 50

⁴⁸ O'Connor, "Translations French to English" In: *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, p. 1130

4.2. Fiction

English to French and French to English

Novels are the most translated literary genre, and according to Phillip Stratford the number of literary translations has increased continuously from the 1920s on, most notably since 1960. In 1981 the total number of literary oeuvres in translation had reached 300 (240 authors). Between 1900 and 1940 only ten authors were translated from English into French, among them John Glassco, Irene Baird, and L.M. Montgomery.

According to J. O'Connor, approximately 90 % of all literary translations from French into English have been published since the government award and funding were inaugurated in 1972.⁴⁹ The introduction of support programs and funds for literary translation installed by the Canada Council of the Arts, and the creation of a Governor General's award for literary translation played a crucial role here. Larry Shouldice goes as far as saying that " the existence of literary translation at its present level in this country is almost entirely due to - and dependent upon - the Council's role as banker, impresario, go-between, and justice-of-the-peace."⁵⁰

Due to the support programs, the numbers increased tremendously. Considering the background of the decision to support literary translation that was made and carried out in 1972, political considerations did obviously play a role in the launching of the federal funding program. Several scholars agree on the existence of a governmental agenda to " foster literary translation for the sake of national cohesion".⁵¹ Or, as Jean Delisle expressed it: "One of the specific objectives of the federal grants program is to enable Canadians to become better acquainted with the other solitude through literature" .⁵² This is certainly true, but I would like to remark that approximately 40% of the translation supported by the Canada Council between 1972 and 1980 were non-literary. Of those, more titles translated from English into French were non-literary than vice versa (~ 20%). The translated books were on topics such as judo, yoga-sex, and photography, and on the

⁴⁹ John O'Connor, pp.1127-1132.

⁵⁰ Larry Shouldice, " On the politics of literary translation in Canada", In: La Bossière, p.78.

⁵¹ Louis Kelly " History of Translation" , In: Koerner& Asher, p. 429. Also: Shouldice, pp.78-80.

⁵² "Canadian Tradition", p. 362.

French-to-English side many were trade books published for the English market.⁵³

Nevertheless, even though today translators supported by the Canada Council are still only paid 10 cents per word (as compared to the rate of 18 to 22 cents per word for the translation of non-literary texts), the funding has apparently been an incentive for both translators and publishing houses. It is ironic though, that the rate, initially intended to merely contribute to the translator's fee it became the going rate for translators (10 cents was still more than they were paid before the programme).

The Canada Council also created an annual award for one translation into French and one into English, chosen from the publications of the preceding year. It was first awarded to Jean Paré for his translation of *The Scalpel and the Sword* by Ted Allan & Sydney Gordon, and to Alan Brown for his translation of *L'Antiphonaire* by Hubert Aquin. Later award winners were among others Sheila Fishman (twice, 1974 and 1984) for translations of *Le deux-millième étage* by Roch Carrier and *Thérèse et Pierrette à l'école des Saints-Anges* by Michel Tremblay, Ray Ellenwood (1981) for his translations of *Les Entrailles* by Claude Gauvreau, Dorothy Crelinsten (1983) for her translation of *Délinquants pourquoi?* by Maurice Cusson, for translations into English. On the "other side", Jean Simard was awarded for his translation of Mordecai Richler's *Son of a Smaller Hero* (1975), Collette Tonge (1978) for her translation of Munro's *Dance of the Happy Shades*, and Michel Buttiens for his translation of *Voyage of the Iceberg* by Richard Brown (1984).⁵⁴ Sheila Fishman, Yvan Steenhout, and Jean Paré have each twice won the award, which has been \$ 5000 since 1976.

Another award for translation, the John Glassco⁵⁵ translation award, was created by the Association of Literary Translators in 1981. It is awarded annually to the best, first, book-length translation. The first recipient was Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood in 1981 for her translation of selected poems by Lucien Francouer (*Neons in the Night*). These awards and the funding programs for translation can help explain the rising numbers of publications since the seventies, beside other factors such as the "increase in the number of Québec and English- Canada publishing houses. The foundation of the Association of

⁵³ Ellenwood, pp.66-67

⁵⁴ Delisle, *La traduction au Canada*, pp.159-164.

⁵⁵ John Glassco translated poetry by Saint-Denys Garneau und québécois fiction.

Literary Translators in 1975"⁵⁶, was an event that helped strengthen the community of literary translators, also concerning copyrights. The seventies were also the period when translation units were established in Canadian universities (e.g. University of Ottawa, Université du Québec, University of Western Ontario)⁵⁷

Another important influencing factor was the political development in Québec, clearly visible in the fact that before the Quiet Revolution only approximately one book per year was translated, whereas from the sixties on, the number of published translations rose immediately to an average of six titles per year until 1971, and then rose again due to government funding to approximately 10 works of fiction per year.⁵⁸ English Canada's curiosity and anxiety was rising and they wanted to know about the causes of national sentiment in Québec. One way to find out more was via Québec's literature, especially since it had been politicised for years. Shouldice suggests that because the interest in québécois literature was political, the numbers of titles translated is much higher from French into English than vice versa.⁵⁹

The most active translators who have tried to bridge the cultures since the sixties have been Sheila Fishman (1937-), who translated more than 32 books by the best known Québécois authors (among them Marie-Claire Blais, Anne Hébert, and Roch Carrier), David Lobdell⁶⁰, who translated more than 20 titles, and David Homel, Luise von Flotow, Philip Stratford, and Linda Gaboriau.

Another small award worth mentioning is the one funded by the Multicultural Directorate of the Secretary of State. It supports translations from languages other than English or French and encompasses a wide range of possible genres like conference reports, bibliographies, histories of associations, and also literature. Between 1971 and 1980 the translated languages were Ukrainian, Polish, Punjabi, Japanese, Scandinavian languages and others. Ethnic translation is seen as an "interesting and unique extension of

⁵⁶ Jean Delisle, " Canadian Tradition" , In: *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p.362.

⁵⁷ Jean Delisle, *La traduction au Canada*, pp.88-91

⁵⁸ O'Connor, p.1130.

⁵⁹ Shouldice, pp. 79, 80

⁶⁰ Lobdell died in the early 1990s, his work in progress (M.-C. Blais's *Pierre*) was then finished by Philip Stratford.

[Canadian literature]" by the director Judy Young.⁶¹

4.3. Drama

English to French and French to English

Giguère states that up to 1981 English-Canadian plays were practically unknown in Québec. Translated plays were from Britain or the United States, as well as Italian or Russian plays. They were usually related to French Canada, or adapted by French Canadian playwrights to the scenery of Montréal or Québec. Delisle stated that "characters of Shakespeare, Chekhov, O'Neill, Lorca, Brecht or Goldoni were made to speak Québécois".⁶² So maybe Giguère's harsh judgement, that those plays were only translated for egocentric reasons, is justified. In the case of Québec, the adaptations and assimilations have also been a way to strengthen the identity and diversity inside of the culture and to attract attention for Québec rather than a foreign culture. Indeed, there has been a tendency to resist translation as a way to reduce the presence of the dominant tongue.⁶³ Again, this would explain the assimilation or naturalisation of plays originally rooted in other cultural discourses. As far as I know, there is no real evidence that reduction of translation supports monolingualism and sense of self, and more research would be necessary to distinguish between non-translation as a political strategy and non-translation for other reasons.

In the '90s, a few plays by English-Canadian authors were translated and put on stage. Among them were the plays by Brad Fraser (e.g. *Des restes humains non identifiés et la vrai nature de l'amour*, 1993), and also plays by Sharon Pollock and Tomson Highway.

The picture of the translation "traffic" from French to English looks very different. For the period 1940 to 1970 Giguère lists more than 30 plays, dominated by author M. Tremblay. Tremblay's Joual is definitely not easy to translate and adapt for the English-speaking audience, but the translations are well received by the English speaking audience.

⁶¹ *A Review of Recent Publications and Work in Progress in the Area of Candian Ethnic Literature* (Ottawa: Multicultural Directory, Secretary of State, undated).

⁶² Delisle, "Canadian Tradition", p.363

⁶³ Ben-Z. Shek, "Quelques reflexions sur la traduction dans le contexte socio-culturel canado-québécois," *Ellipse*, 21 (1977), 111.

All in all 27 plays were translated from French into English between 1972 and 1981, and 22 between 1982 and 1996, which shows that the numbers are decreasing. If this means anything, it might be confirming O'Connor's suspicion that the promising upwards movement of the '70s and '80s might have slowed down. The closure of Coach-House Press, who was the main publisher of for example Tremblay and Carrier in translation, in 1996 after provincial funding was withdrawn had also a very negative impact, as well as the steady reduction of federal and provincial funding.⁶⁴

4.4. Feminist Translation

The picture of literary translation in Canada would not be complete without the feminist translation projects, which allow another perspective on French-English relationships in this country. In the early '80s, the journal *Tessera* was created by women of both cultures. It was a project intended to "create a community of women of letters".⁶⁵ In the magazine, translation was repeatedly the topic, since translation as a concept has been seen as a meta-textual parallel or trope for feminist concerns such as the Other, oppression of the Other's voice, invasion of the text/body, subjectivity versus objectivity etc. Thus, the group is also working along parallel lines to the arguments between French- and English-speaking Canada and, as Luise von Flotow says, its existence is an "expression of Canadian women's attempt to communicate across the language gap."⁶⁶ The main novelists, poets, and translators who contributed to *Tessera* and feminist translation in Canada are Gail Scott, Nicole Brossard, Lise Gauvin, Barbara Godard, and Kathy Menzei among others. Gail Scott expressed the view of the group as : " learning how not hearing the other closes space for each of us,"⁶⁷ thus putting all the above considerations of the bridging of the cultural gap into a few profound words.

The group's translation projects were aimed at transforming the literary norms. The first issues of *Tessera* featured mostly French to English translations, later on more and

⁶⁴ O'Connor, p.1132

⁶⁵ Barbara Godard, "Women of Letters (Reprise)," In: Godard, B (ed.) *Collaboration in the Feminine* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994), p.258.

⁶⁶ Luise von Flotow, 'Legacies of Québec Women's "Écriture au féminin": Bilingual Transformances, Translation politicised, Subaltern versions of the text of the Street,' *Revue d'études canadiennes*, vol.30, no. 4 (Hiver 1995-96), p.88.

⁶⁷ Godard, p.263.

more English texts were translated into French. The group has been practising an exchange of letters which still is only a desire of translation practices outside that group. Texts that were translated in the framework of the group were for example Louky Bersianik's *L'Euguelionne*, translated by Howard Scott (probably the only male feminist translator in Canada) and the English version of Brossard's *La lettre aérienne* by Marlene Wildman (1989). In the '90s, feminist translations have taken a step further and sometimes appear as either intertextual bilingual projects (e.g. Lola Lemire Tostevin) or as an intersemiotic process, thus remaining in one language, translating one set of verbal signs into another, or translating non-verbal signs into verbal signs (e.g. Hélène Monette's *Le goudron et les plumes*).

The disruption of the status quo which so regulates translation practices and politics in Canada also shows in translated works of experimental writing such as Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert Mauve*, translated into English by Susanne Lotbinière-Harwood. Other goals of feminist translation have been the valorization of the translator's work, the development of specific strategies to express "la lèttre" of a specific writer, and to deconstruct gendered metaphors. Also, women writers and translators from the past have been recovered and researched.⁶⁸ Not only has this group of women been politically very active, they also have produced a vast number of theoretical articles on translation, literature, and culture. Important theoretical articles and books were written by Sherry Simon, Lori Chamberlain, Luise von Flotow, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, and Barbara Godard. All these women are also practising translators who have been very important in the translation landscape of Québec and English-Canada for the past 15 years.

4.5. Theoretical Work

Apart from the above mentioned theoretical texts by the feminist translators, a vast number of articles about translation in Canada has been written and published since the '70s, and especially since the late '80s. *Ellipse* includes critical articles in each issue, and *The University of Toronto Quarterly* has produced an annual survey of French-to-English translation in Canada (except 1990), with articles written by Simon, Mezei, Godard, and Koustas. Other magazines, for example *Canadian Literature* and *Translation: The journal of Literary Translation*, publish articles or whole issues on Canadian translation.

⁶⁸ Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse / Translation." In: Bassnett, Susan & André Lefevere (eds.) *Translation, History, and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990), pp.87-96.

Other periodicals are for example, *Meta* (since 1955) and *TTR* (since 1988). Bibliographies of translated literature and criticism in Canada were published by Kathy Mezei (1989) and Philip Stratford (1977). Lotbinière-Harwood analysed the translation process in *Re-Belle et infidèle / The Body Bilingual* (1991), Sherry Simon discussed Québec and literary translation in Canada in *Le trafic des langues : traduction et culture dans la littérature québécois* (Boréal,1994) and *Culture in Transit: translating the literature in Quebec* (Véhicule, 1994). Other scholars who wrote about translation in Canada are P. Stratford, D. Homel, A. Lefevre, A. Brisset, L.von Flotow, J. Delisle, B. Godard, and many others. The consciousness is rising, and symposiums have been held in Universities, either solely or partly devoted to the topic of translation, since Canada is unthinkable without both literary and non-literary translation.

5. Conclusion

Thinking back to the beginnings of writing and translating in Canada, and comparing those days with the latest developments, it becomes clear that literary translation has taken a great leap forward, paralleled by the critical literature concerned with it. Just as in the early years though, the considerably active group of literary translators and critics is small and interdependent. The issues and concerns on politician's agendas related to both the relations between Quebec and the other parts of Canada and to funding and promotion of the arts are shared by Canadian translators. They are a very vital connecting link between the cultures. Considering the attitude on both sides, and the willingness (or unwillingness) to communicate, Larry Shouldice expressed his doubts about literature having the power to unify Canada, but he also hoped that the most "positive message it transmits is that difference must be respected."⁶⁹

Literary translation started off under very difficult conditions: problems of finding competent translators, financial risks, and the dependence on certain ideologies in order to find a publisher. It hasn't really become so much easier since the problem of funding still prevails for the majority of translators. Because funding is necessary, and translators depend on it, the whole undertaking is at the mercy of the funding parties and their choice of who is being funded, when, and for which work. This makes it, for example, difficult for experimental writing to survive on a larger scale, which is unfortunate since that kind of writing sometimes opens up the gates to new discussion and a changing discourse. One

⁶⁹ Shouldice, p.82

award for first translations per year is also not a very probable incentive for young translators to devote a lot of time to translating a book, since they can not really earn their livelihood with translation. The position of the translation of poetry is also endangered, since the Canada Council does not raise the rate for this genre, and as Ellenwood says: "it does not take much imagination to realize that, at [] such a low rate per word, a translator of poetry must indeed be a fool for the muse, scorned by Mammon."⁷⁰

O'Connor expressed his concern that new books that are important for Quebec readers and thus determine their cultural discourse can not be accessed and understood by English Canada since for the above reasons there is a lack of competent translators willing to work for ten cents a word. These circumstances, and the interdependence of politics, finances, and the arts leads to the question how large the cultural freedom in Canada actually is? Can and do translators and groups, who work in the field of translation, take risks? This question can probably only be answered over time and under scrutiny of the dissemination of translated French- and English-Canadian literature. The coming years will apparently be seeing more cuts in funding for the arts, which will be a significant factor for the shaping of the future history of translation.

⁷⁰ Ellenwood, p. 68

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