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### THE SEARCH FOR A NATIVE LANGUAGE: TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

*Translated by Rosalind Gill and Roger Gannon*

...we need more than a mother tongue to come into our own, we also need a native language.

Gaston Miron, *L'Homme rapaillé*

#### Issues of language in the theory of translation

**L**ANGUAGE IS AN indispensable element in the realization of the verbal act. It is a necessary precondition for communication. As Jakobson observes, “the message requires...a Code fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and the decoder of the message).”<sup>1</sup> Translation is a dual act of communication. It presupposes the existence, not of a single code, but of two distinct codes, the “source language” and the “target language.” The fact that the two codes are not isomorphic creates obstacles for the translative operation. This explains why linguistic questions are the starting-point for all thinking about translation. A basic premise of translation theory is the famous “prejudicial objection” dismantled by Mounin, piece by piece, in one of the first works to elevate translation to the status of a quasiscientific area of scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Translation is a unidirectional operation between two given languages. The target language is thus, every bit as much as the source language, a *sine qua non* of the translative operation. If the target language remains elusive, the act of translation becomes impossible. This is true even in the hypothetical case in which a text must be translated into a language that has no writing system. Throughout history, translators have had to contend with the fact that the target language is deficient when it comes to

translating the source text into that language. Such deficiencies can be clearly identified as, for example, lexical or morpho-syntactic deficiencies or as problems of polysemy. More often, however, the deficiency in the receiving code has to do with the relation between signs and their users, a relation that reflects such things as individuality, social position, and geographical origin of the speakers: “thus the relatively simple question arises, should one translate or not translate argot by argot, a patois by a patois, etc...”<sup>3</sup> Here, the difficulty of translation does not arise from the lack of a specific translation language. It arises, rather, from the absence in the target language of a subcode equivalent to the one used by the source text in its reproduction of the source language. How should the cockney dialogue in *Pygmalion* be translated? What French-language dialect equivalent should be used to render the lunfardo of Buenos Aires in translations of Roberto Arlt’s novels? What variety of French would correspond to the Roman dialect of the Via Merulana in a translation of Carlo Emilio Gadda’s *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*? What is the French equivalent of the English of the American South in Faulkner’s novels? Such are the questions ritually posed by the translator, torn between the source text and the target language. These problems become more complex when historical time is factored in. Should the translator recreate the feeling of the time period of the text for the contemporary reader? Or, conversely, should the archaic form of the language be modernized to make the text more accessible to the contemporary reader? Should Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, or Chaucer be translated into archaic language? Should Cicero’s style be rendered by the style of a well-known politician of modern times?<sup>4</sup> The choice of a target language becomes even more difficult when the text to be translated is a parody of a variety of the source language. *Gaweda*, a “museum language” of Great Poland, reproduced and parodied by Gombrowicz in his *Trans-Atlantyck*,<sup>5</sup> is a case in point. Translation problems can arise not only from deficiencies in the receiving society but also from a surfeit of linguistic options. For example, in certain societies, the language of men is different from that of women, and these differences are governed by particularly strict constraints. Charles Taber and Eugene Nida have discussed the problem of whether the Scriptures should be translated into the language of men or of women.<sup>6</sup> Writings on the translative operation abound with such questions. Translators address these issues in prefaces to their work, outlining the deficiencies of the target language, deficiencies arising from sociological, geographical, or historical variation in the source language.

Although the target language cannot always provide equivalents of the source language, the absence of a target language, the language into which one translates, is not usually cited as a formal translation problem. One could object that there have been instances in which translation has indeed created languages. But then there would have to be some agreement on the meaning of the word “create,” because it would be wrong to assume that these languages had no prior existence and that translation created them from whole cloth. A case in point is the translation of the Bible by Luther, a translation that gave rise to the German language. In this case, the difficulty of translation arose from the fact that the target language was not a single unified language but a number of dialects:

Good German is the German of the people. But the people speak an infinite number of Germans. One must then translate into a German that somehow rises above the multiplicity of *Mundarten* without rejecting them or suppressing them. Thus Luther attempted to do two things: translate into a German that a priori can only be local, his own German, *Hochdeutsch*, but at the same time elevate, by the very process of translation, this local German to the status of a common German, a *lingua franca*. So that the German he used did not become itself a language cut off from the people, he had to preserve in it something of the *Mundarten*, of the general modes of expression and of the popular dialects. Thus, we find at the same time a consistent and deliberate use of a very oral language, full of images, expressions, turns of phrase, together with a subtle purification, de-dialectalization of this language... Luther's translation constitutes a first decisive self-affirmation of literary German. Luther, the great "reformer," was henceforth considered as a writer and as a creator of a language...<sup>7</sup>

Another example is the replacement of Latin by French after the edict of Villers-Cotterêts in the sixteenth century. By requiring that all civil acts be "pronounced, registered and delivered to the parties in the French mother tongue,"<sup>8</sup> François I set into motion a translation movement that helped "elevate our vulgar [tongue] to the equal of and as a model for the other more famous languages."<sup>9</sup> As a result of this and ensuing decrees, vernacular French was to become the language of law, science, and literature. It acquired the status of national language, the founding language of the French state.

Strictly speaking, translation does not fill a linguistic void, no more so in the France of Du Bellay than in the Germany of Luther. Translation can, however, change the relation of linguistic forces, at the institutional and symbolic levels, by making it possible for the *vernacular language* to take the place of the *referential language*, to use distinctions from Henri Gobard's tetraglossic analysis. According to his analysis, a cultural field, or a linguistic community, has at its disposal four types of language or subcode:

- I A *vernacular language*, which is local, spoken spontaneously, less appropriate for communicating than for *communing*, and the only language that can be considered to be the mother tongue (or native language).
- II A *vehicular language*, which is national or regional, learned out of necessity, to be used for communication in the city.
- III A *referential language*, which is tied to cultural, oral, and written traditions and ensures continuity in values by systematic reference to classic works of the past.
- IV A *mythical language*, which functions as the ultimate recourse, verbal magic, whose incomprehensibility is considered to be irrefutable proof of the sacred...<sup>10</sup>

In "renascent" France as well as in "reformist" Germany, the referential language was a *foreign* language. In the corpus under review, the goal of translation is to

supplant such foreign forms of expression, which are viewed as alienating, literally dispossessing. The task of translation is thus to replace the language of the Other by a native language. Not surprisingly, the native language chosen is usually the vernacular, “the linguistic birthright, the indelible mark of belonging.”<sup>11</sup> Translation becomes an act of reclaiming, of recentring of the identity, a re-territorializing operation. It does not create a new language, but it elevates a dialect to the status of a national and cultural language.

### ‘Translated into Québécois’

The inclusion of the annotation “traduit en québécois” (translated into Québécois) on the cover of Michel Garneau’s translation of *Macbeth* can be explained by the translation’s role as a re-territorializing operation. This reference to the language of translation is a reversal of usual procedure, which is to inform the reader of the language from which the work has been translated. Normally, the language of translation is a given; for readers, it is implicit, understood, that the language of translation will be the language of their own literature. A French publisher would never preface a book by Claude Simon, Marguerite Duras, or Michel Tournier with the annotation “written in French.” The reader of a translation does not need to be told what language has been used to translate the foreign text. However, in cases where the reader is unlikely to be aware of the language of the original text, information about the language of origin is normally provided with the expression “Translated from.” But when, against all normal usage, there is a perceived need to indicate that the translation is “into Québécois,” it is precisely because it cannot be taken for granted that a work will be translated into Québécois. Similarly, would one not write the annotation “translated into Occitan” on a literary work in France? The annotation underscores the marginality of the language. But there is a considerable difference between the linguistic status of Occitan and that of Québécois. Occitan is a different sign system from French, as Catalan is from Spanish. Québécois is not a different sign system from French: “*Phenomenology of the Mind* would never be translated into Québécois.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, the expression “traduit en Québécois” forms part of the ideological construction of the presumed difference between “Québécois” and French. Clearly, this annotation heralds the birth of a language that translation will have to bring to the fore, or at least, *expose*, in the photographic sense of the word. This function of translation, to give more exposure to the language, is reinforced by the proliferation of lexicographical studies of Québécois. New dictionaries of Québécois appear almost yearly. Of these, Léandre Bergeron’s was the best-known during the period under study.<sup>13</sup> The dictionary aims less to codify usage than to demonstrate, if not to construct, the difference between Québécois and the French of France. The following examples, taken from the *Practical Handbook of Canadian French—Manuel pratique du français canadien* by Sinclair Robinson and Donald Smith are a good illustration of such a lexicographical endeavour. The handbook, whose very title is a serious misnomer, sets out to prove to anglophone students that Canadian French is a separate language. “It has the same capacity to express the whole range of human concerns as any other tongue.”<sup>14</sup> Using a more ideologically motivated than naïve

categorization, the authors divide French and Québécois lexical items into three pseudo-contrastive groups:

Canada	France	Translation
beurre d'arachides	pâté de cacahouètes	peanut butter
lait écrémé	—	skim milk
colline parlementaire	emplacement en pente du gouvernement canadien	Parliament Hill
électorat	corps électoral	electorate
relevé de notes	copie des notes au niveau universitaire	transcript <sup>15</sup>

Mystified by the alleged difference between the two types of French, the reader of the handbook will be left with the impression that the French of France is a limited language, and that it is fundamentally incapable of expressing “Québécois reality.” On the other hand, Léandre Bergeron defines “Québécois,” as opposed to French, as “a sign system, mainly spoken but sometimes written by the Québécois people.”<sup>16</sup> The existence of a Québécois language is also tangible proof of the existence of a “Québécois people,” in the restrictive sense of the expression “a people” as compared with “a population.” Bergeron’s Québécois is a language “rich with all the tension of a small people who are still wet from their birth on the eve of the twenty-first century, still shy in the presence of grownups, reluctant to walk among all those big people.”<sup>17</sup> This explains why so much importance is placed on translation, because it proves irrefutably that the Québécois language exists. “We have even started to be translated into other languages for those who want to hear our distinctness, to talk about Melville to the Americans, make the ‘matantes’ heard in Tokyo, and make the citizens of Berlin dream of our forests.”<sup>18</sup> Conversely, translating canonical works or literary masterpieces such as *Macbeth* into Québécois is an attempt to legitimize Québécois by elevating it from its status as a dialect. It proves that it is the language of a people and that it can replace French as the language of literature for its people. Here, the roles are reversed: the goal of a translation is not to provide an introduction to the Other or to mediate the foreign work. It is the foreign work that is given a mission—to vouch for the existence of the language of translation and, by so doing, vouch for the existence of a Québécois “people.” Thus, when Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Brecht are given the task of establishing Québécois as a literary language in its own right, and ultimately as a national language, they are also given the task of reflecting the reality of the society that speaks that language, of literally speaking for it, or of being its mirror. Thus, when a foreign text is adapted or “culturally translated,” it stands to reason that it will be translated into “Québécois.”<sup>19</sup>

The annotation “traduit en québécois” and, at a different level, the proliferation of lexicographical works are both signs of institutional conflict in Quebec. The battle has begun against the language that hitherto served as a referential vehicle. This language is, of course, French. French is not a foreign language in Quebec, as Latin or Italian were in Du Bellay’s time; yet it has suddenly been rejected as

foreign, that is, incomprehensible. Consider, for example, this extract from *Défense et illustration de la langue québécoise* by Michèle Lalonde:

Thus, even for the most educated people in the country, there is still a wide gap between spoken and written language and a kind of conflict that could cause great anguish and terrible feelings of dichotomy when a whole *chagrin* tries to express itself. And it is true that, in that light, the French language of France is like a second language to us, an almost foreign language because it does not have a strong emotional content and immediate allusions to our affects and experiences.<sup>20</sup>

Rejecting French is tantamount to eliminating internal bilingualism, a bilingualism that puts the vernacular language in conflict with the referential; a language without constraints is set against a highly regulated, “polished” language from overseas, a language thus not suitable for translating local experience. The “*chagrin*” that is inexpressible in the French of France is the “Conquest,” the “colonization,” the socio-economic “oppression,” the very foundation of the nationalist interpretation of history, both real and ideologically constructed.<sup>21</sup> The language conflict was one expression of nationalist aspirations at the time. Another, in the political arena, was the nationalist movement that led to the birth of the Parti Québécois and the emergence of the Front de Libération du Québec. The demand for territorial and political autonomy was logically extended to a demand for a distinct native language. Suddenly, the French of France became unsuitable for communication among Québécois. The nationalist *doxa* used a solipsistic concept of language to explain why French was suddenly incapable of expressing the “affects and experiences” of the Québécois people, who, it would appear, do not share the affects and experiences of other peoples and other nations. After being in contact with a new reality, French had undergone a transformation, with the following result: “even when the words are the same, they express another reality, another experience.”<sup>22</sup> It may appear to be the same language, but this is deceptive—Quebec French is no longer the same language as the French of France. This argument is generally supported by allegedly irrefutable proof—a vocabulary list. The manuals and dictionaries mentioned above are a development of this trend. They also lend “scientific” support<sup>23</sup> to the argument for the difference between the two languages. A case in point being the list of Québécois words produced by Michèle Lalonde, which includes such un-French words as “savane,” “raquette,” and “feu-follet”!<sup>24</sup>

The year 1968 marked the beginning of changes in Quebec’s relation to the French of France. To satisfy the needs of the nationalist cause, French was held up as an ideological fiction—a socially and geographically homogeneous language, homogeneous to the point of being totalitarian. Was it not continuously subjected to normalization by a small group of academicians, and to censorship by a handful of intellectuals in Paris? This portrayal of the French language as a frigid and withered language, as opposed to a vigorous, natural Québécois, has been widely debated and denounced by many.<sup>25</sup> We will, thus, not pursue the matter here. Suffice it to say that the language conflict that developed around 1968 is clearly symptomatic of a change in relations with the Foreigner.

### Québécois in the market of symbolic commodities

A linguistic community is a market. Its vernacular and referential languages are its symbolic commodities, each with its own use value and its own exchange value. The circulation of these commodities is governed by power relations.

A linguistic community appears to be a sort of *huge market in which words, expressions and messages circulate as commodities*. We may ask ourselves what rules govern the circulation of words, expressions and messages, beginning with the values according to which they are *consumed and exchanged*.<sup>26</sup>

As nationalist Quebec began asserting itself at the end of the 1960s, its vernacular and referential languages suddenly started competing with each other. Thus, in the market economy of symbolic commodities, there was competition between the exchange values of the two languages. On the cultural level, the Québécois product had to take precedence over the imported product. This gave rise to a form of protectionism, the aim of which was to limit importation and circulation of non-Québécois symbolic commodities in cultural institutions such as theatrical publishing and production, criticism, and literary awards and grants. The language conflict mirrored the newly engaged battle to conquer the symbolic-commodities market, that is, the battle to become institutionally dominant.

In the theatre, foreign symbolic commodities were dominant, but they remained so by default. Statistics [...] reveal, however, that as the number of Québécois productions increased, the exchange value of artistic creations such as foreign translations was more and more seriously eroded. If they were to replace French productions, which were clearly dominant, and if they were to appropriate the symbolic capital held by these productions, Québécois productions had to be different. This was the first condition for the emergence of a distinctly Québécois theatrical institution. Here is how Jacques Dubois explains the “law of distinctness” as it applies to the literary institution:

...at the time when an institution is being founded, we see the development of legitimacy within the literary sphere, and this legitimacy defines the activity of this sphere as autonomous and distinctive ... Thus, writers find themselves engaged in the logic of distinctness. If distinctness becomes the issue for them, and that is indeed how one gains the recognition of one's peers and competitors, the only way to achieve recognition is to make one's writing culturally marked in a way that is pertinent in a given literary field.<sup>27</sup>

In the dramatic arts, language would fulfil the distinctive function that was needed for Québécois productions to become institutionally recognized and autonomous vis-à-vis French and French-Canadian productions.

### The distinctive function of Québécois

This breaking away into a separate aesthetic particularity closely paralleled contemporary political demands, with all their ramifications. We have seen that, in Quebec, the quest for a native language is tied to the need to be different, not to be mixed in with the others in the North American melting pot:

nous distincts  
différents  
à ne point confondre  
  
[we [are]  
distinct  
different  
not to be confused with anyone].<sup>28</sup>

‘*Québécoité*’ (Quebecness) defines itself as the search for absolute distinctness, a distinctness that will counteract the danger of assimilation. The threat of assimilation looms on a number of fronts. First, a battle must be waged against the assimilation inherent in the position of a francophone community hemmed in by anglophones. But, of course, the danger of anglicization comes not only from the geopolitical structures of Quebec within the Canadian federation; it also comes from the proximity of the United States, which exerts a strong sociocultural fascination. Economically and politically all-powerful, the United States provides Quebec with its new cultural models and can be viewed, therefore, as a second assimilating front. A third threatening front is immigration. The foreigner, who is called “immigrant,” “ethnic,” and “allophone” or “neo-Québécois,” is seen as the enemy within:

Mais au contraire, à peine peuvent-ils [les Québécois] s’aventurer hors de leur demeure sans être cernés de toutes parts par des puissances étrangères tantôt Anglaise, tantôt Américaine, voire, récemment, Italienne, qui les repoussent à leur bon plaisir & les soumettent à leurs lois, privilèges ou droits acquis de plus ou moins longue date sur ce territoire...

[But on the contrary, they (the Québécois) can hardly step outside their doors without being surrounded on all sides by foreign powers, sometimes English, sometimes American, and more recently, Italian, who feel free to push them aside and subject them to their laws, privileges, or rights that were acquired a more or less long time ago on this land...]<sup>29</sup>

This way of thinking attributes to the Italian, the symbol of all immigrants, the assimilating characteristics of the anglophone. The assimilation of francophones is an undeniable threat, if only by virtue of the law of numbers. Moreover, immigrants were quick enough to decide which group to model themselves after, the minority group or the dominant prestigious group. Imbued with the American

dream, immigrants had not left everything behind only to end up in the camp of a group that insists on depicting itself as the colonized, the loser, and the victim. It is easy to understand why their allegiances go spontaneously to the anglophones, who, in fact, have traditionally extended a warm welcome to immigrants, excluded, as they themselves were, from francophone institutions on linguistic or religious grounds. The immigrant thus becomes an agent of assimilation. But this negative portrayal of the immigrant goes even further. It characterizes the newly arrived as the conqueror, the usurper, who receives special treatment. We know how the English got where they are; they have history on their side. But where does an Italian (a Portuguese, a Greek, a Pole, a Haitian, a Vietnamese, a Chilean, a Turk), that bare-foot peasant who just arrived yesterday on “our” soil, get such rights? There is an interesting transfer of blame in this depiction of the immigrant, for it is clear that, in reality, the immigrant does not exactly occupy the upper social, economic, cultural, and political echelons of Quebec society. Is this depiction not, in fact, an indictment specifically designed to justify keeping immigrants on the margin of society, outside all spheres of authority in Quebec? In a province “under siege,” the Italian symbolizes internal alterity, a sort of fifth column, a true incarnation of the fear of the Other. No one has been more forthright than Jean Éthier-Blais in expressing the idea of the “foreign peril,” a peril that had only become more threatening with the arrival of the Vietnamese, the Chileans, and the Tamils:

[...] le Québec est déjà divisé contre lui-même. D’une part, Montréal, qui se veut *multiculturel*, donc objectivement *anti-qubécois*, viscéralement, dans ses néocomposantes; d’autre part le grand Québec, qui joue la politique de l’autruche et sombre dans l’optimisme tactique. [...] Nos gouvernements sont prêts à sacrifier tout ce qui nous est cher, langue, histoire, pour ne pas décevoir ces “réfugiés politiques”.

[...Quebec is already divided against itself. On the one hand, Montreal, which likes to see itself as *multicultural*, thus objectively *anti-Québécois*, *viscerally*, in its *neo-composition*; on the other, Quebec as a whole, which plays the politics of the ostrich, drowning in tactical optimism... Our governments are ready to sacrifice everything we hold dear, language, history, so as not to disappoint these “political refugees.”]<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, here, group membership is not fortuitous or a natural state of affairs. It is guided by nationalist interests, and by definition does not allow for inclusion of neo-Québécois. They have the misfortune of being what they are: foreigners. This argument, which is designed to prevent the dissolution of the Québécois identity, tacitly reproduces the dominant/subordinate schema that is so vigorously denounced when the group is speaking of itself. Any relationship with the Other seems inconceivable outside this framework of domination. This is because the Other is at fault and wears a mask, as insinuated by Éthier-Blais’s use of quotation marks, which make the official status of “political refugee” suspect—no doubt, illegitimate. Only the Québécois are tragic figures, exiles in their own country. Foreigners use a

false identity to pass themselves off as victims and abuse the generosity of an overly hospitable country. The poetry of Michel Garneau opposes the fascist undertones of such rhetoric. His apologia for cross-breeding uses poetic language to reveal and acclaim the mixed background of the Québécois identity: “J’ai tout le sang mêlé/ les ancêtres sont mes étrangers/un peu d’hurabénaquois /un peu d’irlancossais [...]” [“My blood is all mixed up/my ancestors are foreigners/Hurabénaquois/a little Irishscotch...”] In another poem, “L’avenir câllé” (Calling to the Future) he even writes:

qu’on réalise québécois combien nous sommes  
 éceurement racistes  
 baie-james-réserves-rythme de nègres-  
 maudits-anglais-français-italiens-juifs  
 poloks-chicken flied lice-sauvages  
 pis qu’on arrête ça tout d’suite.

[that we Québécois realize how sickeningly racist  
 we are  
 James-Bay-reservations-nigger rhythm-  
 cursed-English-French-Italians-Jews  
 Polaks-chicken flied lice-savages  
 now let’s stop that right now.]<sup>31</sup>

The foreigner poses a problem precisely because he introduces heterogeneity, impurity into the Québécois community.

Nous autres  
 dit couramment ce peuple  
 à propos de lui-même  
 marquant ainsi d’un mot  
 l’intime ambiguïté  
 de son identité.

[“Nous autres”  
 says frequently this people  
 about itself  
 underlining thus with a single word  
 the intimate ambiguity  
 of its identity.]<sup>32</sup>

Ideally, no foreign presence should ever stain the Québécois identity. Doing away with any “ambiguity” of identity means getting rid of the Other. In the name of distinctness, the salvation of the Québécois identity, all forms of alterity must be automatically ejected from the group, confined to their own differences. The first-person plural, “nous,” is used to justify various kinds of difference—ethnicity, language, identity, and separation. Close association between “nous” and “les autres” is dangerous, harmful, and therefore to be deplored. The “Québécois language” is entrusted with establishing this separation and constitutes, in effect,

the *differentia specifica* of the Québécois. If the French language is no longer sufficient, it is because the stakes are no longer simply linguistic; they have become topological. Language must be coextensive with a territory. There can be no sharing of language or territory.

### The enigmatic Québécois language<sup>33</sup>

Gaston Miron makes a distinction between “mother tongue” and “native language,” a distinction, he says, the Québécois need to make.<sup>34</sup> How does he explain the relevance of this distinction between two concepts that, in actual usage, are one and the same? He does not define what he means by “native language,” but he holds it up as the symbol of political liberation. Miron’s native language is still French, but it is not spoken in the same cultural and sociopolitical circumstances as French. In fact, Miron uses the notion of a native language as an antithesis to a series of axioms on which his whole argument is built: if a native language is to emerge, Quebec must rid itself of its colonial status; once Quebec is freed of its colonial socio-economic constraints, its newly emerged native language can be used to justify the rejection of French culture. The existence of a native language presupposes that its speakers are “in the world according to a culture, that is according to an ontology” which is *unique* to that language, and to that language only. In other words, the emergence of a native language implies the elimination of alterity.<sup>35</sup> To acquire a native language is to be reborn in a free country, to have a country entirely to oneself. Reclaiming one’s native language naturally leads to the idea of a pure nation that exists in “the consciousness of the world.”<sup>36</sup> Their own native language or national language is a sign of the unity and purity of the Québécois “people.” It is the distinctive feature of what Gaston Miron calls the “*Québécanthrope*” the *homo quebecensis*, who sees himself, to use Weinmann’s rejoinder, “as a new man” who comes from a *separate* branch of the development of humanity.<sup>37</sup> Miron’s native language does not exist. It is a political postulate founded on an identity fetish and on the rejection of the Other: “only political action can restore him [the Québécois] to his homogeneity, the basis for exchange between cultures.”<sup>38</sup> The call for a return to homogeneity is not exactly a subtle one. There seems to be no awareness of the fact that there is no such thing as a homogeneous culture, no more than there is homogeneous literature. Indeed, the ideology of homogeneity rejects all dialogism and is, thus, a form of totalitarianism.<sup>39</sup>

Creating a distinction between a native language and a mother tongue entails more than the reappropriation of the native language, a language deformed and alienated by interference from English. The distinction also implies rejection of the mother tongue, which, in this case, is the language of a “foreign” culture, the French culture. Pierre Gobin points out what this distinction specifically means to the playwright “living in a society that bears the marks of colonial experience.” The author “experiences even more profoundly the distance between ‘indigenous’ language and ‘foreign’ writing, especially if both have the same linguistic heritage, that is to say, if there is *diglossia* rather than *bilingualism*.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, sharing

a language with French does not sit well with a solipsistic and ontological concept of culture. According to this line of thinking, the mother tongue of the Québécois is someone else's language, in the same way that their native country, which has been despoiled by the English, has become someone else's country. Therefore, claiming one's native language means rejecting one's mother, severing a tie that, in any case, was never nourishing:

Ya-t-il doncques une Langue Québecquoise, ou Québécoise, ou kébécoise distincte de la Française comme celle-ci l'était naguère du latin dans laquelle je puisse m'exprimer? D'aucuns aussi prompts à trancher cette question que lents à trancher le cordon ombilical qui les relie à la Mère-patrie, soutiennent péremptoirement que *non* et qualifient de barbare & impure la Par lure de nostre "vulgaire" qu'il faudrait châtier sans pitié comme une façon tout au plus de parler ineptement français.

[Is there indeed a Québecquoise, or Québécoise or kébécoise language distinct from French, in the way French used to be distinct from Latin, in which I can express myself? Some are as quick to answer this question as they are slow to cut the umbilical cord that connects them to the Mother Country; they maintain that the answer is simply no, and say that the language of our "vulgar" is a barbarous and impure way of speaking that should be punished mercilessly for being an inept way of speaking French.]<sup>41</sup>

Mother tongue is not the same notion for Michèle Lalonde as it is for Gaston Miron. Lalonde's concept of mother tongue corresponds more to what Miron terms a "native" language. For Lalonde, the mother tongue is not the language of the mother country, a borrowed language, with "a French superior lineage, devoid of all our turpitude, thus of a less vulgar Culture."<sup>42</sup> The mother tongue is truly the language-of-my-mother [la langue-à-ma-mère]. It is the language of one's roots, full of "lovely words...invented to describe, for example, *les bordages* (in-shore ice), *les bordillons* (piles of in-shore ice), *les fardoques* (undergrowth), and *les cédrières* (cedar groves), and other common things in our wild surroundings."<sup>43</sup> The mother tongue is an Edenic, native, natural language, dating from the idyllic era of colonization (when "we" were the colonizers). In those days, it was a free language, a language in perfect harmony with the territory of the Québécois, a language nothing could resist, "neither the blue spruce, nor the white cedar, nor the plains, nor the hemlock spruce, that so awed our ancestors but did not leave them speechless and unable to name them."<sup>44</sup> Lalonde's definition of mother tongue is full of nostalgia for a paradise lost, a time when the Québécois could invent their own names for things, when the Québécois language was "Cratylean" and in complete harmony with nature. The deterioration of the language followed the loss of the country to the venal hands of a foreign power:

À la claire fontaine du Toronto Stock Exchange il en  
coule des dollars sous nos doigts comme billets  
d'amour pour la belle dame des maîtres

*brrou goudourou xouliminimini crrah vrrah kbmè strix*  
 j'attendais un vrai language là où il n'y avait que des  
 pieuvres pour me bouffer tout cru tout vivant

crisse de câlce de tabarnaque  
 le jour où j'ai pensé hors des fantômes admis pensé de  
 ce qu'est vivre ici je n'ai su que sacrer profaner.

[In the clear fountain of the Toronto Stock Exchange  
 dollars flow through our fingers like love  
 notes for the beautiful lady of the masters

*brrou goudourou xouliminimini crrah vrrah kbmè strix*  
 I was expecting a real language in the place where there was  
 only octopus to eat me completely raw and totally alive

crisse de câlce de tabarnaque  
 the day I thought outside of the acceptable ghosts thought about  
 what it is to live here I could only swear profanities.]<sup>45</sup>

In a lyrical, humorous register, Paul Chamberland's poem "L'afficheur hurle" also takes up the theme of nostalgia for a pure language unspoiled by the Other. He expresses his anguish that a "true language" is impossible and sings the praises of a paradise lost:

L'amour m'a mis entre les dents les clés de la vengeance  
 [...]
 pourtant j'aurais pu être tendre comme de la dentelle  
 mais il aurait fallu depuis toujours voler rouler sur  
 le muscle d'une terre forte cascader sur les hanches  
 d'une mère ouverte aux razzias du plaisir Mère  
 Liberté Mère Amour Mère debout dans le création du monde.

[love put the keys of vengeance in my mouth  
 ...  
 but I could have been tender like lace  
 but it would have been necessary to fly roll  
 over the muscle of a strong land cascade onto the hips  
 of a mother open to the plunders of pleasure. Mother  
 Liberty Mother Love Mother standing in the creation of  
 the world.]<sup>46</sup>

It would be possible to return to the mother on two conditions: she must be a lover and she must incarnate liberty. The metaphor of incest sits well with the metaphor of the family that is often used to describe Québécois society ("this little society that comes together like a family").<sup>47</sup> Implicit in the metaphor of incest is a longing for an unreal past, a past that can be re-created by staying among one's own people. Thus, we see the formation of a vicious circle of nostalgia which, exclusive and in ward-turning, rejects the Other and its culture.

In this nostalgia for a return to nature, there is also a call for a return to a language which, if not lost, has yet to re-emerge.

How does one choose between the language of a paradise lost and the futile search for a native language; futile because the language is contaminated by the “contemporary landscape in which *le Workshop*, *le Warehouse* and *le Shopping-centre* already have a name before they even sprout and there are many more of them than the *blé d’Inde* [corn on the cob] and the *arbre à sucre* [maple tree]”?<sup>48</sup> This is the very dilemma that led Michèle Lalonde, in her defence of the Québécois language, to adopt the sixteenth-century French of Joachim Du Bellay just as Du Bellay had vindicated French by using an Italian text as a model. And we know how highly he thought of Italy! Returning to this archaic form of French represents an attempt to pay “homage to the very rich and original Langue Québécoise, to the time when it was spoken freely and without so many unhappy complications on the free Canadian soil.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, the Québécois language is a nostalgic language, a myth, a fiction, a fantasy of a lost object. Justification for its existence is found in nationalist rhetoric, which equates a language with a people and with a specific territory. None the less, when Michèle Lalonde is not writing manifestos, she switches to standard contemporary educated French to explain what the relationship between the Québécois writer and the language of Québécois society should be:

The role of writers is simply to take as much interest as possible in the Québécois collectivity and to ADDRESS THIS COLLECTIVITY IN ITS LANGUAGE. By this I mean: we must regenerate the language, rediscover it, reinvent it, we must give it new significance, fill in the gaps with the help of international French, shake it up, refine it, make love to it with abandon, and do with it what we will but adopt it as the language of the six million who speak Québécois.<sup>50</sup>

Here, once again, we encounter the view that language must be homogeneous and unified, as should the people who speak it in their daily lives. But these people have never used this language in their literature. Oh, Guilty Literature! You must be removed from your place at the centre of the institution! The Québécois writer who is deserving of the title should “renounce literary egocentrism” and “for the time being pull out of the Prix Goncourt,” and adopt the language of the Québécois, the true speech of “real people.” The duty of writers is in fact to “give the power of speech back to the collectivity from which they come...to the point where they should try to have more contact with students, workers, in other words, with ordinary Québécois, even if it means going to write among them.”<sup>51</sup> And, of course, Québécois workers, like their French counterparts, are avid readers of *Change*, the avant-garde journal in which this exhortation appeared! But the contradiction is even more profound: Québécois writers, who themselves do not speak the language of the collectivity, are asked to return to their linguistic roots. What is truly paradoxical here is that writers are expected to use the language of the people while playing the role of demiurge. Are they not expected to restore the language, consolidate it, give it back the vigour it had at the time of its origins, the time of liberty? To

rediscover freedom of language is to regain liberty itself. To give the power of speech back to a people is, in both senses of the word, to allow them to speak and to provide them with a language. More to the point, it is, in fact, to give them what the Other took away with the injunction “Speak White!”<sup>52</sup> But does this not constitute a change in ideological direction? The nationalist goal, anchored in the notion of “difference,” does, in fact, need to be reinforced by distinctive characteristics, and language is the most important of these. Yet, this form of Québécois distinctness really exists only in the lower classes. In other words, the desire to give a language back to the “people,” a conveniently ambiguous term, masks the ideological reappropriation of the language by the élite, as they attempt to prove the absoluteness of the Québécois “difference,” and thereby justify the demand for political autonomy. Perhaps more than anything else, such a difference guarantees recognition to a new group of writers and sets them apart institutionally from other writers. This, of course, ensures that they have no competition from those who continue to compete for the “Prix Goncourt.”

Michèle Lalonde’s suggestion that writers should live and write among the working class—which V.L.Beaulieu does for several months of the year—brings to mind Luther’s dilemma as he pondered the state of the German language at a time when it was not yet unified. What variety of German would be appropriate for translation? Luther proposed the following:

...We must seek out the mother in her home, the children in the streets, the common man in the market-place and examine what they are saying to discover how they speak; so that we may translate according to that. Then they will understand and notice that we speak German just like them.<sup>53</sup>

In pre-referendum nationalist Quebec as well as in reformist Germany, the success or failure of an ideology depended on a willingness to communicate with the people. To achieve hegemony, a group needs grassroots support. This was the case in the creation of a new religious institution in Germany and remains so for the creation of a literary institution in Quebec. The emergence of a truly Québécois literary institution is dependent upon the existence of a public. The Québécois language, which has been entrusted with this mission, is to “international French” what the dialects of Germany were to Latin. But there is a difference. Whereas Latin was truly a foreign language to the “mother in her home” and to “the common man in the market-place,” international French in Quebec is found on the radio, in the newspapers, on television, and in the theatre. Nationalist ideology rejects the notion of Quebec French being “international.” In this context, the word “international” has a negative connotation and reveals a desire to exclude; the “multicultural” and the “transcultural” are negative values, to be fought at all costs. Suddenly characterized as “international,” French has been defined as, and deliberately made into, a foreign language. Such an ideology emphasizes the illegitimacy of French, claiming that it is neither heard nor understood in Quebec. And proof of this assertion is to be found in the speech of ordinary Québécois.

More than any other literary genre, the theatre lends itself to the differentiating role entrusted to language. More than any other, the theatre, which gives primacy to the oral, makes it possible to hear the difference between referential French and vernacular French, a difference that is mainly a phonetic one.

### The myths of “Québécois” as a language of translation

The phrase “traduit en québécois” contains a paradox. It indicates, in French, that the language in which the work will be read is not French. This contradiction clearly illustrates the confusion surrounding the meaning of “Québécois.” Native language? Mother tongue? Lost language or the true speech of the Québécois? But which Québécois, and under which circumstances? Characterizations of Québécois range from the myth of its Edenic origins via the standard French of Gaston Miron or Michèle Lalonde, all the way to the sociolectal reality of a “decimated” language called “joual.” What does “traduit en québécois” then mean? Theatre translation illustrates the elusive nature of the Québécois language. Inconsistencies in the target language from one translator to another reflect the paradoxes and the incoherence of definitions of Québécois, as well as the diglossia of those who speak it. As definitions of Québécois itself fluctuate, so translations assume various forms.

Michel Garneau, the translator of *Macbeth*, appears to have given himself the task of rebuilding the original language of Quebec, the language of a distant past when Quebec was still free. With this goal, translation becomes a philological endeavour. To return to the birth of the spoken tongue in Quebec, Garneau undertook a veritable archaeological exploration of the language: “I dug deep (as if digging a well) into the Québécois language until I reached its ancestral source, I rummaged through the glossaries like crazy.”<sup>54</sup> Garneau also states that he reproduced the phonetics of the Gaspésie dialect. But why not the dialect of the Beauce or the Saguenay? His choice was apparently based on a concern for greater authenticity: “Beginning with lexical and syntactic archaisms, from the rural poetry of old laments and Gaspésien pronunciation (that Garneau, like Jacques Perron, finds more authentic), he creates a sort of ideal Quebec language.”<sup>55</sup>

The primacy Garneau accords to the speech of the Gaspé Peninsula clearly smacks of ideology. It so happens that the Gaspésie was the original site of Quebec, since it was here that Jacques Cartier landed in 1534 and planted a cross to claim the new land. The motivation for choosing the Gaspésie dialect is perhaps unconscious. The choice, none the less, is a functional one, since its purpose is to restore the Quebec language to its original truth and purity. The resulting language is an “ideal” language—in other words, a perfect, nostalgic, mythical language. It is, indeed, the same language as the native tongue called for by Miron; it represents, literally, the language of the country at its birth. It is the language of the “savage that I was,” according to Garneau, “in the infancy of the tall grass.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, nostalgia for this lost innocence suffuses the whole of the “naïve” poetry of the author of *Petits chevaux amoureux* (Little Amorous Horses) or *L’Élégie au massacre des nasopodes* (Elegy for the Massacre of the Nasopodes). The language in Garneau’s *Macbeth* allows us to hear the words of the mother tongue that Michele Lalonde

calls the “language-of-my-mother,” in a world inhabited by *chats sauvages*, *engoul’vents*, *éparviers*, where people *criailent*, *s’époérinent*, *rôdaillent*, and *s’acagnardissent*. Listen to Lady Macbeth convince her husband of the necessity of the crime:

Toute est organisé pis tu sais pus d’quel côté avoér peur?  
 Écoute, j’ai déjà nourri à mon lait, j’sais c’que c’est  
 D’aimer le p’tit qui tête après toé, ben si j’ava’s juré  
 De l’fére comme t’as juré, même pendant qu’y m’ara’t  
     gazouillé  
 Su’a falle, j’y a’ra’s arraché l’teton des gencives  
 Pis j’ y’ a’ra’s craqué ’a tête en deux!<sup>57</sup>

The language in Michel Garneau’s *Macbeth* harks back to the early days of Quebec. It is a language both innocent and ancestral, a “natural” language imbued with a primitive force. It is the language of the pioneers who had to hold their own against a hostile nature. It ties the search for identity to the myth of origins, a myth that the language itself helps to create. The Shakespearian world, and, in particular, that of *Macbeth*, a sacrificial tragedy of primitive violence, provides a perfect backdrop for a prehistorical exploration of the Quebec language. It is a perfect vehicle for reconstructing a past and for bringing to light a time when the language and those who spoke it owed nothing to anybody. The archaeology of the Quebec language reduces “alienation” to degree zero and returns the language to its point of origin, where all forms of dependence on the Other are abolished.

Literary classics such as *Macbeth* are chosen as vehicles for the Quebec language in an attempt to remove the language from its dialect status and to prove that it is capable of fulfilling a referential function. At least, this is the view of critics: “Shakespeare, through his work, gave poetic status to a language which hitherto had none; Garneau wants to demonstrate the richness of the Quebec language and to place it on an equal footing with other languages.”<sup>58</sup> Based on an inaccurate idea of the state of the English language in pre-Elizabethan times, this view makes Garneau the equal of Shakespeare and elevates Québécois to the status of a language at the height of its poetic maturity. The Québécois in Garneau’s *Macbeth* is an anachronistic language, just as Shakespeare’s language is today. In this sense, we can say that Michel Garneau’s translation aims to provide contemporary Quebec speakers, not with a language they can actually speak, but rather with a feeling for their history and their ancestral ties. In any case, the creation of this ancestral language, “native language” according to Miron, or “mother tongue” according to Michèle Lalonde, brings to a successful conclusion the search for a language of one’s own, a necessary condition for establishing the Québécois identity.

Michel Garneau’s philological endeavors are unique. Generally speaking, what is termed “Québécois” translation attempts to establish a difference between the contemporary French of Quebec and the “French of France.” In this way, it falls in line with the programme of the new Quebec theatre, which, according to Jean-Claude Germain, must “restore our national language to the full vigour of its true expression.”<sup>59</sup> But this language, which is theoretically the language of the

Québécois “nation,” displays astonishing diversity when used as a language of translation. Let us look, for example, at several extracts from the stage directions of Québécois translations:

Chekhov, *Les Trois Sœurs (The Three Sisters)*, translated by Robert Lalonde

LA MAISON DES COTÉ. UN SALON MODESTE; BEAUCOUP DE MEUBLES ET DE BIBELOTS. ATMOSPHERE TRES “FAMILIALE” ET ORDINAIRE. LA SALLE À MANGER EST CONTIGUË AU SALON. C’EST UN DIMANCHE ENSOLEILLÉ DE PRINTEMPS.

GISÈLE EST EN UNIFORME D’INSTITUTRICE POUR JEUNES FILLES ET CORRIGE SES DEVOIRS. ANGÉLE EST ASSISE; SON CHÂLE SUR LES GENOUX ET LIT. ISABELLE EST OCCUPÉE À METTRE LA TABLE. ON VA DÎNER.

*Gisèle (EN CORRIGEANT SES DEVOIRS):*—Ça fait un an aujourd’hui que papa est mort. Le jour de ta fête Isabelle. On gelait. J’pensais virer folle. Toi Isabelle, t’étais étendue sur le divan, blanche comme une morte... Ça fait rien qu’un an pis on peut déjà en parler comme de n’importe quoi d’autre... Tu vois, t’es-t-en robe blanche Isabelle, pis t’as l’air tellement en santé! T’es si belle dans c’tte robe là. C’est avec la robe de maman que tu l’as faite?<sup>60</sup>

Theoretically, the translator has reproduced authentic North American rural French. The dialogue uses oral contractions such as “j’pensais,” “pis,” “t’as,” and “c’tte robe là.” Expressions like “virer folle” and “être en santé” immediately identify the speaker as French Canadian. She is a teacher and a doctor’s daughter, but her speech, full of expressions like “t’es-t-en robe,” is not the speech of a cultivated person and is in marked contrast to the “Québécois” used by the translator in his stage directions. These language choices can be explained by the fact that translators of plays into Québécois always begin by transposing the original setting into a lower register. Brigadier-General Prosorov’s house becomes the house of a village notable. The “salon” (complete with columns) “behind which there is a large room”<sup>61</sup> is transformed into “a modest living-room” with a “very domestic and ordinary” atmosphere. We have already noted that Garneau has a tendency to remove from the original text any indicators that place the characters in a dominant social position. It could be said that, in the interests of representing *québécoisité* on the stage, the characters of the original work undergo a social lowering in the translation. We may well ask, then, to what extent the choice of foreign plays translated in Quebec is a function of the social position of their characters. This social lowering has a direct effect on the language used by the characters in the translation, allowing them to speak a type of language marked by phonetic, lexical, and syntactic features characteristic of speech in Quebec, and particularly characteristic of the lower classes. And it is the lower

classes who must be portrayed, since portrayal of the lower classes reinforces the sovereigntist credo, based, as it is, on the concept of the alienation of the people. This ideology of difference does not allow for the neutrality of the French spoken by the educated classes in Quebec. The difference between Quebec French and the French of France is, in point of fact, a sociolectal one. This is evident in written stage directions, which carry no specific linguistic markers of Québécois speech.

Brecht, *La Bonne Âme de Se-Tchouan* (*The Good Person of Sechuan*),  
translated by Gilbert Turp

LE SOIR—LE VENDEUR D’EAU S’ADRESSE AU PUBLIC

Wang—Chu vendeur d’eau dans capitale du Setchouan: ici.  
mon travail? c’est pénible  
pendant les sécheresses—faut que je cours à l’autre bout du monde  
pour trouver de l’eau  
pis pendant les pluies ben...j’en vends pas  
*ce qui règne surtout dans notre belle province c’est la misère*  
en fin de compte—ya à peu près rien que sués Dieux  
qu’on peut compter pour se faire aider  
ben à ma plus grande...grande joie  
j’ai appris par un marchand de bétail comme yen passe souvent dans le  
coin que des Dieux—pis des hauts placés—sont en route pour icite pis  
qu’on serait en droit de s’attendre à les recevoir  
je suppose que le ciel s’est tanné de nous entendre nous plaindre vers  
lui dins airs.<sup>62</sup>

The central ideological matrix of the discourse on Québécois alienation mirrors the theme of Brecht’s *Good Person of Sechuan*, a fable set in the province of Sechuan, “which represented all those places where men exploit other men.”<sup>63</sup> And Quebec is one of those places where men... By sheer chance, the first line of the play sets the tone for the theme of Québécois identity. Wang is the very symbol of the Québécois. The “marchand d’eau” (water merchant) of the French version becomes in Quebec the “vendeur d’eau” (water-seller). This change may appear insignificant, but the phonetic significance of the expressions chosen by the Québécois translator should not be overlooked. The “vendeur d’eau” captures much better the sense of the “porteur d’eau,” a term traditionally employed by Québécois to describe the inferiority of their social condition and their exploitation since the English Conquest. Elsewhere in the play, the expression “notre province” acquires a modifier, becoming “notre belle province,” thereby changing the referent of the discourse: Sechuan becomes an allegory for Quebec, just as Scotland does in the Québécois translation of *Macbeth*: (“les drapeaux des étrangers insultent not’ beau ciel”—“foreign flags are an insult to our beautiful sky”). This new referent echoes one of the main themes of the discourse of Québécois alienation: “Quebec is a despoiled nation,” a theme that clearly informs Garneau’s idiosyncratic translation: “O nation miserable”/ “J’appartiens à eune nation ben misérable” and corresponds exactly to “Chu vendeur d’eau” (I’m a water-seller). We now begin to see why translation into Québécois

almost always involves proletarianization of the language.<sup>64</sup> The pauperization of the signifier reflects the alienation of the Québécois public for whom the text is intended. The procedure used to achieve this is graphemization. By graphemization we mean the graphic realization of the difference between the phonetics of the Québécois language and those of an unmarked French: “chu”/“je suis,” “sués”/“sur les,” “dins airs”/ “dans les airs.” But this transcription is not always functional. Consider, for example, Jean-Claude Germain’s retranslation of Brecht’s *A Respectable Wedding*:

*La mariée*: Ah oui...çé lui qu’y a eu l’idée pour toute han?... Ya tiré les plans, y a achte le bois, y l’a scié, y l’a sablé pis y l’a collé... parsque toute est embouffeté pis collé han...a parre les pantures, y a pas un clou...çé faite rustique!<sup>65</sup>

Here, the written form is tampered with to give the illusion that there is an irreconcilable difference between “Québécois” and French. But how does the French pronunciation of words such as “acheter,” “embouveté,” “parce que,” or “à part” differ from the Québécois pronunciation, a pronunciation that is supposedly reflected in Germain’s spelling? On the same page and in the mouth of the same character we find the following: “votre oncque Hubert” and “votte oncque Huberre.”<sup>66</sup> There are similar inconsistencies throughout the text. As we mentioned earlier, these inconsistencies form part of an ideological pattern: the deformed spelling, invented by Germain and presented as what he calls “our national language,” is in fact an “in” code that functions primarily as a form of differentiation and, consequently, a form of exclusion.

In many cases, the language used for translation resembles that used in dramatic writing, in which an alienated speech variety is realistically transposed and takes on a cathartic function. This is what Michel Tremblay set out to achieve. His plays paved the way for implementation of Michèle Lalonde’s program for the Québécois language:

...the subject of *joual* as a language for the theatre has received a great deal of attention... Many accepted it immediately, while others categorically rejected it; however, both groups spent too much time and effort on the subject, in my opinion, to the detriment of its intended use in the theatre... As I have often said...it is all well and good to speak of my audacity in writing in “true” *joual*, but we must not forget what lies behind this outcast of a language, this ugly, poor, anaemic “disgraceful” etc., etc., etc.... It is not only the élite who have “profoundly human problems” and it is possible to say “I am unhappy” without a glass of Martini in one’s hand... Rose Ouimet’s “Maudit cul!” is the strongest expression of despair that a Québécoise can utter. Did the audience understand this in *Les Belles-Soeurs* or was it enough for them to be shocked because it was vulgar?<sup>67</sup>

The sociolect chosen by Tremblay is functional. It plays a role in the renewal of the theatrical aesthetic by modifying those norms that produce the effect of reality. The naturalistic reproduction of the language jolts people into a new awareness. But

Tremblay does not claim to be supplanting what previously functioned as a referential language. *Joual* is for him simply one of those registers available in the written language:

My role is to continue to describe the working-class world, while from time to time allowing myself the luxury of a “Lysistrata” and a “Cité dans l’Oeuf.” But those whose role is to continue to produce such plays as “Lysistrata” and “Cité dans l’Oeuf,” they, too, ought to allow themselves the luxury of a “Belles-Soeurs” occasionally... I cannot accept people looking down their noses at *Les Belles-Soeurs* just because it is vulgar...they should read Edward Albee, Tennessee Williams, and John Arden in English! Were the Americans and the English ashamed of coming to grips with *their* “joual”?<sup>68</sup>

Michel Tremblay’s *joual* plays created an opening in the literary system in Quebec. No such opening existed in the literary system of France. This new theatrical form had an important consequence; it broadened the translatability of the sociolects of Anglo-American plays, which now had a “natural equivalent” in Quebec culture, though not in French culture: “It is time for us to begin translating American plays ourselves! The French, whom I much admire incidentally, have the gift of ‘disfiguring’ American theatre.”<sup>69</sup> The inadequacy Tremblay addresses here is systemic and was a feature of French theatre of the time, as opposed to Québécois theatre, where the translation of works by Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, or Eugene O’Neill was no longer faced with a linguistic void. Let us look at two Québécois translations of the following extract from *Desire under the Elms*:

*Cabot*: I couldn’t work today. I couldn’t take no interest. T’hell with the farm! I’m leavin’ it! I’ve turned the cows an’ other stock loose! I’ve druv ‘em into the woods whar they kin be free! By freein’ ‘em, I’m freein’ myself! I’m quittin’ here today! I’ll set fire t’house an’ barn an’ watch ‘em burn, an’ I’ll leave Yer Maw t’haunt the ashes, an’ I’ll will the fields back t’God, so that nothin’ human kin never touch ‘em! I’ll be a-goin’ to Californi-a.<sup>70</sup>

**Translation by Robert Ripps and Yves Sauvageau**

*Cabot*: J’pourrais pas travailler aujourd’hui...m’y sens pas l’coeur. Au diabe la terre! J’la lâche là! J’viens d’lâcher les vaches pis l’reste du bétail! J’les ai poussés de par le bois où c’est qu’y vont être libes! Leu rendant la liberté, j’m la donne aussi. C’t’aujourd’hui que j’pars d’ici. J’vas sacrer l’feu à maison pis à grange, m’a r’garder brûler les bâtiments...m’a laisser ta mère s’promener dins cendres...pis m’a r’mette mes champs au bon yeu comme ça y aura jamais rien d’un humain qui y toucheront. M’a m’embarquer pour la California.<sup>71</sup>

**Translation by Michel Dumont and Marc Grégoire**

*Cabot*: J’ai pas été capable de m’mettre à l’ouvrage aujourd’hui. Ça m’tentà pas. Au yâbe la ferme! J’en veux pus. Les vaches, j’les ai lâchées

lousses, pis toute le resse du bétail itou! J'les ai amenées dans l'bois pour qu'y soyent libes! J'les ai libérées pis en faisant ça, J'me sus libéré moé-même! J'm'en va d'icitte pas plus tard qu'aujourd'hui! J'va sacrer l'feu à maison pis aux bâtiments; j'va les r'garder brûler, pis toute c'que j'va laisser au fantôme de ta mère, c'est des cendres; c'est l'bon Yeu qui m'a donné la terre, j'va y r'denner à mon tour, pis y arra pus jamà rien d'humain qui va pouvouère y toucher! J'va partir pour la Califournie.<sup>72</sup>

The diversity of social and regional lects of vernacular French in Quebec provides the translator with a broad range of language possibilities. This “co-linguism” exists to the same extent in France. There is no reason why a French translator should not translate O'Neill into the sociolect of farmers of any region in the country. Such a translation, however, would be considered as artificial as a translation into “neutral” French, as Michel Tremblay is all too well aware. The target text would not meet the criteria of acceptability set by the literary institution.

To translate sociolects into French, the translator has to contend, not with an intrinsic deficiency in the linguistic system of France, but rather with a *linguistic void in the normative system of its literature*. Ideology can be detected behind the void, as Renée Balibar has shown in her study of language use and its social effect in the nineteenth-century French novel.<sup>73</sup> A Québécois writer managed to use language to establish a new and distinctive dramatic form. No French writer has ever managed to defy the normalizing linguistic ideology of the Republic to this end. Two social currents in Quebec made this possible—the glorification of difference and the recognition of an American component in the affirmation of the Québécois identity. Since Michel Tremblay began writing in *joual*, abundant use has been made of all the social registers of spoken French in Quebec, both on the stage and on television. Yet, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that *joualization* of the French-Canadian theatre has been influenced by the sociolectal character of the Anglo-American theatre, the most popular foreign-language theatre in Quebec. One thing is clear, the use of the vernacular, an innovation in Quebec, has led to the emergence and institutionalization of a national theatre that does not use French models. Use of the vernacular has also reinforced sovereigntist aspirations by turning the theatre into an ideological springboard. The vernacular is thus an effective vehicle for the central theme of the sovereigntist discourse—the alienation of Quebec society.

### Why translate into Québécois?

The search for a language of one's own offers one explanation for the phenomenon of retranslation. The rejection of the French of France, deemed inadequate for translating foreign plays into Québécois reality, provides another. The search for a native language also explains the phenomenon of retranslation. The “repatriation” to Quebec of the translation of foreign works hitherto available only in French translation is seen as essential. Quebec is able to provide its own translations of foreign plays, but they will be retranslations. Retranslation is a particularly

interesting phenomenon from the point of view of comments that are made in relation to it.

As it is deemed important to avoid using imported translations, Québécois translators have been known to translate from languages they are not familiar with. In such cases, the translator has to work from intermediate translations. For example, Gilles Marsolais translated Strindberg and Chekhov without knowing Swedish or Russian. The same is true of Michel Tremblay's translation of *Uncle Vanya*. Both used word-for-word translations provided by speakers familiar with the language of the original text. They then produced the definitive version by working with existing French or English translations. On occasion, the influence of these earlier translations is so pronounced that the origins of the Québécois version are hardly in doubt. A comparison of two translations of *Uncle Vanya* speaks for itself:

**Michel Tremblay**

SÉRÉBRIAKOV  
 Donner toute sa vie  
     à la science,  
 s'habituer à son cabinet  
     de travail,  
 à son auditoire, à des camarades  
     vénérés  
 et, tout d'un coup,  
     de but en blanc,  
 se retrouver dans ce sépulcre  
 côtoyer tous les jours  
     des gens stupides  
 écouter des propos insignifiants...

je veux vivre, j'aime le succès

j'aime la célébrité, le bruit  
 et, ici,  
 j'ai l'impression d'être en exil.  
 Pleurer sans arrêr le passé,  
 épier le succès des autres,  
 craindre la mort...  
 Je n'en peux plus!  
 Je n'en ai pas la force!  
     Et là, en plus,  
 on ne veut pas me pardonner  
 ma vieillesse!

**Elsa Triolet**

SÉRÉBRIAKOV  
 Donner toute sa vie  
     à la science,  
 être habitué à son cabinet  
     de travail,  
 à son auditoire, à des camarades  
     vénérables  
 et, soudain,  
     on ne sait pourquoi,  
 se retrouver dans ce caveau,  
 voir tous les jours  
 des gens idiots,  
 écouter des conversations  
     qui ne présentent pas  
     le moindre intérêt...

je veux vivre, j'aime le succès

j'aime la célébrité, le bruit,  
 et, ici,  
 c'est l'exil.  
 Pleurer sans arrêr le passé  
 épier le succès des autres,  
 craindre la mort...  
 Je n'en peux plus  
 Je n'en ai pas la force!  
     Et si avec ça,  
 on ne veut pas me pardonner  
 ma vieillesse!<sup>74</sup>

The two extracts are remarkably similar. Compared with Elsa Triolet's translation, Michel Tremblay's translation contains occasional paradigmatic differences

(caveau/sépulcre), but his syntax follows Triolet's almost exactly. The similarity makes one wonder what the real role of retranslation is in Quebec. In some countries, intermediate translations play an essential role. They provide access to foreign works that would remain otherwise unknown for want of a translator capable not only of reading them in the original but of translating them directly into the language of the country.<sup>75</sup> There are a number of explanations for the phenomenon of indirect translation in Quebec, that is to say, translation based on earlier translations. Works translated in this manner *already* exist in the target language. There can even be several contemporary translations of a single work. A number of French translations of classics from other languages have achieved canonical status—translations of Strindberg by Boris Vian, Pirandello by Benjamin Crémieux, or Chekhov by Elsa Triolet. Given the similarity between Québécois translations and their French “models,” it is difficult to sustain the notion that a Québécois audience would find the French version hard to understand. Moreover, when the translations are by Adamov, Pitoeff, or Vitez, one can hardly claim that they do not measure up because they were not translated by theatre specialists. We may therefore conclude that, in the Quebec theatre, translations imported from France are seen to play an anti-mediating role. This is Gilbert Turp's argument: “When I read the French translation of *Mother Courage*, no image came immediately to mind ... what was lacking in the French translation was not reflection or emotion; rather, it was evocation. The French translation of *Mother Courage* said nothing to me.”<sup>76</sup> This same argument is used by Michel Tremblay and Gilles Marsolais to justify their own translations, which were mediated, paradoxically, through the very French translations they wished to replace:

When he read Elsa Triolet's translation, Tremblay was struck by its relatively rigid, literary character... He therefore invited Kim Yaroshevskaya, whose native language is Russian, to translate for him, word by word, the language of Chekhov. The result was significant and revealing. Tremblay noticed that Chekhov's language is *more natural than literary* and that Chekhovian dialogue is full of understatement. It was in this spirit that he produced his translation ... The result, and you will be able to judge for yourself, is a *direct idiom*. It is certainly closer to Chekhov than Elsa Triolet's translation, precise but not *too literary*.<sup>77</sup>

Director Gilles Marsolais used the same procedure in his translation of *Miss Julie*:

As I didn't know Swedish, I would not have dared to produce a French translation of *Miss Julie* except that I was fortunate to meet Ulla Ryghe, a Swedish cinematographer living in Quebec... I was then able, thanks to her collaboration (and to her dictionaries!), to go directly to the Swedish text and to correct certain mistakes which had been carried over from translation to translation... I compared this text to existing translations and was then able to produce the first draft of the present translation.<sup>78</sup>

After reworking the first translation, which he felt to be too literal, Gilles Marsolais arrived at the same conclusion as Michel Tremblay:

The result was a second, more direct, more “spoken” translation, a translation more immediately accessible to the public and, finally, I believe, closer to the spirit of Strindberg.<sup>79</sup>

The similarity of argumentation is striking. Paradoxically, ignorance of the source language led the two translators to discover the “truth” of the original text that previous translations, and especially French translations, had concealed. According to Tremblay, the two English translations of *Uncle Vanya* are more “natural, simpler and closer to us.”<sup>80</sup> The literariness, or artificiality that the Québécois translator criticizes in French translations can be seen as proof that the distance between the vernacular and the literary language is no longer the same in France as it is in Quebec. This is especially true for the theatre. The new Québécois theatre has achieved its own singularity, by doing away with this linguistic distinction. It has given the *koine*, the language of the home and the street, its status as a literary language. To conform to the criteria of acceptability in the new Québécois theatre system, the translation of a work like *Mademoiselle Julie* by Boris Vian must be shorn of its French literariness. This is precisely what G.Marsolais did in his translation:

#### Boris Vian

*Jean:* Je rêve d'ordinaire  
que je suis couché sous un  
grand arbre dans une forêt  
obscur. Je veux monter,  
monter au sommet, pour voir  
le clair paysage tout brillant  
de soleil, et dénicher le nid  
où dorment les oeufs d'or.<sup>81</sup>

#### Gilles Marsolais

*Jean:* Moi, Je rêve  
d'ordinaire que je suis  
couché sous un grand arbre  
dans une forêt sombre. Et  
j'ai envie de monter,  
monter jusqu'au sommet,  
pour regarder le clair paysage  
où brille le soleil et dérober les oeufs  
d'or de cette nichée.<sup>82</sup>

Marsolais's retranslation has removed the poetic scansion that reinforces the expression of the dream, but, aside from that, in what other ways is his translation particularly Québécois? We are dangerously close to the ideology of “the language of one's own” and of solipsism when a work written in or translated into the French of France is rejected on the grounds that it would be inaccessible to the Québécois public. Monique Mercure, who played Mother Courage in Gilbert Turp's Québécois translation, has this to say:

In the French translation there are occasional expressions that I didn't understand and a different syntax; these have become patently clear in this translation. If, for example, I had had to act in the French translation of the play, I would have had to read the English translation to grasp all

the subtleties and all the nuances. This is often the case for French translations of foreign writers.<sup>83</sup>

The French translation, understood by the Québécois public for decades, suddenly becomes opaque and inaccessible to this very same public. To understand the French text, the francophone reader in Quebec must henceforth make a detour by way of English, that is to say, via a foreign language. Granted, what the actress is really objecting to in French translations is the “polished” language that detracts from the original text.

According to Gilles Marsolais, it would be abnormal if a foreign-language play were not “translated or adapted by a Québécois before being staged.”<sup>84</sup> Given the desire to reterritorialize, the nationality of the translator becomes, apparently, a major criterion for legitimizing translations of plays staged in Quebec and for ensuring their acceptance. Yet Marsolais echoes Boris Vian, who himself foresaw the necessity for a “new Francicization of *Julie*...as part of the evolution of the language of the French theatre.”<sup>85</sup> In 1968, the language of the theatre in Quebec underwent a revolution of truly Copernican proportions. Québécois translators had good reason for trying to bridge the gap between the language of the French theatre and the language of the new theatre. For Tremblay and for many others, Québécois translations are more effective on the stage than French translations because they make use of an orality that echoes everyday speech. And indeed, parts of the dialogue in Michel Tremblay’s translation of *Uncle Vanya* are markedly different from those of Elsa Triolet’s version:

**Tremblay**

*Marina:* On est toutes  
des pique-assiette chez le  
bon Dieu. Toi, comme Sonia,  
comme Ivan Pétrovitch,  
personne reste à rien faire,  
on travaille toutes!  
Toutes... Ousqu’est Sonia

*Téléguyine:* Au jardin.  
Avec le docteur, ils  
cherchent Ivan Pétrovitch  
partout. Ils ont peur qu’il  
se fasse du mal.

*Marina:* Pis ousqu’i est  
son fusil?

**Elsa Triolet**

*Marina:* Nous sommes tous  
des parasites chez le bon Dieu.  
Toi, comme Sonia, comme Ivan  
Pétrovitch, personne ici ne reste  
à ne rien faire, tous nous  
travaillons! Tous... Où est  
Sonia?

*Téléguyine:* Au jardin. Elle  
est avec le docteur, ils  
cherchent partout Ivan  
Pétrovitch. Ils ont peur qu’il  
n’attente à sa vie.

*Marina:* Et où est son  
pistolet?

The difference between these two translations reflects the difference between French and Québécois literary codes for the theatre. In the Québécois theatre, the “naturalist” code is the equivalent of the French literary code. This is clearly exemplified in Tremblay’s plays. But in his translation of *Uncle Vanya*, the naturalist code is found only in the language employed by Marina. If we compare

Tremblay's and Triolet's translations of the play, it becomes clear that there is only a fine line between the theatrical language of the two countries. It is even finer in Gilles Marsolais's translation of *Mademoiselle Julie*. His Québécois translation of the play belies what, as a translator, he says of his work: "our approach to international French is far removed from that of our French cousins. We have a vocabulary, a spirit, which are all our own." He has hidden this irreconcilable difference extremely well:

*Julie*: Assez pour commencer! Viens avec moi! Je ne puis voyager seule aujourd'hui, le jour de la Saint-Jean, entassée dans un train étouffant, au milieu d'une foule de gens qui vous dévisagent! Et le train qui s'arrête à chaque station, quand on voudrait voler! Non, je ne peux pas. Je ne peux pas!<sup>86</sup>

Is this not the language of an aristocrat? The cook expresses herself in an international Québécois as refined as that of her mistress, even if occasionally she uses a local turn of phrase emphasizing her status as a woman of the "people":

*Christine*: Écoutez Jean, voulez-vous venir danser avec moi quand j'aurai fini? [...]

Oh, ses mauvais jours approchent et elle est toujours à l'envers *dans ce temps-là*. Venez-vous danser avec moi maintenant?<sup>87</sup>

There is, however, a difference between the language used to translate and the language used by translators to discuss their translations, especially when the translators are playwrights or directors, and therefore belong to the theatre. Quite clearly, they are trying to dissociate themselves from their French cultural and linguistic heritage. They are trying to place a *cordon sanitaire* around their burgeoning theatre, but they have failed to create a distinctive language for the theatre, a language that could be used as a systematic and coherent language of translation. When the chosen target language is a sociolect that is distinctively Québécois, we are immediately struck by the diglossia between the translation, on the one hand, and the preface and instructions to the directors or actors, on the other. The justification for the "Quebecization" of foreign texts is written in a language that no longer bears any trace of its *québécoité*. We have already observed that the language translators use to translate is not the same as the language they use to explain to their Québécois readers that the play was translated for the express purpose of putting it within their reach. Gilles Marsolais and Jean-Claude Germain are, each in his own way, the most obvious examples of this tendency. Québécois translators are inconsistent, in that they employ both the vernacular and the referential language. However, the role of the languages is reversed: the vernacular is used to translate the foreign text, while the referential language is used to comment on the text. Translations into Québécois therefore play an ideological rather than a mediating role. The diglossia between the dialogue and the commentary or stage directions in these translations demonstrates to what extent the audience is being

manipulated. The discourse on language used by translators, who often double as playwrights, enables them to introduce an ideology of *québécoisité* to the public, a public from which they exclude themselves.

## Notes

- 1 Jakobson, 1969, 353.
- 2 Mounin, 1963. See also Ladmiral's synthesis (1979, 85–114).
- 3 Mounin, 1963, 165.
- 4 These very questions were raised by T.Savory:

Cervantes published *Don Quixote* in 1605; should that story be translated into contemporary English, such as he would have used at the time had he been an Englishman, or into the English of today? There can be, as a rule, very little doubt as to the answer, for, in most cases, a reader is justified in expecting to find the kind of English that he is accustomed to. If a function of translation is to produce in the minds of its readers the same emotions as those produced by the original in the minds of the readers, the answer is clear. Yet there is need to notice in passing the possibility of exceptions whenever the original author is read more for his manner than for his matter. We may read the speeches of Cicero, for example, chiefly that we may have an opportunity to appreciate his eloquence. Of recent years the most eloquent speaker of English has been Sir Winston Churchill, and Churchill's style was not Cicero's style. Should a speech by Cicero be so translated as to sound as if it had been delivered by Churchill? No (1968, 56–7).

- 5 “Gaweda” is a synthesis of several registers, the styles of nineteenth-century Polish story-tellers and of seventeenth-century Sarmatian Baroque. In his novel *Trans-Atlantyk*, Gombrowicz re-creates “the sound of a stylized way of speaking..., deliberately rustic (an affection comparable to the language Proust gave to the Guermantes)...a mixture that conjures up a “Polishness” of former times.” After explaining how an invented language is used to expose the archaeological layers of this nostalgic Polishness, C.Jelenski demonstrates how translators of the novel managed to deal with what appeared to be deficiencies in the target language:

It seemed futile to look for...a coherent French model. In cases where there was an archaically colourful word in the Polish text, we turned to writers such as Madame de Sévigné, Saint-Simon, or even La Fontaine, and simply borrowed expressions similar to the ones in the original. These expressions played the same role in the French text (contrast between contemporary and past time periods, witty allusion to quaint former times) as their equivalent in the

Polish text. On occasion, a dated syntactic device enabled us to render the fin-de-siècle colour of certain passages, that kind of mocking, humorous distinction used to describe particularly superficial characters in the novel.

(Gombrowicz, 1976, 20; our translation)

- 6 E.Nida has found a practical answer to this difficult question: the speech of women should have priority because it is women, not men, who are responsible for educating the children. The proselytizing objective that motivates Nida's translation of the Bible explains this "pragmatic" solution to a fundamentally linguistic problem (Nida and Taber 1982, 32). In more common cases of bilingualism or diglossia, Nida and Taber's choice of priorities is similarly motivated:

...priority is given to the larger of two languages, or to a language designated as national or official, or to a language spoken by an appreciable number of people who cannot communicate effectively in any other language... With respect to the level of language to be used in the translation, priority is given to common language or popular language translations over translations made in literary language.

(ibid., 176–7)

- 7 Berman, 1984, 46–7; our translation.  
 8 Quoted by C.Bruneau, 1955, 126.  
 9 Du Bellay, *Deffense et illustration de la langue françoise*, Book I, Ch.V (quoted by Mounin, 1955, 14). We should not forget, however, that Du Bellay rejected and impugned translation as an agent of this transformation.  
 10 Gobard, 1976, 34; our translation.  
 11 Ibid.  
 12 Trudeau, 1982, 122.  
 13 Bergeron, 1980.  
 14 S.Robinson and D.Smith, *Practical Handbook of Canadian French* (Toronto: Macmillan 1973), i.  
 15 Ibid., 1, 6, 102, 72, 74.  
 16 Bergeron, 1981, 11; our translation.  
 17 Ibid., 9.  
 18 Ibid., 8.  
 19 This is how Nida defines adaptation (1982, 134).  
 20 Lalonde, 1979, 21; our translation.  
 21 On the construction of "memory-screens" and reinterpretations made by nationalist historiographers of the Conquest, which is portrayed as "the initial catastrophe of French Canada, the *Apocalypse Now* that plunged a country happy under the French, into subjection and humiliation," see Weinmann, 1987, 277–88.  
 22 Rioux, 1974, 17; our translation.  
 23 Here is how the authors, both university professors, describe the goal of the

*Practical Handbook of Canadian French*: “It is the authors’ hope that it will aid communication and understanding between the two main language groups and also demonstrate the richness of expression of French-Canadian speech, a language attuned to our Canadian reality”, 1973, back cover.

- 24 Lalonde, 1979, 53.  
 25 See, in particular, Marcel, 1982 and Trudeau, 1982.  
 26 Rossi-Landi, 1983, 87; emphasis in the original.  
 27 Dubois, 1978, 44–5; our translation.  
 28 Lalonde, 1979, 53; our translation.  
 29 Ibid., 15.  
 30 J.Éthier-Blais, “Sept auteurs en proie au mal québécois,” in *Le Devoir*, 20 Feb. 1988, D-8; our translation, emphasis added.  
 31 Garneau, 1974; our translation.  
 32 Lalonde, 1979, 53. In an article by J.Godbout, entitled “Ma langue, ma maison,” we find the same theme of the impurity introduced by the immigrant:

In the villages and towns of Quebec, there are particularly ugly neighbourhoods where buildings, besides being covered in multicoloured neon lights, are decorated in an astonishing variety of styles... The passer-by sees in these places the delirious expression of a shattered culture where styles, inspired by the traditional Canadian house, the Spanish castle, or by Victorian turrets, remind us that here, in our country, people can reconstruct their universe as they wish... Why has Montreal been disfigured? To build American sky-scrapers. To build Italian white-brick buildings in red-brick streets. Could the Greeks have been forbidden to put blue paint on the grey stones and could the Portuguese have been told not to transform slate roofs into rainbows?... We should perhaps perceive bilingualism in this way. A single language is harmony, more than one language is war... But since language is the architecture of emotions and thought, there are places on the verge of madness. We are living in one.

(*L'Actualité*, July 1987, 104)

- 33 J.-P.Faye uses the expression “cette inconnue énigmatique” in his preface to Lalonde, 1979 (p. 6).  
 34 Miron, 1970, 118.  
 35 Ibid., 118, 124.  
 36 Ibid., 118.  
 37 Weinmann, 1987, 315.  
 38 Miron, 1970, 118.  
 39 “The desire for a State, to be constituted in a Nation-State, thus corresponds necessarily to the desire that motivates certain individuals or certain groups within a society to impose their interpretation of the national interest on all members of the society... When the former take over the power of the State,

you may expect the national interest they invoke to be represented as all the more urgent and at the same time all the more objective, so great will be the desire for power that motivates them, and so imperious their determination to impose on all of society a conception of itself that is destructive of its habitual way of living and thinking” (Morin and Bertrand, 1979, 138–9).

- 40 Gobin, 1978, 107; our translation, emphasis in the original.
- 41 Lalonde, 1979, 12.
- 42 Ibid., 13.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid., 15.
- 45 Chamberland, 1969, 69; our translation.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Lalonde, 1979, 20. The incest theme is also found, interestingly, in Michel Tremblay’s *Bonjour là, bonjour* (1974). The theme appears in a number of plays, but Tremblay uses it as a metaphor and not just to evoke a social problem.
- 48 Lalonde, 1979, 13.
- 49 Ibid., 18.
- 50 Ibid., 164.
- 51 Ibid., 166.
- 52 Lalonde, 1974, “poème-affiche” (protest-poem).
- 53 Luther, quoted in Herman, 1984, 45; our translation.
- 54 M.Garneau, production notes for *Macbeth* at Le Théâtre de la Manufacture; quoted by Andrès and Lefebvre, 1979, 84.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 M.Garneau, “AG, aile gauche,” in 1974.
- 57 Shakespeare, 1978, 41. The original text is as follows: “I have given suck, and know/How tender ’tis to love the babe that milks me./I would, while it was smiling at my face,/Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums /And dashed the brains out, had I sworn as you/Have done to this” (Shakespeare, 1962, 851).
- 58 Andrès and Lefebvre, 1979, 84; our translation.
- 59 The following appears on the back cover of the play by J.-C.Germain, 1972: *Diguïdi, diguïdi, ha! ha! ha!* followed by *Si les Sansoucis s’en soucient, ces Sansoucisci s’en soucieront-ils? Bien parler, c’est se respecter!*
- 60 Chekhov, n.d., 2.
- 61 “V dome Prozorovyx. *Gostinnaja s kolonnami, za kotoroj viden bol’šoj zal.* Polden; na dvore solnečno, veselo. V zale nakry-vajut stol dlja zavtraka”: Chekhov, 1984, 307; emphasis added.
- 62 Brecht, “La Bonne Âme de Se-Tchouan,” unpublished, trans. Gilbert Turp. The extract is quoted directly from the manuscript, deposited with the National Theatre School library. The following is the original text (p. 1).

*EST IST ABEND, WANG, DER WASSERVERKAÜFER,  
STELLT SICH DEM PUBLIKUM VOR. Wang: Ich bin  
Wasserverkäufer hier in der Hauptstadt von Sezuan. Mein  
Geschäft ist mühselig. Wenn es wenig Wasser gibt, muss ich*

weit danach laufen. Und gibt es viel, bin ich ohne Verdienst. Aber in *unserer Provinz* herrscht überhaupt grosse Armut. Es heisst allgemein, dass uns nur noch die Götter helfen können. Zu meiner unaussprechlichen Freude erfahre ich von einem Vieheinkäufer, der viel herunkommt dass einiger der höchsten Götter schon unterwegs sind und auch hier in Sezuan erwartet werden dürfen. Der Himmel soil sehr beunruhigt sein wegen der vielen Klagen, die zu ihm aufsteigen.

(Brecht, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,"  
in *Die Stücke von Bertolt Brecht*, 595; emphasis added)

63 Editor's note in Brecht, 1975, 11.

64 French translations use the reverse procedure. The "marchand d'eau" expresses himself as if he were a member of high society:

WANG—Je suis marchand d'eau, ici, dans la capitale du Se-Tchouan. Mon commerce est pénible. Quand il n'y a pas beaucoup d'eau, je dois aller loin pour en trouver. Et quand il y en a beaucoup, je suis sans ressources. Mais dans notre province règne généralement une grande pauvreté. Tout le monde dit que seuls les dieux peuvent encore nous aider. Joie ineffable, j'apprends d'un maquignon qui circule beaucoup que quelques-uns des dieux les plus grands sont déjà en route et qu'on peut aussi compter sur eux au Se-Tchouan. Le ciel serait très inquiet du fait des nombreuses plaintes qui montent vers lui.

(*ibid.*, 7)

65 Brecht, 1976, 30.

66 Brecht, 1976, 30.

66 *Ibid.*, 31.

67 Tremblay, 1969, 3.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Tremblay, program for *L'Effet des rayons gamma sur les vieux garçons*, quoted in *Cahiers de la Nouvelle Compagnie Théâtrale* 1 (October 1974), 10.

70 O'Neill, *Desire under the Elms*, in 1959, 57.

71 O'Neill, n.d., 81.

72 *Ibid.*, 100.

73 R. Balibar (1985, 280–98) has analysed the procedures used by French novelists to create local colour. She notes in particular that textual elements employed to create a rural effect often appear in italics and must be read in a different tone and treated differently from the main body of the text. A novel like *Jeanne* by G. Sand, in which there is an attempt to defend a dialect, the old French of Berri, was a failure. Balibar points out that the use of the dialect in the same context as the national language had no influence on French thought of the time. She attributes this failure to the contemporary ideological atmosphere, the Republican ideal being to promote communication among citizens with different mother tongues. The legitimate language was

the language of the state, and every effort had to be made to eradicate differences.

- 74 Chekhov, 1967, 373; 1983, 44–5.
- 75 This situation can be applied to a country like Israel. In this respect, see G. Toury, 1980.
- 76 Turp, 1984, 3; our translation.
- 77 Krysinski, 1983, 10–11; our translation, emphasis added. This observation is similar to M. Bataillon’s analysis of the translation of *Platonov* by E. Triolet; the analysis ends with the following observation: “The translation trap in Elsa’s work is that she is splendidly fluid.” This “polished” translation, adds Bataillon, “corresponded exactly to what was happening in the theatre of the fifties”: *Sixièmes assises de la traduction littéraire* (Arles: Actes Sud 1989), 82–5.
- 78 Marsolais, 1977, 11; our translation.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Krysinski, 1983, 11.
- 81 Strindberg, 1985, 13.
- 82 Ibid., 14.
- 83 MacDuff, 1984, 14.
- 84 Marsolais, 1977, 12.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Strindberg, n.d., 52.
- 87 Ibid., 5, 8.

## Ernst-August Gutt

### TRANSLATION AS INTERLINGUAL INTERPRETIVE USE

#### Introduction

**I**F INTERPRETIVE USE cannot serve as the basis of translation theory designed to convey the same “message”, that is, both the explicatures and implicatures of the original, could it not serve as framework for a general theory of translation of a less ambitious kind?<sup>1</sup> The simplest possibility would be if translation *were* interpretive use across language boundaries. In other words, a translation would be a receptor language text that interpretively resembled the original.

From a theoretical point of view, such a theory would, of course, be attractive in that the only stipulation needed to differentiate translation from other instances of interpretive use would be that the original and the new text belong to two different languages.

However, before accepting a theory of translation along these lines, we need to examine more closely what it means to say that an utterance interpretively resembles an original.

Let us look at an example. Suppose that at a linguistic conference a colleague of mine had missed a particular session that I attended. So he might ask me: “What did Pike say?” At this point I clearly have a wide range of options open in answering him. I could:

- a. try to summarize in a couple of sentences what I consider to be the main points of the lecture;
- b. try to give brief summaries of the main points of the lecture;