

A LITERATURE IN THE MAKING: REWRITING AND THE  
DYNAMISM OF THE CULTURAL FIELD. QUEBEC WOMEN  
WRITERS IN ENGLISH CANADA

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**Abstract**

The essay focuses on a study of the reception of Quebec literature in English in Canada and the United States, taking into consideration the indices of its reception in relation to the field of textual production of Quebec literature in English translation, especially the position of women writers in these intercultural relations.

**Keywords:** translation studies – Quebec women writers in English – cultural production

**Resumo**

Este ensaio apresenta um estudo da recepção da literatura quebequense em inglês no Canadá e nos Estados Unidos, levando-se em consideração os índices de recepção em termos da produção textual da literatura do Quebec nas traduções para o inglês, em especial a posição das escritoras nessas relações interculturais.

Are Toronto and New York sites for the consecration of Quebec literature since the 1940s as Paris has long been? In reframing Antoine Sirois' question regarding the horizon of expectation of Parisian

Ilha do Desterro	Florianópolis	nº 42	p.049-102	jan./jun. 2002
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professional readers that influenced the awarding of French literary prizes to three Quebec women writers (147), I am responding to Pierre Hébert's invitation to carry out a more sustained analysis of the "Carrier phenomena" with a study of the reception of Quebec literature in English Canada and the United States ("Carrier" 109). However, I shall not undertake the systematic analysis of the reception of the Quebec corpus by the English-Canadian and American literary institutions that he called for, because I shall not analyze the place of Quebec literature in the educational system. Also, I shall consider only a few indices of its reception, namely the aesthetic and social discourses of literary criticism. On the other hand, I shall extend my analysis to include the field of textual production of Quebec literature in English translation, since English-Canadian publishers' selection among the Quebec corpus – a selection that functions as a second literary system with its own processes of admission, legitimation and consecration – makes visible the poetic discourse of the works and the socio-cultural discourse from which is shaped a representation of Quebec literature and an image of Quebec for English Canada. This representation is the effect of a narrative of decision-making by translators and critics, for literary criticism, like translation, functions as a discourse of legitimation creating hierarchies of value. A selective transmission of the Quebec corpus contributes to the formation of a community of readers, an English-Canadian public, and so works to consolidate an identity for the nation.

Because I am mainly concerned with the position of women writers in these intercultural relations, the parameters of reception of Quebec literary works I have established may seem overly subjective. They are symptomatic, however, since I am building on similar findings in two independent studies of the reception of the Quebec literary corpus by the English-Canadian literary institution. As Réjean Beaudoin, Annette Hayward and André Lamontagne observe, the works of Quebec authors most commented upon by English-Canadian critics were written by Gabrielle Roy, Anne Hébert and Marie-Claire Blais. Jane Koustas has also noted that, according to the index *Canadian Translation*, the texts of Anne Hébert, Gabrielle Roy and Marie-Claire

Blais were those most translated into English.<sup>1</sup> The two phenomena are connected: the more one translates, the more critical reviews are published, the greater the symbolic capital, the more translations completed. Moreover, Mary Jane Green confirms the pertinence of Lise Gauvin's and Laurent Mailhot's observation that American researchers have paid particular attention to Quebec women's writing. Green notes that in *Quebec Studies*, the only American periodical devoted exclusively to Quebec culture, fully half the articles of literary criticism concern women writers. These analyze "the women writers already canonized in Quebec – Gabrielle Roy, Anne Hébert and Marie-Claire Blais, as well as a more recent generation of feminist writers such as Nicole Brossard and Louky Bersianik" (115). Interacting with the hierarchical structure of the anglophone literary system, the reception of works by these two generations of writers exerts a more conservative pressure in the former case and a more oppositional stance towards authority in the second instance. However, the significance of this feminization of Quebec literature is not the same in Canada as in the U.S. While the American canon is composed primarily of male authors, the Margarets – Atwood and Laurence – along with Alice Munro figure prominently in the English-Canadian canon. The dialectical relations between literary systems articulate a movement compensatory for a lack in the American system in the former case, whereas, in the second, the doubling of the systems works to legitimate a pan-Canadian culture through which the nation is feminized. Nonetheless, the situation in English Canada is more complex, as we shall see.

### **Translation in the structuring of the field of cultural production**

Over the last twenty years, the literary institution has been a privileged object of research in Quebec. In English Canada, however, academic criticism has more frequently embarked on deconstructive readings of texts. The author-function still holds sway in English-Canadian journalistic criticism which either celebrates the recognition

of certain authors in a global cultural marketplace, or advances a liberal ideology of individual success by heralding the transcendence of the aesthetic imagination.<sup>2</sup> Such a concept of the autonomous subject is an ideological position that elides the relations of production and of transformation, that is, the social labour through which certain positions are produced as transcendent subject (*auctor*) while others are reduced to the position of marginalized other. This operation naturalizes and neutralizes historical and social relations by fixing in routinized institutional practices what are in fact arbitrary and differential values. Such autonomization in everyday habit derealizes the symbolic violence of a process of consecration that forces works to submit to a treatment of distinction. According to Bourdieu, the logic of relative autonomy in the functioning of the different instances of legitimation establishes a process of differentiation and exclusion upon a principle of cultural legitimacy. Modalities of cultural practice can be defined only as a system of differential positions taken in relation to other possible "*prises de positions*" within a political economy of the sign. Conflicts between different positions create the particular structure of a field through a dialectic of distinction between restricted and general fields of production. The differential deviation structuring the field functions objectively as antagonistic positions of genres and forms. Restricted positions are subject to limited circulation and long-term rewards, as is the case with consecrated texts, deemed classics and taught in the academy. Those positions receiving "large-scale production" compete in the market-place in search of a profitable return on investment in the short run, as is the case with best-sellers. Without appearing to submit to the interference of economic, political or religious power, the institutional practices of distinction reproduce isotopically the relations of power in a stratified society.

However, symbolic forms and systems of relation cannot be set apart from other practices in the everyday but must be considered within the entire range of lived social relations that Bourdieu calls "*habitus*," a social ecology of the sign. Symbolic capital is the social relation that consecrates the signifying practices of the dominant class within a

heterogeneous field of cultural production, among a complex and constantly changing set of circumstances, involving multiple social and institutional actions. The signifying practices and cultural goods of that class wield the symbolic power with the authority to determine cultural and symbolic capital. While Bourdieu's theoretical model and analysis have focused exclusively on the dialectic between restricted and general fields of production as these pertain to class conflict, his attention to their positional properties as a social relation posits the emergence of other position-takings or habitus of groups with potentially differentiated conditions of social possibility. Women, for him, however, constitute only a "specific statistical category" or "target group" to whom works of "brand-name culture" (prize-winners) may be directed and so bring them into the socially dominant group (127-28).<sup>3</sup> This process of differentiating audiences occurs through struggles for specific stakes and rewards along a horizontal axis in which players in the sub-field of large-scale production seek to enhance their economic capital in contrast to those in the field of restricted production who exalt values of disinterestedness. A secondary opposition, intersecting vertically, entails struggles between a consecrated avant-garde and an emerging avant-garde or between different forms, such as the boulevard theatre and vaudeville, that are a function of the social quality of the works and their audiences. The dynamism of the system, the continuous changes within the field of production for the producers, arises from these struggles in the field within the structure of the distribution of a "capital of recognition" or "degree of artistic recognition" (187).

Crucial in Bourdieu's elaboration of the structure of the cultural field is the attention he gives to mediating forms of activity in the production and dissemination of authoritative ideas, texts, authors, etc. There always exists an array of intermediaries such as publishers, critics, journalists, librarians and, I would add, translators, among other diffusers, as well as the social networks and institutions in which they are situated, such as publishing houses, periodicals, schools, scholarly societies, museums and other such sites for dissemination. In this complex network of overlapping and competing institutional sites, these

intermediaries all contribute to the production of the meaning and value of a work. An analysis of the differing positions and histories of translation and criticism in the field of cultural production opens up questions concerning cultural value which is, in Bourdieu's formulation, the constitution, preservation, and reproduction of authority and symbolic power in the field (270).

In analyses of the Quebec literary institution, Bourdieu is often quoted, but Jacques Dubois has had a greater influence, according to Denis Saint-Jacques, who notes a slippage that occurs in which "institution" displaces Bourdieu's concept of the "field" and so neutralizes "the position of the literary within the social configuration" (43). Criticism is concerned less with the "habitus" – the social relations of power lived in everyday practices – than with the Apparatus and the Norm, the French normative standard producing a "conflict of codes" (Belleau) in the Quebec cultural apparatus. There is a greater focus on the modes of consecration and conservation than on the dynamism structuring a heterodox field with multiple position-takers in differentiated social milieux. This slippage occurs in a dialogue between Lise Gauvin and Jacques Dubois on a panel about the autonomy of the Quebec literary institution. Autonomy in this instance refers not to the internal self-regulation of the system of cultural production, as in Bourdieu's usage, but variously designates a technocratic vision of writing or the conditions of a veritable decolonization of culture. Literary criticism functions, then, as the ideologeme "autonomy" in a compensatory discourse of the Quebec field of production that affirms its specificity in a dialectical relation with an other, with both the colonizer ("l'Anglais conquérant") and the linguistic and cultural heritage of France (Brisset 32-33). Recognition of literary value in the field of restricted production constitutes a social relation in which the colonial power retains its prestige if not all its power. Concerned above all with the Paris-Montreal axis, Quebec literature criticism participates in the reproduction and circulation of symbolic goods by marking culturally pertinent distinctions with France for a self-regulating Quebec literary institution in the process of formation. This

preoccupation also orients the discourse on the translation of Quebec literary works. "It seems to me dangerous at any rate," Lise Gauvin comments, "that only novels which have been recognized with French literary prizes are translated into foreign languages" (279). In this formulation, she indicates the complex position of the Quebec cultural field in constant interaction with other fields. Translation is indeed a dynamic mechanism through which cultural fields develop relations with each other. However, translation, as a discursive practice emerging from interlinguistic conflicts, does not transform meaning so much as it *invents* meanings as a function of the ideological conflicts *within* the translating culture.

Whereas Denis Saint-Jacques seeks to expose the underside ("l'envers") of the literary system and draw attention to the missing social relations of power, I want additionally to call for an *inversion* and insist on the importance of exteriorization, of differentiation through exchange, as an important mechanism structuring the field. A system is never completely closed even if autonomous or self-regulating: it can only be thought as system in relation to a becoming through struggles with different historical periods or competing schemas. The determination of value in a given system depends on the selection of a political orientation among divergent positions. Questions of language and culture are always problems of the relation between a dominant class and the people within the mediation of hegemony, according to Gramsci: likewise, translation negotiates the relations of prestige and power between languages within an international arena. Literary value is the value of distinction introduced when translation inserts an enunciation into a different system. However, the values produced on the market of exchange of these symbolic goods differ according to the position taken in relation to the dominant power and as a function of the direction of translation. I propose then to invert the vector of exchanges so as to examine the axes of New York-Paris and New York-Toronto-Montreal. Since World War II, because of American economic supremacy, New York has become the world's cultural capital. The French literary prizes awarded to Gabrielle Roy and Marie-Claire Blais

in particular merely confirmed a previous American legitimation of their work in English translations published in New York and Toronto. France consecrated certain value: *Bonheur d'occasion*, an American best-seller, and *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, the work of "a genius," in the opinion of Edmund Wilson, the most renowned American critic.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the literary field(s) in Canada is/are not autonomous in the way Bourdieu formulated the concept. At every stage in cultural production, government financial support compensates for the lack of economic capital invested in publishing – grants to artists, block grants to publishers, fees to translators, funds to promote books and support readings of work by writers and translators. Publishers do not necessarily seek to please a bourgeois elite in the selection of titles and so produce cultural capital or to extend their audiences through titles chosen to augment economic capital. Government policy intervenes directly in the financing of cultural institutions by determining the categories of cultural production eligible for grants in aid. Translation in Canada is directly regulated by government since the translation of legislation and government documents constitutes the principal field of translation activity and, consequently, determines the norms of translatability. It was only in 1972 with the establishment by the Secretary of State of a programme of grants-in-aid of translation of Quebec and English-Canadian books into the other language, following on the heels of the Official Languages Act (1969), that literary translation developed in Canada, especially among the small, subsidized publishers.<sup>5</sup> There is inevitably a political dimension to the reception of Quebec books in English Canada, since the asymmetrical relations of power between Quebec and English Canada have traditionally been worked out on the terrain of the politics of language.

Quebec literary works selected by French or American publishers for prizes or translations respond to the criteria of these autonomous systems or may be rewritten and so modified as to conform adequately to their norms. A consecration in the restricted field of production of these systems may have important economic considerations for the



Quebec writer in addition to symbolic capital, monetary rewards that the Prix David of Quebec or the Governor-General's Award do not entail. The announcement of the Prix Fémina for Anne Hébert's *Les Fous de Bassan* quintupled its sales (Sirois 158), while the impact of the Prix Fémina on the success of Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* was not nearly as great as the novel's appearance in English translation as the May 1947 selection of the Literary Guild of New York in an edition of 750,000, a consecration in the field of large-scale production more directly tied to economic capital. Both these processes of selection differ from the rewriting in translation by the subsidized English-Canadian presses with their more transparent relations to political power. But a translation may also circulate in the field of marginal production, that of the avant-garde or another specialized audience such as children or women, and earn only a limited, critical success. It is the critical representation of this representation that confers "the public meaning of a work" by proposing "a social definition of its objective position in the field" that differentiates it from other positions (Bourdieu 118-19). Translations of Quebec literary texts have occupied the entire range of these positions, as we shall see, and issues of gender are operative in the distinctions among them that hierarchically structure the field.

### **Rewriting, or changing value and knowledge**

How does an "imported" literature function in a different system? What impact does this importation have on the fame and survival of writing? These are important questions for polysystem theory which concerns itself with the dynamic interaction of heterogeneous cultural fields. Translation, as "metaliterature," is a privileged mode of producing literary knowledge, according to André Lefevere (*Literary* 68). As "rewriting," translation constitutes a model of a dynamic system that relativizes knowledge, opening it continuously to an outside, to the *différend* of an agonistic position or to the shock of the new. For change is produced through a movement of exteriorization or exotopy as much as through internal differentiations within a field and as such

may be posited as a process of becoming, not a binary opposition. Borders are sites of intense semiosis where a new “semiosphere” is produced through the distinction a culture makes between an orderly “us” and a disorderly “them.” Simultaneously within and without, the border both unites and separates and so brings about a realignment of the borderline and a redistribution of value (Lotman 142) that produces heterogeneous and mobile meaning. Criticism and translation are two important modalities of textual “manipulation” which, along with literary history, anthologizing, and many types of peritextual apparatus (prefaces, advertising, book jackets, etc.) engage in mediation and negotiation between different fields or different positions in a field, and so realign borders. Such rewriting functions metatextually to determine its reception in the process of forming an audience by means of specific textual regularities and the performativity of discourse.<sup>6</sup> Forms of “rewriting” propose a certain ideology and a certain poetics in function of a given socioeconomic power by means of which one culture intervenes in another. The resulting refraction may accelerate literary innovation (by introducing new genres, new concepts or new literary techniques) or, on the contrary, rewriting may play a conservative role and inhibit change (by selecting genres, concepts, or techniques that conform to established models) (*Rewriting* vii). Translation, in broadening the field of reception and the framework of a text’s potential readings, plays an important role in increasing the text’s longevity. As Lefevere concludes: “The fame of a writer and his or her position in literature are, to no small extent, at the mercy of his or her translator” (*Literary* 74).

Lefevere’s theory of the textual and ideational manipulation of the literary to differentiated effects reworks a number of elements of polysystem theory. However, with his announcement of the “cultural turn” in translation studies, Lefevere insists more on the socio-cultural changes in the habitus, changes that may be analyzed through the operation of “patronage” (*Rewriting* 11). For Itamar Evan-Zohar, principal theoretician of polysystem theory, translated literature occupies either a primary or a secondary position, according to the state

of the translating culture within the polysystem (22-24). The “normal” position, Evan-Zohar claims, may be found in established or stable literatures where translation occupies a secondary position with a conservative function of reproducing norms. Translated literature occupies a primary position with an innovative function when the translating culture is unstable. Such instability is a feature of the “new” English-Canadian and Quebec literary systems, according to Carolyn Perkes, which are, additionally, marginal in relation to the “strong” French, English and American literary systems. In a process of accelerated constitution since the 1960s, English-Canadian literature is in search of new models to enrich its repertory of forms. Nonetheless, as Perkes observes, its forms have generally changed little despite the increased contact with Quebec literature, at least not those of the novel and short story, the genres most represented in the Quebec corpus in translation, which have reinforced the realistic tendency of English-Canadian fiction. An exception to this model of interaction, according to Perkes – an exception highly significant for my argument – is feminist writing in translation which, she contends, occupies a primary position aiming to transform the models of the target system and produce “adequate” translations. Such a project introduces changes in the English-Canadian peritextual discourse and cultural norms (1196). This approach to translation that evaluates its ideological adequation or performative felicity challenges the discourse of “fidelity” with its corollary of equivalence and identity that predominates in the corpus of translator’s prefaces analyzed by Perkes (1205-06). That there are several modalities for the insertion of Quebec literature in translation into the field of English-Canadian cultural production leads Perkes to conclude that the Canadian literary system does not conform to Evan-Zohar’s hypothesis (1196). The problem, I propose, is on the contrary in polysystem theory’s hypothesis itself that presumes a homogeneous reception of translations according to an abstract and idealist model. However, there is always differentiation and struggle among contending forces within a cultural field, in the present case between works apt for reworking to enter into the restricted field of English-Canadian cultural

production, recognized with prizes and canonized in the education system – two instances of legitimation that consecrate through their symbolic acts – and experimental texts which, produced in a feminist habitus, circulate only in a marginalized field of production.

The concept of “patronage” is of help here in linking position of reception within a field of production to socio-economic contingencies in the cultural field. Lefevre posits different modalities through which operate three aspects of power: ideological, or the formal and thematic constraints on genres of discourse; economic, or the conditions of possibility for living from the sales or salary of one’s works; and the prestige of a particular style of life, or habitus. There is always a situation of “literary diglossia” stratifying the field, even in the case where a singular force – absolute king, totalitarian state or monopoly of big-box stores – controls the three elements of power through subsidies or pensions or censure. But in such a non-differentiated system, the works not recognized would be called “dissident” or would be published only with great difficulty (*Rewriting* 17). This stratification of the field affects the conditions of possibility for publication in a differentiated field as well. Works that conform to the dominant ideology or poetics, and so are likely to be canonized, will easily find a prestigious publisher: works diverging from the doxa will have to make do with a “*samizdat*” or be published in a different system, unless they find a “rewriter” able to make them culturally pertinent (*Rewriting* 21). Such intervention on the part of influential rewriter-critics has positioned Quebec writers within the English Canadian cultural field. Translation may also facilitate such movement into another cultural field, as it does with many texts written in minority languages in Canada whose English (or French) translations are eventually published while the original languishes in manuscript for lack of an audience. But publication in this second cultural field may shape the text to a different horizon of expectations, as we shall see with English versions of works by Quebec women writers. Those works suitable for canonization function in a long cycle of production oriented to the future, rather than in a short cycle of production oriented to the present and pre-established interests,

as are best-sellers and other works in the large-scale field of production. In deciding what will be translated and for what audience, publishers also determine who translates, under what circumstances, and how they translate. This patronage function not only regulates the status of the translator, but intervenes obliquely in the other instances of reception, notably, in those of criticism and education where, on the basis of the works available in English translation, and within the literary schemas proposed by these translated works, readings and interpretations are produced that make them intelligible to a unilingual audience. These operations constitute the textual and ideological effects of the market of symbolic goods that determine the translatable or the "threshold of knowledge" ("seuils du savoir," Perkes) of textual difference.

If I insist on the importance of publishers in the reception of Quebec literature, it is not to contradict Pierre Hébert when he writes that one "can never insist enough on the role played by translators in making Quebec literature known in English Canada" (109), but rather to emphasize the relations of power that determine who will occupy the translator-function. Translators may well write in their prefaces and essays about the "*bonententisme*" in their recognition of the other (in what Sherry Simon has called the "ethnographic" impulse in English-Canadian translations of Quebec literature (53), that is their valorization of alterity), their translations nonetheless are forced to submit to the symbolic violence of the selective process of transmission by publishers within the competition of the market in symbolic goods that creates hierarchies of value.<sup>7</sup> Cultural nationalism always intervenes in these literary (inter)relations, but economic power structures the field. The difference in the reception of translated works, between their secondary or primary position as identified by Perkes, signifies a socio-economic stratification in the English-Canadian cultural field. The "realist" works of fiction by Gabrielle Roy, Anne Hébert, and Marie-Claire Blais, or rewritten to appear realist and express referential knowledge about some "unknown" corner of the nation, circulate in the restricted field of cultural production, produced by American publishers in co-editions

with the large English-Canadian publishers – McClelland & Stewart, Stoddart-General (but not by the branch plant Oxford or Macmillan or Knopf). On the other hand, the works of a younger generation of feminists circulate in the marginal field of production, that of the avant-garde or feminism, published in periodicals such as *Open Letter*, *Exile*, *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, *Tessera*, or by “small” writer-run publishers such as Talonbooks, Exile Editions, Coach House, Women’s Press, that transmit a different representation of Quebec literature.

### **“How do you say ‘Gabrielle Roy’?”**

Do you say [rw ] or [r i]? Ted Blodgett’s question, which I reformulate phonetically here, is asked every day in Toronto where the first French language public school, opened more than twenty-five years ago, is called L’Ecole Publique Gabrielle Roy. No other Quebec writer has managed to lodge herself so deeply in the imaginary and the habitus of English Canadians as Gabrielle Roy. With this question we address the ideological implication of her presence in the heart of the “Queen city.” Is Gabrielle Roy a Quebec writer or a Franco-Manitoban writer or a Canadian writer of French expression? And does this school’s name constitute an opening to embrace exogenous codes in an ethics of cultural difference that recognizes the alterity of the other? Or is it an identificatory translation that accommodates alterity in a play of surface differences to sustain a multiculturalist and pan-Canadianist vision of the nation? Through what dynamic in the dialectic of distinction does Gabrielle Roy compose an integral part of English-Canadian literary history? Under the sign of opposition? Or that of complementarity? As rupture? Or continuity? In the tension and disjunction of this operation of exchange and transference, inevitably incomplete because still in process, I reintroduce the protest of Lise Gauvin about the “distortion” produced in the displacement outside Quebec of the horizon of expectation in the transmission of knowledge through the circulation of symbolic goods. If a community and its knowledge can only exist in a “tragic situation,” according to Gauvin,

who experiences the rewriting of translation as a loss, then it must be in a Tchekovian drama in which the weight of cultural heritage weighs heavily on future possibilities. Yet it was under the sign of modernity that the work of Quebec women writers was first welcomed in English Canada, and that in a relation of inclusion or addition, not of the subtraction identified by Gauvin.

'The Three Sisters' is how François Gallays frames this drama. In his essay, "Gabrielle Roy et ses deux 'soeurs': Marie-Claire Blais et Anne Hébert," he outlines a strong resemblance among novels published between 1945 and 1975 which are structured around the relation between two generation of women and set during the period of World War II. This was a period of great social change in Canada when massive industrialization accelerated modernization, but especially so in Quebec where the struggle for women's independence took the form of political emancipation. Feminism was militant during this struggle for suffrage, because Quebec women did not have the same civil rights as women in other provinces. It was not until 1964 that they were formally recognized as legal persons. Though they had a high symbolic status as mothers, their legal status was a subordinate one. This discrepancy infused passion into their emancipatory struggle at a time when feminism was less militant in anglophone Canada. The transformation in social structures, in their habitus, may be read in the fictional heroines' quest for liberation. Annabelle Rea has also stressed the connections between these novelists in her essay, "*Le premier jardin d'Anne Hébert comme hommage à Gabrielle Roy*," where she notes resemblances between Florentine and Flora in the thematics of the body and maternity. In the motif of Demeter and Persephone, she traces the relations of mothers and daughters in the novels of women writers belonging to different generations in an alternative genealogy to write "une histoire à elle," in the phrasing of Patricia Smart. In this herstory, women would be the subject and not the object of knowledge and resistance would take the form of political action to change the social order. The relations among women are viewed positively by these contemporary critics, in contrast to thirty years ago when such



genealogies of women, especially that of Marie-Claire Blais' *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, were attacked as a matriarchy embodying the colonized subordination of all the Americas, and not just Quebec (Major).

Over the last twenty years, feminist criticism has become an important discourse in the academy following an increase in participation of women in civil society which has conferred on them some cultural capital. Feminist criticism rewrites Quebec literature to make it culturally pertinent for this new order of discourse. It pursues, however, an orientation well established in journalistic criticism that celebrates the work of Quebec women writers for its pathos. This is highlighted in an interview with Carol Moore-Ede, the director of a CBC television production about Gabrielle Roy and Marie-Claire Blais whose novels, *Children of My Heart* and *Nights in the Underground*, had just appeared in English translation. She had tried in the programme to encourage the public to read these novels by evoking in their dramatization "toute la gamme des *émotions*" in the books. The powerful fascination that Quebec women writers have long had for Anglo-Canadians, she claimed, is because these women "have created the most despairing and the strongest images in all Canadian literature" (*La Tribune* 52). These powerful emotions have a political function, as Walter Poronovich writes in the *Montreal Star*, for the promotion of Quebec literature is a federalist project to counter separatism: "If Quebec decides to separate CBC-TV can at least say in good conscience that it had tried earnestly to tell the rest of Canada who and what we Quebecers are" (C3). Neither of these critics noted another politics at stake here, that of gay liberation, for the scenario was written by Timothy Findley, a Toronto gay writer. The masked actors and nightmarish decor in the staging of Blais' fiction which contrasted with the realistic scenes, actual people and landscapes depicting Roy's fiction, might well have represented the abject lesbian who could breathe only "Underground."

*The Garden and the Cage*, title of Findley's dramatization, was borrowed from an essay about Gabrielle Roy's fiction by Hugo



McPherson, published in the first issue of the influential critical periodical, *Canadian Literature*. This essay elaborated what was to become the dominant representation of Quebec literature in its attention to the symbolic and affective aspects of the work – restrained despair contrasted with a sympathy for the characters, the poetry of their dreams, and the passion or lyricism of the novelist. In the work of both Roy and Blais, as we read in the *Montreal Star*, “[t]here is a persistent cloak of bleakness and frustration, fathered by years of aborted hope and fostered by inevitable despair.... Lost souls. Dead souls... All very depressing, yet somehow inherently beautiful in its reflection of life and living” (Poronovich C3). Anne Hébert’s novels are marked by the same polarity, according to a *Montreal Gazette* reviewer: “*Les fous de Bassan* is a harsh book, as severe as the dour community it depicts. But it is also a splendidly lyrical book” with its “spellbinding, perfect language” (Simon C6). While McPherson focused on the tension and oscillation between “the garden of childhood innocence and the past” and “the forces of the city, adulthood ‘experience’” in the work of Roy, the TV dramatization linked Roy’s work to the pastoral myth and Blais’ fiction to the pain of urban living. Newspaper reviews and commentary focused principally on the emotional power of the fiction, on its conventional feminine aspect, in a depoliticization of the novels. Gabrielle Roy in particular is commended for her celebrations of “endurance” and “generosity.”<sup>8</sup> There is no praise for her technical skill as a writer nor for the aesthetics of her fiction which are replaced by comments on the faithfulness of the representation and the significance of the themes, folklorized here in such a way as to make Gabrielle Roy’s work pertinent for the large-scale field of production, that of popular literature.

The reference to “archetypes” in these reviews signals the frame of “thematic criticism” of Northrop Frye through which Roy’s fictions are read. Frye’s theories dominated English-Canadian criticism, orienting it toward an Arnoldian idealism that privileged an expressive realism deployed for pedagogical ends. McPherson was clearly drawing on Frye’s theory of archetypes in reading a Blakian opposition

between innocence and experience as the “controlling pattern” in Roy’s fiction (62). He transformed her novels into existential dramas of “Everyman” in which there is no difference between rural Manitoba and “the Garden of Eden,” so powerful is the pastoral myth. Rose-Anna becomes for him a universal *mater dolorosa* who teaches us that we must engage in “a way of life in which the moment is all-important, and in which fortitude, compassion and love are the essential values” (64). Roy’s fiction has been made pertinent to the idealism dominant in English-Canadian academic criticism and she finds her place among canonized writers between the English poet William Blake and the American prairie novelist Willa Cather, and so becomes the bearer of universal value. Her work is thus dehistoricized and rewritten to conform to the humanist discourses which Canadian nationalists opposed to American materialism throughout the 1950s, as is evident in the Report of the Massey-Lévesque Commission on culture (1951) and in the founding documents of the Canada Council (1956). McPherson explicitly links this antimaterialist ideology with Canadian nationalism in his conclusion where he writes: “She has, however, given us a vision of ourselves which is immeasurably more powerful than ‘the vision’ of windy Prime Ministers and journalistic patriots. She convinces us, indeed, that the truth which Canada has revealed to her is a timeless truth. And she persuades us to bear witness to its importance” (70). Roy’s novels are read in English Canada as a kind of “pseudo non-fiction” (Elder 70) for their pedagogical force in the service of the nation. Fortitude in suffering is the “truth” of Canada they teach us.

McPherson’s analysis exemplifies the “ethnographic” impulse of the dominant discourse on translation in English Canada – self-knowledge through an encounter with the other – and its central presuppositions: a literary work is taken to be an authentic representation of French-Canadian society and, by reading it, we will come to greater appreciation of this different society. However, while translators at least some of the time attempt to make the strangeness of this other culture palpable, McPherson’s commentary exhibits an identificatory impulse that attempts to conceal the foreign provenance

of the work in order to co-opt it for an anti-American nationalist project of English-Canadian elites. Gabrielle Roy's country, as McPherson describes it, is a part of the "peaceable kingdom," as Frye calls Canada. But this is a feminized country. Gabrielle Roy's social status is effaced before her work, but especially before the myth of Canada as a stable country, maternally generous in its love and abject in its endurance of suffering, which becomes one of the forms of the signified: *Canadian persistence confronting America*. By conflating the nationalist demands of Quebec with those of Canada, English Canadians give more emotion and greater urgency to their own identity crisis. Quebec constitutes a sort of libidinal excess for anglophone culture. However, it is an image of Quebec and Canada that fits badly with the reality of technical and social changes created by the industrialization and Americanization of Canada during the 1950s. Yet, in the imagined community of Canada, as it has been conceived by an intellectual elite, the feminized spirit of Quebec urges perseverance and signifies resistance to American capitalism. Literary criticism manifests the ideologeme "fidelity" in a compensatory discourse of the English-Canadian field of cultural production, asserting its specificity in a dialectical relation with the dominant, materialist U.S.A. and, simultaneously, with the dominated, with Quebec's cultural heritage. This latter relation of alterity is seen as supporting the new Canadian field which the critical discourse is in the process of creating.

In favouring an ethos of pathos in works of women writers where the depths of oppression are relieved only by the characters' emotional strength – rather than one of critique in the novels of Hubert Aquin, for example, that present revolt against a colonialist society with a more radical assessment of the situation and a more aggressive solution to end oppression – the English-Canadian field minimized the impact of that opposition by feminizing Quebec and so naturalizing the hierarchy of power. The "pervading presence of tragedy" identified by Poronovitch is presented as the inevitable suffering of the universal human condition, without political remedy. This critical rewriting is typical of the reception of Aquin's work, according to Chantal de

Grandpré and Marilyn Randall, who note that his work is only appreciated (appropriated?) at the expense of a neutralization of its politics. While the response to his work is generally “enthousiaste,” criticism privileges knowledge of the human heart. Comments on Aquin’s style as “effervescent, dazzling, convoluted” are accompanied by warnings that his “pyrotechnics” will not be to everyone’s taste (Patricia Morley, quoted in Randall 205). His fiction has not excited the same intensity of response from readers as the work of Roy, Québécoise in her very “passionate heritage” and “attraction towards the oppressed” (Scott). Gail Scott’s emphasis on the passion in the political forecasts the feminist rearticulation of politics in which “the personal is political,” a development that undoubtedly has stimulated renewed feminist interest in Gabrielle Roy’s work since the 1980s (Lewis, Whitfield). For activism and passivity are no longer binary oppositions in her work: and feminist criticism values positively the contradictory, the in-between, that signify an excess rather than a lack in being or meaning.

This brief comparison of the reception of Aquin’s work (or that of Jacques Godbout or Jacques Ferron), all three novelists associated with the project of Quebec independence and the “nouveau roman,” is instructive. They have received none of the objective signs of legitimation by the English-Canadian literary institution that the women writers have who occupy the highest rank in the Canadian literary pantheon. Nor any recognition from the French institution either, for it is the “three sisters” who received the major French literary prizes: the Prix Femina to Gabrielle Roy for *Bonheur d’occasion* in 1947, the Prix Médicis to Marie-Claire Blais for *Une saison dans la vie d’Emmanuel* in 1966, and the Femina to Anne Hébert for *Les fous de Bassan* in 1982, following the Prix des Libraires for *Kamouraska* in 1971. These novels were also made into films, though only *Bonheur d’occasion* was screened in Toronto cinemas. Roy also received the Governor-General’s Prize for fiction twice for the English-language versions of *The Tin Flute* (1947) and *Street of Riches* (1956).<sup>9</sup> And *The Tin Flute* was voted the best “Canadian” novel ever at the Calgary conference on the novel (Steele).

This exceptional consecration of literary translations indicates how thoroughly Roy was integrated into the English-Canadian cultural field: she became a symbol of the bicultural national literature anglophone critics dreamed about. Although this may indeed seem to be an "assimilation tranquille" (O'Neill-Karch 96), it should not be overlooked that the French edition of *Bonheur d'occasion* sold well in Toronto in 1946, thanks to the high praise of the most renowned Toronto critic, William Arthur Deacon of the *Globe & Mail*. With his nudging, *La petite poule d'eau* was on the curriculum of the French Authors examination for the Ontario Senior Matriculation in 1956-57 – the only book by a Canadian in either English or French to be studied in high school prior to 1968. But then, Gabrielle Roy's first publications had been stories written in English that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Toronto Star Weekly*. Fulfilling the idealized image of a bilingual Canada, Gabrielle Roy's work responded to the dominant ideology as that of a Canadian of French expression.

If Roy enters without reservation into these ideological parameters, this is not the case with her younger "sisters" who are received conditionally. Not sociorealist novels like those of Roy, their poetic fictions are integrated into the field of restricted production, even of marginal production. Criticism in magazines and newspapers comments on their aesthetics and not just their themes. The novelist Aritha Van Herk praises *In the Shadow of the Wind* for its style "so pure and controlled that one stops and rereads paragraphs for the pleasure of the language" (10). Marie-Claire Blais' style attracts more negative criticism for its excesses. According to Keith Garebian, *Nights in the Underground* is "a mixture of *fin de siècle* decadent romanticism and contemporary existential seediness. It is part marmelade, part political claptrap – alternately sticky and brittle, concrete and abstract, sensual and intellectual...and will disappoint all but her most loyal devotees" (E3). Although Mark Czarnecki signals the importance of the stylistic experimentation in *Le sourd dans la ville*, his ironically titled review, "Bloody Clouds of Words," concurs with Garebian's assessment: "without paragraph or dialogue breaks, page after page

covered with neat rectangular blocks of text as daunting and compulsively readable as tombstones" (56).

Despite this reticence, at later intervals, Anne Hébert and Marie-Claire Blais received some forms of consecration. Alone among Quebec authors, the three women writers are included among the "Major Canadian Authors" for whom annotated bibliographies were published by the Toronto-based ECW Press.<sup>10</sup> A critical synthesis of the work of each of these authors appeared in U.S. publisher Twayne's "World Author's" series.<sup>11</sup> Although American critics have written more about Blais – she was the most studied Quebec author in American periodicals during the 1970s (Green 115) – perhaps because of her residence in Massachusetts and the praise of the influential critic, Edmund Wilson, Blais' work was the focus of a study in Toronto publisher Forum House's "Canadian Writers and their Works" series, as was the work of Gabrielle Roy.<sup>12</sup> That Anne Hébert was not included in this series, although she was the 1967 recipient of the Molson Prize for her work, demonstrates the preference for the novel, more apt to respond to the horizon of expectation of anglophone readers for faithful representations of French Canadian society than is poetry which is more subjective and aesthetic. By 1971, only two of Hébert's books of poetry had appeared in translation with different small publishers. Her poetry had attracted the critical attention of only a couple of university professors reviewing it for little magazines such as *Alphabet* and *The Canadian Forum*, with one anonymous review in the *Canadian Author & Bookman* (1967). In contrast, seven of Marie-Claire Blais' works of fiction had appeared in English translation and her play "Puppet Caravan" was televised by the CBC in 1967. Her works were adapted for a number of different mediums – *Mad Shadows* was performed by the National Ballet of Canada a decade later – attaining through this multiplication of forms of rewriting a more complex position within the English Canadian cultural field. Moreover, Blais had personal connections with the English Canadian literary institution as a member ("ambassador," according to Sheila Fischman, B6) of the Writer's Union of Canada, on the invitation of Timothy Findley. Anne Hébert, living in France and published there

by Seuil, lacked such close relations to English Canadian writers and publishers. The influence of the New York consecration of Roy and Blais undoubtedly had a significant impact on their insertion into the English Canadian field, for the position of Anne Hébert changed dramatically with the New York translation of her novel *Kamouraska* in 1973.

### **Narrating the nation: the feminized spirit of Quebec**

Works inserted into the field of large-scale production undergo a more radical manipulation than those received into a marginal position in the field, as the folklorization of Gabrielle Roy's novels demonstrates. The selective and limited transmission of knowledge which produces a decontextualized and partial representation of Quebec literature poses a more significant problem in the interaction between the two fields of cultural production. A few texts in translation function as synecdoche of Quebec literature. No explanations of the process or principles of selection are offered, however. The critical series of Twayne, Forum House and ECW detach the three women writers from the context of the field of Quebec cultural production so as to better represent them as authors in the strong sense of the term, as exceptional, as authoritative. In the literary system, the author's name is a fiction that assures the quality of the writing by circumscribing its subversive potential. The author-function guarantees the cohesion of the work through its violent internal restructuring so as to make it respond to the expectations of unity in the receiving cultural field. Anglophone criticism privileges the author-function by celebrating the personal success of these women writers and by minimizing their relations to the Quebec field of cultural production with its readings of the "national" narrative. The unilingual English reader has no possibility of evaluating the respective position of these women writers within the field by comparing them to other Quebec writers, since it is only with English-Canadian writers or international writers in English translation that such comparisons can



be made. Comparative analysis with English Canadian writers may open up new perspectives on their works, as when Gabrielle Roy is read alongside Margaret Laurence as a Manitoba writer. Comparison may just as easily shift from a recognition of distinctive traditions into a camouflaging of their incommensurability, as in Coral Ann Howell's study of fictions by Blais and Hébert along with nine English-Canadian women writers. In *Private and Fictional Words*, she established a correspondence between the feminine and the Canadian as cultural difference without taking into account the cultural and linguistic hegemony that stratifies as it differentiates within Canada: "becoming feminized Canada gains real significance" (151). The women's "stories seem the natural expression of the insecurity and ambitions of their society and in many ways they provide models for stories of Canadian national identity" (26). Quebec women writers are included in this analogy between the feminine and the nation, equally subordinate, which has been common in English Canada at least since 1928 when R.G. MacBeth praised poets Marjorie Pickthall, Pauline Johnson and Isabel Mackay – "talented daughters of the Dominion" – who stayed in Canada rather than joining their masculine contemporaries to advance their careers in London.

English Canada has had a long tradition of including works written in French in studies about Canadian literature, at least since the publication of Henry Morgan's encyclopedic *Bibliotheca Canadensis* (1867). A significant socio-political role is accorded to knowledge of francophone literature in forming the nation, observes Pierre Hébert, contributing to the "entente cordiale ou de la bonne entente" between two founding peoples ("Littératures" 18). While this equal treatment of the complete corpus of the two literatures continues in the encyclopedic tradition of such reference works as the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* and the fully bilingual *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, more common has been a model of supplementation and subordination. "AND Quebec," as Frank Davey observes, is the practice in most critical works or anthologies that relegate Quebec to a final chapter or appendix at the end of the book (13).



For a veritable ethics of cultural difference, however, as Gayatri Spivak argues, it is not enough to take note of the differences between the words and the rhetoric of “cultures-in-relation.” What must be taken into account are the differences between two habituses, between those contexts of everyday life where power exerts itself by making distinctions between modalities of address or utterance regarding their felicity or adequacy in fulfilling the appropriate conventions, and hence their performativity. The partial inclusion of Quebec literary works within the field of English Canadian cultural production decontextualizes and refracts them: a few works are admitted to inoculate the field against difference, against alterity, but not enough to effect real change in the field. A paradox ensues: what is most admired in Quebec literature – its unfamiliar or surprising knowledge,<sup>13</sup> its modernity, its powerful emotion – is rendered banal and ordinary. Rewriting the works participates in an operation of territorializing them, making them familiar, routine, whereby the self-regulation of the cultural field negotiates the insertion of symbolic goods from the outside. Symbolic violence operates as much by means of a process of inclusion as by exclusion when opposition is rewritten as complementarity. Symbolic capital affirms itself as continuity.

Yet it was under the sign of rupture, of modernity, that the works of these Quebec women writers were first hailed, modernism that had bypassed English Canada whose literature passed directly from Victorian idealism to post-modernism without pausing at the naturalism and symbolism of European high modernism (Kroetsch 1). Initially, English-Canadian criticism appreciated the objectivity and irony of their works that contrasted with the dominant idealization. This enthusiastic response constituted a compensatory movement for a lack in the English-Canadian cultural field and promised to enrich its literary corpus. Transforming the models, Quebec literature in translation occupied a primary position in the English-Canadian field, at least at the time of its initial reception. That this subsequently changed to become a conservative movement in which the translations took up the secondary position in the cultural field noted by Carolyn Perkes (1196)

calls into question the binary model of polysystem theory. The operation of exchange and transfer of knowledge through the mediation of works in translation is necessarily incomplete because it is implicated in the dynamics of the “target” system in its evolution through conflicts between competing programmes of reading and changing historical phases. First contact occurred through a movement of exotopy in which writers of the target cultural field broke out of the constraints of the dominant aesthetic and ideological forms. Subsequently, realigning its borders and redistributing its values, the receiving system rewrote this peripheral knowledge so as to render it pertinent to the importing culture where it took up the diverse positions in which the habitus is subjected to hegemonic relations. The changing frameworks of academic criticism have been aptly identified by Neil Bishop in regard to the work of Anne Hébert: thematic criticism was supplanted by semiotic, narratological and psychoanalytic criticism heavily influenced by continental French approaches (258). Since the 1980s, he notes, feminist criticism influenced by American critical practices has carved out a space for marginality in her work. Subsequent changes in habitus have occurred with the large-scale migrations across the continent and a transfer of population, economic and political power towards the west. Gabrielle Roy’s works have been more readily rewritten to correspond to the new critical frameworks of the intercultural and “la francophonie,” where she is read as an analyst of multiculturalism (Dansereau, Waddington) or as a franco-Manitoban writer (Harvey).

This dynamic shift in habitus and critical doxa manifests itself in the successive refractions of Gabrielle Roy and her two “sisters.” English-Canadian criticism participates in the production and transmission of symbolic goods by constituting the distinctions pertinent for the cultural field in the process of formation. In the first instance, a new objectivity incites the admiration of the English-Canadian writers. Comparisons abound with the great European masters of modernism. Hugh MacLennan, who aspired to be a Canadian Balzac, compared *Bonheur d’occasion* to the fiction of Charles Dickens, while his wife, the writer Dorothy Duncan, wrote that Gabrielle Roy reminded her of

Scandinavian writers. She praised the novel for its sociopolitical timeliness (its honest dealing with the “unfortunate poor in Montreal”) and the realism of its style (the most authentic French-Canadian dialogue). They recognized in Roy’s work an aesthetic project with parallels to their own attempt to write the history of contemporary urban society. The success of Roy’s novel established new models of writing that transformed the horizon of expectation for the urban fiction of MacLennan, Gwethelyn Graham and other contemporaries, who became her fellow members of the Canadian Authors’ Association. Alerted by MacLennan of the novel’s considerable interest, William Arthur Deacon, the influential literary columnist at the *Globe & Mail*, noted resemblances to Flaubert. Without *Madame Bovary*, he claimed, there would have been no *The Tin Flute*: “The exquisite care of every homely detail, giving concrete reality to a stick of cheap furniture, to the drifting snow, to the taxi-driver’s grandiose talk, is what this French master seems to have taught his apt pupil in Canada” (13).

Deacon’s influence as rewriter of her work had an important impact on Gabrielle Roy’s career. Their friendship was enriched by memories of their Manitoba childhoods which linked them against the cultural hegemony of Toronto and Montreal. Deacon thought Roy had earned such success because she was an outsider, first from Manitoba and then from France. He mounted an impressive publicity campaign for the novel in the *Globe & Mail*, an English language newspaper with considerable cultural capital, making it known to a broad public. Because of his background as a lawyer, Deacon was able to help Roy in the material direction of her career, advising her on translation contracts for the novel. Simultaneous publication of the novel in the two languages was necessary, he believed, because the larger anglophone market would be important for the survival of francophone writers: “The need of money will ensure that the emphasis will be on Canadianism, rather than on racialism... Canadian literature will quietly assimilate the French” (qtd. in O’Neill-Karch 96). If, for him, it is primarily the constraints of economic power that orient the choice of publisher, and even of language, this argument advantages a specific

political power. Constitution of an autonomous Canadian field of production, long overdue as British publishers refused to treat Canada as a separate market in their dealings with American publishers, became an impossibility after 1946 when the British and Americans concluded an agreement placing Canada within the American sphere of rights while Great Britain had sole right to market books in the other former colonies and in Europe (Parker 371). Recognition constitutes a social relation of subordination to American capital, American publishers having the greatest prestige in the English-Canadian cultural field: publication in the U.S. confers symbolic as well as economic capital.

That Roy followed Deacon's advice and signed separate contracts with an American as well as a Canadian publisher increased her royalties. However, the translation made by Hannah Joseph for the American editor and reprinted by the Canadian, greatly facilitated that "assimilation tranquille" by transforming *Bonheur d'occasion* into a universal drama celebrated by American critics for its intense "pathos" (Lee). The textual effects of this manipulation established a model of ethnocentric translation for Quebec books translated in the U.S. and then imported to Canada. Joseph's error in translating "poudrerie" (blowing snow) by "poudrière" (powder magazine) has been much discussed. But the title is also subject for debate since the literal version, "Borrowed Bliss," preferred by Roy, was not retained. *The Tin Flute*, selected from a higher socio-linguistic register and exemplifying the strategy of ennobling adopted by Joseph, accentuates the universal elements of the novel and conceals Roy's complex dramatization of Montreal's social stratifications. Unfamiliar with Quebec turns of phrase, Joseph chose to eliminate quebecisms so raising the linguistic register of the dialogue and erasing subtle distinctions between characters' speech. This choice passively diminished the import of the novelist's analysis of class along with ethnic hierarchies. Joseph also transformed the characterization by changing the motivation and evaluation of actions. Azarius is presented as lazy when "se laisser vivre" is translated "while I'm waiting" rather than "let's go with the flow" and Florentine is no longer a member of the disadvantaged working class when the

phrase “moitié peuple, moitié chanson” is translated “half slut, half song” (Montpetit 145). Joseph’s translation deemed inadequate, *Bonheur d’occasion* was retranslated by Alan Brown in 1980. Not only did he choose to retain the title because it had become so celebrated in English Canada, but his translation did not clear up all the other problems, since he rendered this phrase, “half song, half squalor” (Montpetit 146). Nor did Brown signal the anglicisms in the dialogue of Roy’s novel, although they had an important sociolinguistic value since the selected heteroglossia signified the characters’ relations with economic power. The textual effects of these manipulations exhibit an ideology of naturalization based in concepts of transparency and “fluency” (Venuti 5) which, oriented primarily toward an addressee, mask the work of textual manipulation performed by a translator and the signs of cultural difference by effacing the traces of re-enunciation. The novel is presented as though written in English and not as a translation coming from a different culture.

The criterion of transparency exerted its force in the rewriting of Marie-Claire Blais’ novels in the practice of her translators and in its reception by journalist-critics. Blais, like Roy, had the support of a special interlocutor in the most influential of American critics, Edmond Wilson, according to whom she wrote with great lyric force and biting satire “as shocking as Zola’s” (148). He called her a “genius” and compared her fluid prose-poems to those of Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and even Virginia Woolf (153). Other critics subsequently compared her to the great European masters of modernism, to Claudel, Cocteau, Bernanos and Mauriac for the power of her images of revolt (Callaghan 31), to Kafka, Faulkner and Dostoevsky for her exploration of the darkness of the human soul (Stratford). In Wilson, Blais had found an exceptional rewriter with cultural capital who made her work pertinent not only in the American cultural field but also internationally. With his backing, she won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1963 and moved to the U.S. where she lived near Wilson and many other writers. Through him she met Toronto writer, Morley Callaghan, also much praised in *O Canada*, and his son, Barry, who published an early interview with her and

subsequently translated some of her poems and plays for publication in his periodical, *Exile*. While Callaghan helped her negotiate with Canadian publishers, Wilson's high praise opened the doors to the most prestigious American publishing houses. They made contracts for translations of her work, engaging American translators. Such direct negotiations between publishers ensured rapid translation of Blais' work until *Nuits de l'Underground* (1978), with the exception of some texts dealing explicitly with homosexuality. These were translated later by small Canadian publishers, manifesting clearly the relationship between the prestige of the publisher who commissions the translation, the habitus of the translator, and the themes of the work to be translated.<sup>14</sup> American practice differs from English Canadian in this regard, particularly since the establishment of the translation programme of the Canada Council where translators select a book to translate, then enter into contact with the author and a publisher. Through this intervention of the Council and political instances of power, the status of the Canadian translator is higher than the American who performs work-for-hire. In the U.S., the market of symbolic goods is structured by the economy: the field of publication has been in the process of intense capitalization since 1945 and today has become a veritable cultural industry dominated by Disney and Time-Warner. With Farrar, Strauss & Giroux as publisher, Blais' works were oriented towards the field of restricted production.

Marie-Claire Blais' earliest work fulfilled the expectations of an international market for it showed no regional particularities of setting or language. It was, however, her most "realist" novel, *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* that won the Prix Médicis. Subsequently, her work became more subjective and rooted in Quebec realities with the three-volume, fictional autobiography of Pauline Archange. It was rewritten to conform to the generic norms of the English *bildungsroman* in the translation of Derek Coltman who cut the final eighteen pages of *Vivre! Vivre!* to form a single volume under the title *Manuscripts of Pauline Archange* (1969). *Une joualonnais sa joualonie* (1973) raised difficulties of a different order for the translator: a satiric parody of the Quebec

national novel written in joul and a *roman à clef*, a mordant satire of the Montreal literary milieu, this novel crammed with quebecisms was rewritten by the American translator Ralph Manheim as *St. Lawrence Blues* (1977) in a way that eliminated its foreignness. Although he kept the names of Blais' characters in French, he oriented the text toward an American public with the title which alluded to *St. Louis Blues*, well-known in the U.S. outside the realm of Jazz. For those familiar with Quebec literature, the title evoked the white niggers of America, the ideologeme of oppression. From an aesthetic perspective, the translation succeeded well linguistically, since Manheim retained the rhythm and the energy of the narrative.

From a Canadian perspective, however, as Ray Ellenwood pointed out in a review, where a politics of language is always in play, the translation greatly distorted the pragmatic effect of Blais' novel. "Marie-Claire Blais' book is about a particular kind of speech in a particular setting... This is not a nationalistic book – quite the opposite – but it *is* concerned with the politics of language, with the way people speak, and how their speech is bound up with class, education and opportunity" ("Translating" 105). Like Joseph, Manheim fails to render the bilingualism of Blais' novel and so obfuscates her dramatization of the socio-economic stratifications of Montreal. Removing the heteroglossia of certain phrases, not signalling the English used in some contexts, Manheim elides the political import of Blais' novel so as to make it more pertinent for an international market. Imported into the field of restricted production in English Canada, however, this depoliticized and universalized novel functions in a context where questions of linguistic identity are at the heart of national politics. The textual and ideological effects of Manheim's manipulation mask the difference of a text which takes a controversial position on important linguistic issues. These strategies have a significant impact on models of translation that favour readable, ethnocentric translations. This American model predominates among prestigious English-Canadian publishers and journalists whose criticism is oriented towards the field of restricted production. When Ray Ellenwood translated *Nights in the Underground*



(1978) for a Toronto publisher, he tried to render into English the historical and social specificity of the Montreal lesbian community characterized by a mixing of French and English languages. As he argued, highlighting Quebec's difference was an ethical issue: "I have a moral obligation to make my translation recall the original as much as possible" (109). And this strategy made the traces of textual manipulation visible in a translation that called "attention to itself" (107). As he commented, translation is a complex system of decoding and recoding on a number of levels, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic. The translator, like the author, is positioned within a specific historical context subject to ideological-aesthetic constraints. Ellenwood's strategy of textual defamiliarization did not arouse the admiration of anglo-canadian reviewers. Keith Garebian attacked his translation as symptomatic of a decline in Blais' writing: "The translation doesn't help matters. Ray Ellenwood has produced an atrocious bilingual hybrid: '*on demande a toi et moi if we were Jewish... ils ont dit they wouldn't punish us*' (E3).

The purity of language is a fiction that reinforces anglo-canadian hegemony. Anglophone critics consider non-pertinent to the dominant discourse any book that does not give the illusion that it was written directly in English, especially a book that exposes the bilingualism of Montreal, francophone city which has long resisted the economic, political and cultural domination of English. The concealment of language politics contributes to a depoliticization of the dispossession in the novels which is perceived as an integral part of the human condition and not as the effect of a specific political oppression – the hegemony of English North America. In her translation of *Anna's World* (1985), Sheila Fischman adopted a strategy that respects the norm of naturalization. The English words in Blais' text help to establish the motivations and assessments of characters. The repetition of "drifter" and "drift away" relates specifically to Anna's father, an American "draft-dodger." Linked to the words "sexy," "gang," and "forbidden," they signify the increasing influence of an American culture of violence, a socio-political transformation that is invisible to the anglophone reader,



as Kathy Mezei observes (“Speaking” 144). That for many Sheila Fischman is the best known translator of Quebec literature indicates to what an extent the ideology of naturalization in the target language is esteemed as a translation practice. Ellenwood’s ethnographic impulse, which attempts to translate into English an idiom open to the strangeness of its diverse appropriations, is not legitimated in the field of restricted production where a negative cultural value is attributed to translation. It should be noted that Ellenwood has published his translations primarily with small Canadian publishers like Coach House and Exile. Within the socio-economic hierarchy of the field of literary production in English-Canada, what has been most valued are rewritings of novels made to appear realistic and to communicate an authentic referential knowledge of a Quebec – feminized and unilingual in English.

The reception of Anne Hébert’s work shows how Toronto is mostly interested in “what New York wants,” at least in the big daily newspapers which are the most important instances of rewriting works apt to be consecrated. Hébert’s work is admired at the price of a certain decontextualization both generic and political. Read thematically for its symbols and archetypes, her fiction is inscribed in a history of anglophone literature. The power of symbolic capital to stratify the field is particularly noteworthy in the analogies elaborated by critics to establish the pertinence of *Kamouraska* in the field of anglo-Canadian cultural production. Although Hébert had published her first texts more than thirty years earlier, had received the recognition of prestigious prizes in Quebec, and her poems had been translated by celebrated English-Canadian poets, her work was noticed by the anglophone public only in 1973 with the translation of *Kamouraska*. William French, successor of Deacon as literary chronicler at the *Globe & Mail*, wondered whether English Canadian publishers were afraid of taking risks with such works. The history of publication of *Kamouraska* reveals the presence of a “wall” preventing the circulation of symbolic goods between “French Canada and English Canada”: “It was published in Quebec and France in 1970 to considerable acclaim, and won the Prix des Librairies in France. Yet only now do we get an English translation

of the novel, just one jump ahead of the movie. And even this version comes to us via New York, with translation by an American, Norman Shapiro" (15). The "wall," according to French, was erected by the conservatism of English-Canadian publishers, not (more accurately) by the prestige and economic clout of American publishers. In his review, French praises the power of the images – particularly the blood on the snow – and the combination of a story of passion with the narrative of a historical murder. Easily recognized here is the knowledge much valued by English Canadian critics, intensity of emotion and a faithful representation of Quebec society. However, it is accessible to English-Canadians only with the intervention of the Americans.

French's key points (minus the nationalist complaint) – the existing film version and the American translation – are reiterated by other journalist-critics. Paul McLaughlin emphasized the qualifications of the translator (an American professor) and the film "directed by Claude Jutra and starred G enev e Bujold" which would soon open (37), but not the translation. Beverley Smith extended the analogy between novel ("a dazzling new height in artistic achievements," 1) and film ("received with equal enthusiasm," 15) by comparing them to the tense atmosphere and red imagery of Ingemar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*. For Smith, the novel is legitimated by a British genealogy that establishes its symbolic capital: "Mlle H ebert's description of the passion that consumes her protagonists is powerful and stunning. The blood imagery is straight from *MacBeth*" (15). For McLaughlin, the pertinence of *Kamouraska* arises from its combination of a popular genre – a crime story – and a discourse highly regarded in English Canada, historiography. He asserted the authenticity of the novel's representation of French-Canadian society by emphasizing the historical truth of the plot – "this *actual* crime" – but he also praised H ebert's stylistic mastery – "maturity," and "imaginative control of language" – that produced "an eerie, black excitement that demands one's attention, without becoming contrived" (37). The art of H ebert is

paradoxically an art of avoiding artifice in presenting a non-fictionalized world as reality, as the “truth” of Quebec.

Despite the geopolitical specificity of his title, “Quebec Gothic,” French decontextualized *Kamouraska*. In contrast to the objectivity characterizing the celebrated naturalist novels evoked in his comparison of Hébert’s novel to *Mme Bovary*, the gothic novel is notable for its subjectivity in the dramas of the unconscious that inform its symbolics. For the English-Canadian reader this is a significant genre, for the stories and novels of Alice Munro and Margaret Atwood have been called “Ontario gothic” and are praised for their magic realism, their atmosphere of the marvelous and mysterious infused in the everyday. This Ontario gothic has in turn been influenced by the “Southern Gothic” of Carson McCullers and Eudora Welty, writers of the American south. Recognizable here is the legacy of Faulkner, pioneer in the exploration of subterranean violence tearing apart insular communities. A comparison with this canonized American writer is intimated also in the much repeated phrases of the critics, “blood on the snow,” “neige et fureur” – an allusion to Faulkner made explicit in van Herk’s review of *In the Shadow of the Wind* entitled “The Sound and the Fury” – which established the Americanness of this mood of poetic terror much appreciated by Hébert’s readers. An alert reader might also detect an allusion to “Wolf in the Snow: Four Windows on to Landscapes” by Warren Tallman, an influential English-Canadian critic. Published in *Canadian Literature*, this essay analyzed the theme of isolation and alienation in the English-Canadian novel of the 1940s and 1950s through the symbol of characters’ relation to landscape seen through a window. The theme of a certain difficulty of being, like the imagery of windows and vast snowy spaces, were not unlike the psychological dramas of submission and revolt of the female protagonists in Hébert’s novels. The instability of identity, a central problem for characters whose subjectivity disintegrates in proliferating fragments, has affinities with the “feminine gothic” which, according to Ellen Moers, represented women’s troubling relation to creativity, the mixture of fear, guilt and

anxiety accompanying a heroine's efforts to transcend her condition by means of aesthetic creation or procreation of another being. *Kamouraska* and *In the Shadow of the Wind* respond well to the horizon of expectations of the market of cultural goods in English Canada where they belong to a genre of fiction highly valued in the U.S. and Canada, and even in England, as comparisons of Hébert to the Brontës emphasize. That this is a feminine genre, a counter-discourse in which heroines pursue an interior quest that does not violate social conventions – in contrast to the masculine adventures of the picaresque, a canonized genre – fully satisfies the cultural expectations by feminizing Hébert's work. This facilitates her insertion into the English-Canadian cultural field where she joins the pantheon of women writers – the "Margarets" – and bolsters the ideologeme signifying: *the feminine position of Canadian culture in relation to America*. This contradiction is central to the cultural discourse of English-Canadian nationalism. An oppositional discourse is represented in an ideologeme that displaces the symbolic violence of an economic subordination. Culture fulfills a compensatory function in securing a national identity.

### Poetry in the dialogue on translation

What is striking in these reviews of *Kamouraska* is the absence of analyses of the translation and of comparisons with the aesthetics of Hébert's poetry which had been available in several English translations for a decade following the first publication in *Tamarack* (1962) of some poems translated by F.R. Scott. Two books of translated poems, F.R. Scott's *St-Denys Garneau & Anne Hébert: Translations* (1962) and Peter Miller's *The Tomb of the Kings* (1967), violated the normative fiction of the unity of language and the invisibility of the translator with their bilingual format. The difference in the reception of Hébert's fiction and poetry clearly exposes the distinction between the field of restricted production and the field of marginal or avant-garde production in English Canada. The "wall" of which French complained

is not so much one between English and French Canada as it is that creating the internal stratification of the English-Canadian field of production. Among other differentiations, it separates a concern with form and language from a preoccupation with mimesis and theme. Narratives referencing a common humanity are valued over poetry or experimental texts that expose linguistic and cultural difference.

The work of distinction producing this internal hierarchy takes place in the criticism of Hébert's poetry. Through different critical frames of stylistic analysis, critics highlight the reticence and sobriety of her images rather than their sensuality or emotional excess. They emphasize the unusual aspect of her poetry, its place in the tradition of French modernism, and the difficulty it presents for translation into English. Reviews comment on the strategies of translation, influenced undoubtedly by the bilingual format of publication, Scott's three versions of his translations, and the exchange of letters with Hébert about translation. This *Dialogue sur la traduction* enabled a reader to apprehend the mechanisms of a dynamic reading of the poems that takes the form of a rewriting in translation. In publishing the three versions he had made of the poems following Hébert's comments on them, Scott presented translation as an inevitably incomplete process: "Une traduction ne peut jamais être considéré comme tout à fait terminée, même aux yeux du traducteur. Si telle expression ne le satisfait pas, il peut toujours en trouver une autre" (100). In this, he followed the poet's example in modifying the poem through the process of composition and in various subsequent editions. For the poet, too, is a translator, selecting the appropriate language to inscribe "an interior vibration." Reading is also translation, according to Scott, for the reader must extract meaning from a text. The words are not so much changed as charged with a personal meaning which is not necessarily that of the poet (101). The reading-translation that changes words into another language also charges them with different cultural values, for it confronts the limits of languages, their incommensurability, when the meaning of a word in the second language is not the same as in the first language. In their dialogue, Hébert points out some grammatical errors,

some *faux-amis* (or illusory correspondences), while Scott replies in English, proposing alternatives.

Scott's general strategy of "literal translation" (81) proved limited in rendering "ses prunelles crevés," the final image of *Le tombeau des rois*, as "perforated eyes." The phrase has a "broader, more dramatic sense," Hébert commented, but Scott's version gave "more strength to the shocking image" (85). Upon rereading, he concurred with Hébert and changed his translation to "blinded eyes" which conveyed several possible meanings (102). Translating images is difficult, Scott concluded, because "each one must agree with others and complement them" (102). He learned to read images in a literary context which differs from the verbal context, a strategy of active reading/translating that engages with "true poetic signification," according to Northrop Frye in his introduction to the book, that is with the value of an image determined within an "order of words" or literary system (18). The mechanisms of the translating process are exposed in this dialogue: everything takes place under the sign of an irreconcilable difference between two languages and two modernist poetics. This process is an "adventure in experimental writing," observed Jeanne Lapointe in her preface to the book (23). Oriented toward the "source" language, literal translation makes explicit the foreign provenance of the work by producing textual effects that defamiliarize the "target" language in order to bring the reader to the poems. Scott's practice introduced a new model for translating poetry (the field of marginal production) which in the English-Canadian tradition has subsequently been "literalist" (Mezei "Scales"). Although a privileged interlocutor or rewriter for Hébert, Scott did not have the kind of widely recognized prestige of an Edmund Wilson to make her poetry pertinent in the field of restricted production, but only in the field of marginal production of left-wing and avant-garde periodicals. Exotopy constitutes a model limited to the field of marginal production, whereas that of fluency predominates in the field of restricted production in which the fiction of an anglophone Quebec is reproduced for a bourgeois public.

In translating, however, Scott paid more attention to the affective and sensory content of the images than to the sound and rhythm of words, which led some academic critics to produce thematic readings of Hébert's poetry. These readings inscribed the standpoint of the dominant idealism: they presented Hébert's work as an existential drama of innocence evolving into immanence through the experience or anguish of solitude. Laura Rièse underlined the symbolic dimensions of Hébert's and Saint-Denys Garneau's poetry in Scott's translation whose images conceal "a deeper meaning, something restraining and limiting their flighty aspirations, enlarged to comprise all humanity" (210). The universal dimension of this quest distances their poetry from the "general patriotic urge" of their predecessors. Rièse's reading echoed that of Patricia Purcell [Smart] whose study of three volumes of Hébert's poetry, published in *Canadian Literature*, read them as three phases in an "intense interior drama of poetic and spiritual evolution" (51). The poet learns in the passage through a "dark night of the soul" (58) to conceive of poetic creation as a "Christlike mission" (61) leading to liberation. Where Smart developed a comparison with Camus' *L'Étranger* to highlight Hébert's modernity (59), Rièse cited Sartre's *Huis clos*. Smart admired the "clearcut, unadorned style" of the poetry, while Rièse emphasized the striking originality of its metaphors, "not yet as startling as those of the French Surrealists but they come close to a certain abstruseness akin to Symbolism" (210). Hébert's work is thus simultaneously objective and subjective, resolutely modernist in its style though traditional in its subject matter.<sup>15</sup> Recognizable here is the dominant paradigm of *Canadian Literature* that rewrote Hébert's work to conform to an anti-materialist humanism. Rièse did not fully subscribe to its tenets, for she devoted a third of her essay to Scott's translation, to linguistic and textual manipulation, though she valued it for its "clarity and assurance," that is, for its fluency and readability (210). Scott's translation is praised for retaining "the purity of the free verse" (210) which introduced a new poetics to the English-Canadian field of cultural production.



This positive evaluation of the translation was not shared by the poets who reviewed Hébert's poetry in translation. They rewrote her work to conform to the formalism sought after in transforming literary models considered too subjective and Romantic, but still within the framework of humanism's struggle against materialism. Robin Skelton and Louis Dudek regretted the loss of sonority in the English versification.<sup>16</sup> Their comparative analyses under the sign of cultural difference took into account the two different socio-political contexts of French and English Canada with their divergent ideologies and aesthetics. Skelton highlighted the balancing of objectivity with subjectivity in the tone, but regretted the loss of musicality. Scott translated the ritual meaning of *Le tombeau des rois* at the risk of losing the poetry. Nonetheless, Hébert's work exhibited an authentic "creative power" and, along with that of Phyllis Webb, Eldon Grier, and D.G. Jones, testified to the maturity of "Canadian literature" (82). Hébert is recognized in this case for her formal innovation, not for her powerful affects. Under the sign of a differential inclusion, Skelton outlined the difference in the modalities of identification of francophone poets for whom the symbolism and structure of versification conform to French models. Consequently, the problem of Canadianness is experienced differently for them. However, Skelton did not explicate this Quebec distinctiveness, and so minimized the political dimensions of Hébert's work.

This difference, according to Louis Dudek, stemmed from a transformation in addressivity and, consequently, different relations of power between the poet and her interlocutor which are more asymmetrical for French-Canadian than for English-Canadian poets because of the divergence in the evolution of modernism in the two cultures. Dudek emphasized this dual tradition, stressing the irreconcilability of the two literatures. Aesthetically more mature, French poetry revolted against Romanticism with Baudelaire in the 19th century. English poetry had to wait until the 20th century and Ezra Pound for the same revolution. Consequently, this cultural



transformation still underway informed the anti-Victorian satire of Scott, Klein, Layton, Purdy and other English-Canadian poets, which interpellated an addressee directly, so inciting identification. Inheriting the French tradition, Anne Hébert's poetry is notable for its detachment and contemplative mood unknown in the English tradition. Peter Miller's translation of her poems (*The Tomb of the Kings* 1967) functions, then, as compensation for a lacuna in the English-Canadian cultural field and produces "aesthetic innovation" to advance modernism. Nonetheless, Dudek found the interiority of Hébert's poetry sterile. He much preferred the poetry of a younger generation, the poetry of the Révolution Tranquille of the 1960s, which raged against its own tradition. He conceptualized this development as an internal dialectic of Quebec society. It was positive, he suggested, because Quebec had too long avoided such dialectical evolution, remaining blocked in an anti-federalist, anti-English "obsession" (19).

Although he approached Hébert's work from an ethics of cultural and linguistic difference, Dudek ultimately performed a transvaluation of its politics. In emphasizing its interiority, he followed the example of F.R. Scott who, according to the franco-Ontarian critic Jean Ethier-Blais, had not rendered into English the triple symbolic orders of dispossession of *Le tombeau des rois*. Scott had understood the mediaeval context and the Egyptian concepts of hieratism, but he had not grasped their import in French Canada. By interiorizing, he had universalized the profound experience of Quebec's distinctive reality because he had not managed to convey in English "the contradiction of an entire being confronting an indefinable reality. [His rhythm] is too melancholy and lacks the negative tension that is the very source of inspiration of *Le tombeau des rois*" (16). Anti-colonialist resistance, so pertinent in the Quebec field of cultural production, is concealed in the English translation which presents this specific dispossession as stemming from a universal human condition requiring no political intervention to counter it.

### A Dialogue Among Feminists

None of these critics noted another political displacement in Scott's translation, sexual difference, with a consequent masking of the feminist implications of Hébert's poem whose subject is ritual rape. In her dialogue with Scott, Anne Hébert pointed out that he had failed to notice the child was a girl ("une esclave fascinée"), which he subsequently corrected with the introduction of the possessive pronoun in "her ankle." Kathy Mezei ("Question") and I ("Translating") noted this interchange as a key moment in the dialogue that raised a new problematic in translation studies, the question of sexual difference. What began as a dialogue about translation among poets became subsequently a dialogue between feminists about the asymmetries of power producing linguistic and sexual difference. The elaboration of a feminist theory of translation was pursued in *Tessera*, a bilingual feminist literary periodical that focused on analyzing the power relations sexualizing discourse in translation, narrative and fictions of identity.<sup>17</sup> Feminist intervention in the theory and practice of translation has not been limited to the analysis of oversights in the translations of women's writing by male translators, as in the case of Scott's translation practice, but has taken as its field the whole issue of textual authority and the transmission of knowledge. How within a theory of (sexual) difference can the hypothesis of equivalence between languages be maintained? Who determines when equivalence is achieved? The ethics of sexual difference is doubled and compounded by an ethics of cultural difference that foregrounds the incommensurability of languages.

Feminist translation engages in interventionist practices of rewriting that draw attention to the process of translation and make visible the creative aspect of any re-enunciation. The feminist translator underscores the radical difference between an "original" context and the translating context, marks the parameters of the work of transfer, and explicates the modality of circulation of the translated text in its new environment. In this way, feminist translation practices highlight all the socio-cultural mediations effected by translation, especially the

ideological, cognitive and affective aspects. Translation, then, is less concerned with reaching a “target” culture than with exploring the space *in-between*. It focuses on those modalities of power that order the relations between languages and cultures determining the pertinency of contexts and that produce the feminist translator as subject of an enunciation. This utterance is a double discourse in that it is an interpretive transformation and transvaluation not merely mimetic repetition. From this liminal space in-between there emerges meaning in excess of either original or target context which is accorded a positive value of criticism and creativity. For the reader of these feminist translations is forced to become an active reader in order to measure the distance between the conventional forms of linguistic prestige (cultural capital) and the emergent forms of feminist literary language, and so to *make* meaning. That translators of feminist texts have turned in their prefaces and other peritexts to language and writing as both theories and formal elements to bolster “their arguments of adequation” against theories of equivalency, has transformed the discourse on translation in Canada, according to Carolyn Perkes: the knowledge represented in these theorizations of cultural transmission is no longer that of “landscape,” as in the case of Gabrielle Roy, but of “langscape” (Perkes 1203). What is conveyed in the transfer between cultures is no longer representational knowledge of topography in an attempt to secure geopolitical boundaries but a probing of the socio-cultural gap between two unequal languages and cultures in an acknowledgement of differentiation. This interrogation of the ideological work of translation undermines any theory of translation as a “linguistic practice” (Perkes 1205). Translation understood as rewriting posits the alterity of languages and cultures as heterogeneities rather than as binaries. The cross-cultural project of *Tessera* posits a community of multiple voices engaged in many possible dialogues as a becoming through a process of critical transvaluation and social transformation. However, such a theorization of linguistic and cultural difference circulates in the field of marginal cultural production, in avant-garde periodicals and feminist

publishing houses without the cultural capital to produce authority across a wide range of social networks.<sup>18</sup>

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In the contact with modern Quebec literature between 1945 and 1970, the repertory of literary forms in English Canada was modified through the introduction of more objective models. With the dialogue between feminists in the 1980s, there emerged a new literary genre, the “théorie-fiction/fiction-theory” featured in *Tessera*. Collaboration with Quebec feminists in this dialogue fostered the emergence of a new problematic in the Quebec novel, translation. Nicole Brossard, Louise Dupré, Monique LaRue, Hélène Rioux and other writers concerned themselves with the fictive status of the translator drawing on their own experience of translation either as translated author or translator rewriting. As dialogue, translation has engaged English-Canadian with Quebec feminists in reciprocal conversations. And the dynamism of cultural fields interacting has produced change through the differentiation of exchange. Rewriting does not inevitably entail a loss, as is presupposed by the Oedipal model of lack, dominant in theories of meaning. Translation does not necessarily result in a tragic situation, as Lise Gauvin lamented. After all, Canadian feminists have rewritten Tchekov’s *Three Sisters* as a comedy about relations between different generations of women (Cherniak). In the paradox lived by the bilingual translator – whose language is not one and who is unfaithful to two languages –, translation is a figure of the excess of meaning or of multiplicity in an economy of abundance. Translation in this context bears a positive cultural value as a privileged means of access to a different form of creativity. The knowledge such alterity transmits is a knowledge that recognizes its difference, its limits, and consequently acknowledges the relativity of all knowledge. However, such theories of translation as swerve generating cultural innovation have as yet currency only in the field of marginal cultural production.

The displacement of cultural categories provoked by language so made foreign to itself exposes the ambivalence of the narration of the nation which is subject to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles dividing it from within. Is the feminine incorporated in the nation? Or, as site of contradiction, does the feminine question the nation as totality? The taxonomies of the forms of symbolic exchange are always mediated by the structure of the field. But the structuring of the Canadian "nation" as a form of "textual affiliation" created by reading the "national" novel is unstable (Bhabha 140). Far from having established authority supported by a pedagogical discourse in which the people is the object of a re-presentation of its past, as English-Canadian criticism claims with its preference for a literature of referential knowledge, the imaginary community of the nation is constituted through a process of signification in which the people is the subject of enunciation. In such a process of (re)writing, the distinctions established by criticism legitimate a hierarchy of sociocultural values, a hierarchy by means of which the "Canadian" nation attempts to consolidate itself through an encounter with its margins. A feminized, unilingual English-speaking Quebec? This is a necessary fiction for a multicultural Canadian community in the making. As for its remainders...

Nonetheless Quebec feminist writers refuse to recognize as stable any fiction of an anglophone culture relating to its margins. The centre does not hold but shifts to another location. The heteroglossia introduced into Quebec feminists' fictions about a woman translator does not participate in the defamiliarization of the fiction of an English Quebec, but in fictions in which French becomes one language among many others. The analysis of these feminist fictions from Quebec and of their critical reception is another story, a story of difference, one about the elaboration of Quebec discourses on English-Canadian literature. This (her)story testifies to the dynamism of cultural fields in interaction – of literatures in the making.

### Notes

- 1 Koustas analyzed the percentage of their work translated, not the absolute number of translations for each author. So 90% of Anne Hébert's work has been translated, 75% of Gabrielle Roy's and 60% of Marie-Claire Blais. Michel Tremblay, Hubert Aquin, André Major, Jacques Poulin are the next most frequently translated authors, followed by Nicole Brossard, who with 40% of her work translated, is the only writer of the younger feminist generation to appear in these statistics. Novels are the genre most translated (Tremblay's success on stage is an exception), which explains the ranking of Brossard all of whose novels have been translated.
- 2 Academic criticism is not exempt from this privileging of the author-function, since the deconstructive readings are frequently of single texts by authors who are acknowledged celebrities as in the multiple rereadings of Atwood or the rush to publish essays on such rising international "stars" as Anne Michaels.
- 3 Elsewhere, in regard to feminist publishing as a "labour of love" I have developed a more extensive critique of the gendered difference of Bourdieu's concept of "disinterestedness" ("Feminist Periodicals").
- 4 Significantly, criticism in the French media repeated Wilson's phrase and words of praise for Blais' novel without always citing him (Mauriac, in *Marie-Claire Blais: Dossier de presse*).
- 5 Between 1760 and 1960, only 60 books were translated between the two languages while, under the auspices of the Canada Council's translation programme, 66 books were translated between English and French in 1974 alone. For the decade 1972-1981, some 452 translations were subsidized (Ellenwood).
- 6 I refer here to J.L. Austin's understanding of the performative as an effect of any speech act which, taken up by an audience, for whom it felicitously (adequately) meets the conventions in a particular situation of address, has force as event. The audience is created in relation to this enunciative situation.
- 7 Even though literary translators in Canada are paid with funds from the Canada Council – an amount much below the market for political and commercial translation – they must first find a publisher who will accept their project and who will then make an application to the Council for funding.
- 8 "Straight from the Heart" is the title of a review of the translation *Children of My Heart* where Zonia Keywan notes: "the drama in Roy's book lies less in overt

action than in emotions" (73). And David Cobb expands in another review: "Her characters tend to be simple folk used as archetypes of all our endeavours to find happiness and wrest some sense out of chaos... Her narratives are straightforward, uncomplex and celebrate the virtues of courage, loyalty, endurance and spiritual generosity" (10).

- 9 At this time the prize was awarded only in English by the Canadian Authors' Association of which Roy, along with Ringuet and Germaine Guèvremont, became a member.
- 10 Paul Socken's bibliography of Roy was included in the first series in 1979; Delbert Russell's of Anne Hébert appeared in 1987; Irène Oore's of Marie-Claire Blais appeared in 1998.
- 11 Delbert Russell's *Anne Hébert* appeared in 1983, followed by M.G. Hesse's *Gabrielle Roy* 1984 and U.S. based Mary Jane Green's *Marie-Claire Blais* in 1995.
- 12 Philip Stratford's *Marie-Claire Blais* was published in 1971, Phyllis Grosskurth's *Gabrielle Roy* in 1972. All three novelists were the subject of two critical essays in the pioneering anthology *Traditionalism, Nationalism and Feminism: Women Writers of Quebec* edited in the U.S. by Paula G. Lewis in 1985.
- 13 Gabrielle Roy wrote to William Arthur Deacon in 1954 that Quebec critics did not want to listen to her theme of "human love regardless of nationality, of religion, of tongue" (O'Neill-Karch 92).
- 14 David Lobdell, a gay translator, later translated *David Sterne* and *The Execution* for Oberon Press and Talonbooks.
- 15 Anthony Purdy makes a similar observation about *Kamouraska* which is not "postmodern" but "modernist in its composition and Victorian gothic in its subject matter and setting" combined "in a seamless work of art." "Clearly the formula is a winning one" (133). Hébert was the object of study for 16 international academics listed in the 1996 *Répertoire International des Études canadiennes*, with 10 working on Roy, 13 on Women Writers of Quebec, but only 4 on Blais and 3 on Antoinine Maillet.
- 16 Subsequently, I arrived at the same conclusion in analyzing Scott's and Miller's translations comparatively with Alan Brown's ("Review").



- 17 See *Tessera* 6 (1989) "La traduction au féminin/Translating Women" and *Tessera* 3/*Canadian Fiction Magazine* 57 (1986) "Feminist Fiction Theory."
- 18 I have developed this analysis of feminist translation and the dialogue between a contemporary generation of English-Canadian and Quebec feminist writers more extensively in "La traduction comme réception."

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