

Of Her Own Volition: Barbara Godard as a Case Study of the Translator's Agency

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WHAT WOULD CANADIAN LITERATURE be today without the efforts of Barbara Godard? The part that she played as “a creator and a cartographer” (Fuller 3) is reflected in her numerous and diverse contributions to Canadian literature, especially her translations. In the past few decades, developments in translation studies have given the field the self-confidence and theoretical breadth to account for a wide variety of translation practices and an ever-growing range of types of text. The necessarily interdisciplinary nature of the field calls on the neighbouring disciplines of linguistics, sociology, communication theory, discourse analysis, and pragmatics, not to mention literary theory, in order to bring into focus the world of translations and translators. This interdisciplinarity echoes Godard’s own prolific writing, which ranges from reflections on gender and sexuality, through discussions pertaining to feminist semiotics, all the way to studies of cultural memory and remembrance. If the earliest theories of translation tended to offer a somewhat restrictive Eurocentric perspective on the subject, scholars of translation today welcome more diversified perspectives. Outi Paloposki argues that “different theoretical frameworks do not necessarily compete with each other. Rather, difference may be seen as a question of supplementarity” (190), which ultimately strengthens the discipline as a whole.

Surprisingly, the translator’s agency is not especially valued in critical work on translation. Although critics such as Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti tend to acknowledge the translator’s responsibility for his or her choices, a unified theoretical framework for the discussion and analysis of a translator’s agency has yet to be developed and universally adopted. The reason might well lie in the various positions defended by scholars of translation regarding the amount of creative licence that a translator should be allowed in any given project. A num-

ber of translators have taken stands regarding the nature of their work and the level of liberty granted to them in the process of translation. Among them is Godard, whose career as a critic, scholar, and translator spanned many decades and left a permanent mark on the landscape of Canadian literature. Critics and scholars have discussed the breadth and impact of her prolific career in recent years,¹ as evidenced by the numerous critical works published in memory of Godard. Examining her work — both as a translator and as a scholar — emphasizes the extent to which analyzing a translator's individual motivations is relevant to criticism of her oeuvre. Additionally, such an examination reiterates just how much the translator's agency matters at a theoretical level in translation studies. This essay explores Godard's oeuvre and her approach to translation criticism and practice, and it seeks to map out her ideological and critical landscape by analyzing her translations and her articulations of her process.

Godard remains a key figure of Canadian literature, highlighting the importance not only of translation but also of experimental writings over the past forty years as a means to encourage the relationship between anglophone and francophone literatures in Canada. Her translative identity encompasses — and in turn reflects — cultural, political, and social meaning and significance, as evidenced by her challenge to Western structures and pedagogies of translation. By examining Godard's practice as a scholar and translator — focusing mainly on her translation choices — this article shows how her individual imprint is evident not only in her own works but also in the contemporary framework of translation studies as it relates back to individual lived experiences and ideologies.

Godard, whose work was underpinned by her intellectual affiliations, was active in many spheres, and her contributions to the field of Canadian literature are numerous and eclectic. As one of the leaders in theories of feminist translation contends, her steadfast presence in the literary and theoretical scene helped to bring translation to the forefront of theoretical discourse and “contributed to the recognition of translation as a vital literary activity and theoretical site” (Mezei, “Transformations” 205). Godard held the Avie Bennett Historica Chair of Canadian literature and was a professor of English, French, social and political thought, as well as women's studies at York University. She published widely on Canadian and Quebec cultures and on feminist,

literary, and translation theories. Godard championed experimental writing by Canadian women and associated their disempowered position in the literary scene with Canada's historical disempowerment in relation to France, Britain, and even the United States. Critical of Canada's treatment of Quebec and Indigenous peoples, she asserted the politically charged nature of Canadian and women's literatures, marking them as ideal sites for experimental textual production. Godard's attraction to the field of translation can be explained by "her place at a crossroads between French and English" (Mezei, "Transformations" 205). Indeed, reflecting on her own work, Godard explained that she perceived translation as "a way to formally create a barrier between the languages . . . by making [herself] pay attention to the crossover" (qtd. in Mezei, "Transformations" 205). This attention to crossovers and boundaries between languages led her to question other language barriers, notably those of the gendered aspects of languages. In an effort to overcome a major hurdle to cross-linguistic discussions of Canadian writing, Godard began working with important Quebec and Acadian texts, translating key French-Canadian female authors such as Antonine Maillet, Nicole Brossard, Louky Bersianik, and France Th  or  t into English for the anglophone population of Canada. She developed an approach to translation sensitive to the form and content of each text. Her work with these experimental texts made Godard a leader in theories of feminist translation. She published not only five book-length works of translation but also dozens of poems and essays, not to mention several pieces of fiction, excerpts of which appeared in journals, collections, and books. Her editorial work is no less impressive: Godard was the general editor of the Coach House Press Translation Series, and she contributed to the annual "Letters in Canada" review of translations in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*. Her involvement in the realm of translation in Canada was broad, and her dedication was resolute. Her intellectual interests bridged many interconnected disciplines, and the crossover operated as a catalyst for her own work. Her involvement in other spheres of critical thinking undoubtedly influenced how she approached translation; consequently, her work is radically interdisciplinary.

Godard's example reminds us of the necessity and value of taking a given translator's thoughts and decision-making processes into account when analyzing her work. Translation involves a complex process of

iterative reflection,² which involves a significant degree of interpretation of and engagement with the material. Many branches of translation studies emphasize translators' textual power and influence, acknowledging "their role as active and powerful agents" (Paloposki 191) in the process of translation, but they do not go so far as to suggest that this recognition be paired with a suggested analytical approach. In *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, however, Antoine Berman outlines an approach to translation criticism that largely focuses on the subject of the translator, his or her personhood, relationship to languages, translative position, "project," and "horizon," layering the existing criticism of notions of creativity and authorship as they pertain to translators. Berman proposes that we focus on the individual translator by critically unpacking his or her translation practice. Examining the works of Godard through this approach shows how her "*position traductive*" offers helpful insights into her translation practice and politics and encourages an understanding of the impetus that led her to focus on feminist translations.

Berman is not alone in insisting on the need to consider a translator's individuality and agency at a critical level. Other prominent translation scholars, such as Maria Tymoczko, have also stressed the importance of considering the translator when looking at the resulting text. Berman posits that a better understanding of the translator as an individual will enable translation criticism to grow both in importance and in impact, bringing to the discipline a level of recognition similar to that of literary criticism. Tymoczko agrees, adding that a greater awareness of the translator's work could move the field of translation studies away from antiquated Eurocentric issues (i.e., whereby the conception of difference is seen as betrayal, loss, or misrepresentation) and toward translation as a creative process.

Further, Tymoczko argues that, by allowing for a more globalized conception of translation and by "considering the implications of translation as a cluster concept for the role of translators, both scholars and translators themselves can achieve a fuller understanding of translators' prerogatives and a greater appreciation of the full potential of the agency of translators, in part by reflecting upon the roles of translators in cultures beyond the West and throughout time" (*Enlarging Translation* 191). Tymoczko cites terminology pertaining to translation in India, Arabic-speaking countries, and Nigeria, where translation is

associated with notions of “change,” “speaking after,” “breaking apart,” and perhaps most interestingly “narration” (“Trajectories” 1087-88). Likewise, Godard herself notes that “the Anishinaabe term for translation, *aanikohtamowin*, combines a prefix for ‘link’ with a stem for ‘story,’ to imply that translation makes a connection by telling a story about a word,” which in her opinion “[e]xplicitly postulat[es] translation as creation not imitation” (“Writing between Cultures” 57). Far from illustrating the typical self-effacement that Western tradition has come to expect from translators, these perspectives challenge notions of faithful transference between source material and translated text. Indeed, creative licence seems to be accepted if not encouraged, and it seems culturally sound to give translators the responsibility of relating the contents of the original in the target language in the way that they best see fit. These appellations, according to Tymoczko, emphasize the limitations of a strictly Westernized perspective on the task of the translator and her agency in that task.

One can relate Godard’s championing of women’s experimental writing to a larger project concerning the recognition of feminist experimental works in translation. Bridging the “two solitudes” of Canada through her work as a translator, Godard introduced Quebec writers Louky Bersianik, Yolande Villemaire, and Antonine Maillet to English Canada and helped to solidify Nicole Brossard’s importance as a feminist writer in this country. From poetry to fiction to theoretically motivated prose, the feminist works that Godard worked with span nearly all genres. Not only did she translate others’ theoretical works, including Brossard’s *Picture Theory* (1991) and Théorêt’s *The Tangible Word* (1991), but she also contributed to the discussion through her own *Talking about Ourselves: The Cultural Productions of Canadian Native Women* (1985), “Frictions: Feminists Re/Writing Narrative” (1997), and “La barre du jour vers une poétique féministe” (1994). Moreover, Godard edited a number of pivotal works of Canadian feminist writing, including *Gynocritics/Gynocritiques: Feminist Approaches to the Writing of Canadian and Quebec Women* (1987), *Collaboration in the Feminine: Writings on Women and Culture from Tessera* (1994), and *Intersexions: Issues of Race and Gender in Canadian Women’s Writing* (1996). Her devotion to the cause of feminist writing can also be seen through her work as a founding co-editor of the feminist literary theory periodical *Tessera* as well as her work as a contributing editor of *Open Letter* and

a book review editor of *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*. Additionally, Godard was a member of the first *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly of Writing, Politics, Art, and Culture* editorial collective. She famously emphasized in *Tessera* how, “though traditionally a negative topos in translation[,] ‘difference’ becomes a positive one in feminist translation” (“Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation” 50). Indeed, strides made by feminist scholars in the field of translation studies — Godard herself as well as Kathy Mezei, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Susan Bassnett, and Nicole Ward Jouve — have deepened both the practice of translation and the role of the translator. Successfully deconstructing dated conceptions of translation as a second-order task, they asserted that translation can serve as a way not only of reading and interpreting women’s voices but also of producing and writing new voices in harmony. The “daring act” (Mezei, “Traverse” 9) of translation, or “transformance” (Godard, “Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation” 89), is thus portrayed as a continuous process of creation and a dexterous manipulation of language. José Santaemilia aptly explains how, etymologically speaking, the concept “of ‘manipulation’ is inherent to the phenomenon of ‘translation’” since “*manipulare* and *translatare* share a common lexical ground” (1). According to him, both terms project the idea of “an (artful) adaptation,” of a “change” or “transformation,” concepts readily associated with ideas of “transgression, perversion or subversion” (1). Rather than adopting the pejorative notion of change as perversion, Godard’s creativity in translation echoes the idea of the productive “contamination” (Tostevin 13) of one language by the other as a result of their meeting in the “contact-zone” of translation. In other words, the changes that stem from contact between the languages involved in the process of translation are seen as being faithful to the intent of the source in spite of the creative licence to which they testify. Her devotion to the project of feminist literature undoubtedly influenced her perception of the role of the translator.

As a public figure, Godard could anticipate that her work would be highly scrutinized, yet she regularly issued controversial statements and pushed the limits of translation in her work. She redefined what it meant to translate, and her praxis moved beyond the realm of solitary and anonymous work to that of proudly exposed close cooperation. Her practice was characterized by active collaborations with the authors whom she chose to translate. Godard showed fierce loyalty to

Quebec feminist writers — Brossard, Bersianik, and Théorêt — and a keen interest in fruitful collaborations with editors and other writers. As Eva Karpinski shows in her analysis of “the feminist translator’s archive of Barbara Godard,” the process of translation — at least in Godard’s case — was not solitary. Repeatedly, Godard left handwritten invitations in the margins of her works in progress such as “‘Check with Nicole’ and ‘See Nicole’” (“Gender” 29). Additionally, Karpinski mentions comments included in Godard’s work in a “handwriting that is not her own” (29), suggesting that the unfinished translations were passed along to trusted friends and colleagues for some preliminary editing. Those marks on her work indeed “show that Godard lets in other voices” (29). She corresponded with editor, professor, and translator Ray Ellenwood as well as with feminist authors Daphne Marlatt and Lola Lemire Tostevin, which “contribut[ed] to her sense of herself as an active and visible participant in the rewriting of a text” (Mezei, “Transformations” 209). These collaborations enabled Godard to surmount hurdles in her processes of translation. For instance, she credited Ellenwood with resolving the problem of conveying gender in the translated title of Brossard’s *Amantes* (1998). Ellenwood suggested the letter *h* in the middle of the literal translation “lovers” (*Lovhers*), thus providing the reader with a notion of gender not traditionally accessible in English. This creative choice not only echoed the choices of the original French but also “made the grammatical element, always central to Brossard, much clearer” (Mezei, “Transformations” 209). Although Godard’s interventions in the text are relatively few, her presence is by no means reduced. The liberties taken in her translations and the footnotes explaining them give the reader access to the thought processes behind the translation choices and emphasize the importance of those choices in her attempt to convey the original intent as faithfully as possible. Godard’s perception of translation as creative transformation allows for a wider range of textual devices. Mezei posits that, as such, it “opens up to include imitation, adaptation, quotation, pastiche, parody, and repetition” (“Transformations” 212), thus giving the translator a creative range similar to that of the original author by allowing her to honour the original in a Meschonnician way: that is, by producing a “good” translation, one that “enacts the original” versus merely repeating it (Meschonnic 22). Godard certainly does not repeat the original’s words; instead, she makes them her own and, in doing so,

makes the work of translation a friendly collaboration between writer and rewriter.

Godard's creative transformations in translation go beyond the traditional measure of fidelity in a given translation and are already noticeable in her early works. Her rendition of Maillet's exuberant narrator in *Don L'Original* (1972) — published in English as *The Tale of Don l'Original* — is often cited as innovative, since the rural French slang of the character of La Sagouine has to be adapted in English to properly reflect the level of colloquialism and foreignness that the French original conveys. In Godard's translation, the familiarity of the *ya* and *yer* (Maillet, *Tale* 35, 41) instead of the proper *you*, for instance, when La Sagouine prays to God, echoes the familiarity expressed with the use of *tu* and *toi* in the French (Maillet, *Don L'Original* 47, 48), in which the option of an even more proper *vouvoisement* is set aside by the narrator. Additionally, Godard chooses to show the impropriety of the Flea Islanders' way of speaking by eliding vowels and dropping the letter *h*, giving them a recognizably colloquial sound. Other villagers are portrayed with similarly lively speech: for instance, La Sagouine's father, as he sequesters his mother-in-law in the potato cellar, angrily recommends that they should “gag er up, too, cause she's a bitch who's always getting round us . . . with er big mouth” (Maillet, *Tale* 16). The creative liberties that Godard takes in the process of translation do not constitute a subversion of the source but show the efforts taken in order to collaborate with the original's intent and style to achieve the same impact in a new language.

Mezei argues that, thanks to the experience of “translating Maillet, . . . Godard was developing tactics for difficult texts replete with neologism, dialect, and semantic and syntactic disruption” (“Transformations” 208). Indeed, she sharpened her skills with colloquial slang, and that proficiency undoubtedly guided her through translation of the more difficult portions of Brossard's dense poetics. The complexity of the work at hand is evident even in the title, *L'amèr*, a concise, gender-neutral expression ripe with a meaning difficult to convey. Mezei's explanation of the primary trope brings to light the challenge that Godard confronted with “bitter, sea, and mother (*mère*), in which the absent ‘e’ signifies the absent mother, the silenced feminine” (“Transformations” 210). Godard rose to the challenge and proposed a translation similarly layered with meaning, albeit graphically

different, and on a linguistically equivalent level. The choice of “‘These our mothers’: The Se / The Sour / The Smothers,” according to Mezei, exemplifies “Godard’s preference for transformation” and shows “an attempt to recreate rather than to repeat Brossard’s many-layered signifier” (“Transformations” 210). This choice of creation over repetition is the epitome of Godard’s success and demonstrates her hallmark as a translator. Her creative liberties set Godard apart: not only are they logically sound, they are also explained in footnotes and prefaces, guiding the reader through the text and laying her praxis bare for critics to see. By deciding to leave Brossard’s original term *mâ* (*Lovhers* 89) in her translation and to provide additional information to the reader — such as how, “[i]n the feminine, *promeneuse* evokes Rousseau’s ‘Confession d’un promeneur solitaire’” (Brossard, *These Our Mothers* 83) — Godard makes the subtleties of Brossard’s gendered words visible to the anglophone reader. Her translations do not flatten the texture of the source; rather, hers was a labour of clarifying the details of the texts with which she worked. Godard willingly and wilfully exposed what was traditionally concealed and, in doing so, echoed the ideology of affirmation and emancipation seminal to the feminist works that she so valiantly championed.

Additionally, Godard’s use of the paratextual in her work as translator was definitively not common practice. More than explanatory notes on the text to follow, prefaces, according to Godard, have been “commonly thought of as the translator’s cardinal sin. [They] violat[e] the current rule that a translation must not give the impression that it is a translation: it should present itself as a text native to the target language and conceal all signs of its transformation, even the translator’s signature” (“Preface” to Brossard, *Lovhers* 7). Far from abiding by the self-effacing expectations of the genre, Godard used paratextual tools such as footnotes and prefaces as beacons, constantly reminding the reader of her presence, punctuating the text with hints of and clues to the trails that she explored as she was translating. “Prefaces should not be apologies,” Godard states in her preface to Brossard’s *These Our Mothers: Or, the Disintegrating Chapter*, and with such gestures she voiced her rightful presence and signalled her visibility as translator. Mezei associates these editorial actions with a “refusal to concede to the concept of translator and translation as transparent” (“Transformations” 209). By making herself visible without apology, Godard highlighted

her decisions and showed her way of remaining faithful to “the source author’s ideas, theoretical framework and stylistics, and the place of this text within this author’s oeuvre” (Mezei, “Transformations” 209), likewise suggesting that Godard worked with writers as much as she worked with texts. This effort to situate the source text maps out her translative horizon, for it not only outlines the frameworks within which her translation takes place but also “delineates her specific translation strategies and decisions, the difficulties the source text presents, and her solutions, along with the sometimes complex . . . process by which she arrived at these solutions” (Mezei, “Transformations” 209). Moreover, Godard used the preface as a genre to validate the importance of the work to be translated. In her preface to Brossard’s *Loubers*, she offers an in-depth analysis of Brossard’s work that goes beyond the requirements of the preface as a genre, and Godard was well aware of her trespassing. She shares the intent that motivated her preface:

I propose . . . to share the trajectory of my particular reading of Nicole Brossard’s *Amantes*, first by situating this book within her oeuvre as I read it and then by discussing the special problems posed in translating this work from French into English, moving whatever meaning it captures from the original into a framework that tends to impose a different set of discursive relations and a different construction of reality. (7)

Godard’s use of footnotes and prefaces — first with *These Our Mothers* and then with all subsequent works — validates her active presence in the text. Her dedication to using the preface as a tool allows Godard to express both her intellectual and her ideological affiliations as well as to shed light on the intricacies of the creative process involved in her work. Luise von Flotow posits that “It is becoming almost routine for feminist translators to reflect on their work in a preface, and to stress their active presence in the text in footnotes” (76). Here Godard becomes the embodiment of the feminist translator, she who “seeks to flaunt her signature in italics, in footnotes, and in prefaces, deliberately woman-handling the text and actively participating in the creation of meaning” (76). For Godard, the implication of a complicit understanding of the motivations behind the original is evoked in the urge to translate.

This complicity is best exemplified by Godard’s perceptive grasp of the work in which she immersed herself. In the preface to *These Our Mothers*, Godard insists on the influence of Derrida and Deleuze

on Brossard's stylistic choices, referring to her use of terms such as "difference" and "erasure" (Derrida) and "intensity" and "repetition" (Deleuze). Not only does Godard define the theoretical works that frame Brossard's text, she also underscores the "prevalence of doubleness in Brossard's language and meaning" (Mezei, "Transformations" 209), calling paradox and doubleness "compositional principles" of Brossard's oeuvre (Godard, "Preface" to Brossard, *Lovbers* 8). In doing so, Godard calls attention to the tension in the works between gender and grammar. She lauds Brossard's creativity and style, claiming that, through them, Brossard frees the words that she writes "from clichés and customs" by using "ellipsis and parataxis [and] . . . neologisms and puns" (9). Godard also emphasizes how these qualities in the original "forc[e] a new understanding of the limits of translatability" (11). Hence, according to Sherry Simon, Godard's project of translation as a feminist "concord[s] with the impulse of the text, questioning the most basic relationship of word to object, word to emotion, word to word" (27). Godard's prefaces thus serve a dual explanatory purpose: first, they provide readers with extremely thorough explanations of the works to follow; second, and more importantly, they emphasize the importance of the texts for readers who might not otherwise be persuaded. If her tendency to translate feminist texts speaks to the importance of these texts to Godard, her validating treatment of them in the prefaces speaks even louder. Largely because of her efforts in this regard, self-effacement in translation has become an outdated trend.

For Godard, language is the locus of power plays, and an awareness of these gendered and politicized tensions is necessary for translations to express the complexities of the originals. As the author's accomplice, the translator is entrusted with the mission of conveying the author's work in all its complexity. When translators tackle texts that present themselves as feminist works, this mission is doubled, and the stakes are even higher. "[F]eminist discourse," according to Godard in *Tessera*, "is translation in two ways: as notation of 'gestural' and other codes from what has been hitherto 'unheard of,' a muted discourse, and as repetition and consequent displacement of the dominant discourse" ("Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation" 46). That "difference," however, is seen as a positive displacement. Comparing it to parody, Godard asserts that "feminist translation is a signifying of difference despite similarity," making "difference . . . a key factor in cognitive

processes and in critical praxis” (50). Difference, in that context, is empowering; it engages with the dominant discourses, validating the process of interrogation of traditional power structures, and it expresses alternative routes through language and grammar, ultimately reconfiguring the work of communication with each translation. “The feminist translator,” as Godard explains, “affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text” (50), and this presence argues for an active involvement of the reader as her own translator of meaning. Godard advocates for an active involvement with the text. Most of all, she advocates for the visibility of the translator, a stance characterized by the “hopes that feminist discourse and translation will be emancipatory, subversive, and affirmative” (Mezei, “Transformations” 212). This desire becomes explicit in Godard’s paratextual communications.

Berman’s emphasis on rereading a text seems to be echoed in Godard’s translation praxis. Where the latter sees reading as the necessary and recurring step in the process of translation, the former conceives of reading as the foremost tool in analyzing translations. Berman argues that his analysis “first and foremost constitutes *readings* and *re-readings*” (*Pour une critique* 16; translation mine), both of the original and of the translation, and these multiple reading experiences grant the critic access to the elusive *sujet traduisant*, the “persona of the translator.” Comparatively, for Godard, the multiple — and thorough — readings of the original provide access to the intention of the original author and guide her translation work. Simon argues that, by “mapping out the theoretical sources, and relating a variety of other serendipitous readings and encounters to the themes of the books, Godard reconstructs to some extent the thought process behind the writing” (23), which gives insight into both Godard’s *position traductive* and her translation project. Godard records her thought processes in her “translator’s diary,” in which the reader can retrace her train of thought, bringing to attention what she calls the “metonymic or contingent” nature of translation (“Translator’s Diary” 77), which characterizes the process not as a simple act of “carrying across” the language barriers so appealing to her but as “a reworking of meaning” (73), which goes beyond the Westernized definitions of the translator’s task, as identified by Tymoczko.

Godard’s often controversial creative decisions — the “disjunctive strategies” (Simon 24) that Godard used with typography and text —

are somewhat elucidated by her own scrutiny of her method in the diary, and an understanding of her reasoning can shed new light on her work as a translator, even years after the fact. Godard saw her journalistic habits as cartographic evidence of a process: “As a trace of reading and writing, journals map the tangled interrelations of feelings, thinking and writing” (“Translator’s Diary” 69), mapping out what underpins a project. In her diary, she offers the possibility of this “logbook of translation” being “one way to explore the interdiscursive production of meaning that is translation” (69), echoing the beliefs that Berman puts forward in *Pour une critique des traductions*. Beyond mulling over her own translation choices, Godard comments on others’ choices and their effects, wanting to improve on previous iterations of a work. Of the previously translated first chapter of Brossard’s *Picture Theory* (1987), for instance, she writes that “Von Flotow has skipped the sound effects: plays on homophony like ‘cascadée,’ ‘casquée’ are translated as ‘stuntman’ and ‘helmeted.’ Likewise, ‘the moment is brutal and demented’ to convey ‘brut’ et ‘insensé’ ignores Brossard’s many puns on ‘sense” (70). Through journalling, Godard lays the groundwork for her own translation choices by underpinning semiotic connections within the original to be echoed in its translation.

Later, pondering how best to communicate the rhythm of a particularly thick section of the same work, Godard offers these reflections:

these are not the words of love, not a “translation in love.” For this I should choose “call up, urge, arouse” — the words of desire, semantically, that is. Desire, de/sire, to echo with Dé-rive, the word adrift on its chain of derivations? . . . Is there not also the “attraction” of phonemes, of signifiers? What about “longing” to underline the love in all those “allongéait” — “stretched out” — or “prolonging” or “running alongside.” The web thickens as the threads criss-cross, interlace. (“Translator’s Diary” 72)

This testifies to the great attention to nuance and word choice in her translation and to how little she left to chance in the process. Three decades after her translation of *These Our Mothers*, the appeal that Godard makes in her preface still resonates with current readers: “May the intensity of your involvement as reader be as great as mine and you extend its creation in new directions to make this the text of bliss it works to be.” This sentiment is echoed in her preface to Brossard’s *Lovers*, which

she concludes by directly addressing her readers: “the pleasure of the text is now yours” (12). In doing so, Godard unmistakably calls readers to attention and solidifies the validity of her presence in the text as translator.

Her outlook on the task of translation exemplifies and situates her interventions as translator and scholar as a crucial contribution to Canadian literature in the past four decades. The argument for a criticism of translation that has the impact and importance of literary criticism stands on the pillars of translators’ identities and translative environments. These environments are comprised of their positions relative to their cultural, social, and historical surroundings, their translative “horizons,” or the determining parameters of the discourses that inform their processes and projects of translation. That is, these contextual elements inform the choices translators make in the texts they choose to translate and the forms these translations take. Karpinski suggests that, through the Godard archive, an attentive reader has access to her vision of “translation as a mode of being in the world, of being hospitable to thought and language” (“Re-Membering” 124). Indeed, in many ways, approaching the breadth of Godard’s work through the Bermanian critical lens provides novel ways of exploring the multiple facets of Godard and helps us to gain a better understanding of the motivations that guided her creative choices. Her position as a theorist of translation certainly influenced her work as a translator and an editor, and her positive outlook on difference strengthened her position at the forefront of feminist translation in Canada. Her engagement with the texts that she worked with added layers to her translative horizon and guided the development of her praxis, in which reader and writer intersect in the creative space of the translational “in between.” Taking all of these factors into consideration, a critic might be able to assess objectively the weight and impact of a translator’s work as a conduit for her ideological affiliations. This approach to criticism takes into account the ethical dimension of translation, and as Simon has noted, “Berman is the single most forceful contributor to this discussion” (36).

It is safe to assume that this method, should it be applied to other prominent figures in the field, would provide rich contextualizations for translators’ oeuvres and thus help to validate the place of translation criticism alongside long-standing fields of criticism such as literature. Meanwhile, applying the method to a figure as complex as Godard

emphasizes the breadth of her critical creativity and underscores her unwavering commitment to interrogating conventions in both society and text. Translation, in her eyes, was a means of perpetuating the ongoing process of creation, a way of allowing “the circulation of meaning within a contingent network of texts and social discourses” (Simon 24). Godard insisted that more and more “feminists are interested in exploring this language of difference rather than attacking the fact of dominance, for by affirming identity through a language of their own, they hope to subvert the existing cultural order which has excluded them and marginalized their experience” (“Translating” 13). Hence, for Godard, the translator’s agency is evidenced by her presence in the text and the process. This presence is acknowledged *in* and *by* a language of difference anchored in gender and its expression and constitutes a vital part of the initial “meaning” conveyed via translation.

NOTES

¹ Perhaps most notably the excellent collection *Trans/Acting Culture, Writing, and Memory: Essays in Honour of Barbara Godard* (Karpinski et al.) and the wonderfully thorough article “Transformations of Barbara Godard” (Mezei).

² In *La traduction et la lettre ou l’auberge du lointain*, Berman argues that translation is a reflection that goes beyond the search for equivalence. For him, the act of finding an equivalent is equal to cleaning from one’s tongue all obscurity of meaning and refusing to introduce any foreign element in it. Berman wishes to break away from the traditional coupling of theory and practice and replace it with experience (in the Heideggerian sense) and reflection. Thus, translation might well be an experience of reflection as well as a reflection of the translation experience. This complex duality is what gives translation its specificity and what makes it worthy of being a separate discipline, not merely a sub-discipline. Berman defines translation studies as the “conscious articulation of the experience of translation” and as “the reflection of the translation onto itself from its empirical nature” (16, 17; translations mine).

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