

# VIOLETS IN A CRUCIBLE

## *The Translating, Editing, and Reviewing of Canadian Books*

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NOT EVERYONE AGREES that it is possible, or desirable, to translate literary texts. Shelley, for instance, in his inspired defence of the unique grace of the poetic imagination, eloquently disputes the view that such vision can be successfully conveyed in another language:

the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its action, than the words themselves, without reference to that particular order. Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt Shelley would sympathize with the often-expressed modern view that translation is also an act of treason — *traduttore, traditore*. For Shelley, then, any attempt at “transfusion” would quickly become little more than a failed exercise in bloodletting.

A more contemporary text, Brian Friel’s *Translations*, develops the idea of translation as treason. By dramatizing the grave losses and tragic consequences that accompany the British soldiers’ translation of Irish place names in the 1830’s, he reminds us to what extent the vitality of a nation’s culture is rooted in its language. A few of the play’s characters clearly see this linguistic manoeuvre as a treasonous sell-out of their traditions and themselves. The unnamings of their familiar ancestral world is for them a kind of ironic expulsion from Eden, more suggestive of apocalypse than genesis. Ironically, too, here the “source” culture is shown to be the “target” of takeover, of appropriation and assimilation. The weapons of this war are words, the strategy translation.

Although these acts of translation carry superficial overtones of transformation and transition, they also convey the subtler and more sinister implication of transgression. In the play the principal translator-transgressor is Owen, a “go-between” and intermediary who describes himself as a man “employed as a part-time, under-

paid, civilian interpreter. My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King's good English."<sup>22</sup> Having lost faith in his native language and culture, he now collaborates actively with the British soldiers to subvert his ancestral inheritance. In consort with Owen, some characters attempt to demonstrate the limits of unilingual lives and argue that a second language offers the exciting prospect of deliverance into a wider world. But the play itself sounds a darker note, showing the potential danger in the acquisition of English if it means the loss of their native tongue and thus a continued existence as unilingual beings. Of course, the ultimate and all-encompassing irony of *Translations* is demonstrated, throughout the play, in the presentation of nearly all Gaelic speeches in English for the benefit of modern, unilingual audiences.

It is both interesting and illuminating to reflect on the views of Shelley and Friel in the context of contemporary Canadian practices in the field of translation. Most modern readers, in Canada as elsewhere, lack the linguistic skills of the poet and the playwright. As a rule, our reading of foreign literature in translation is likely to be a matter of necessity rather than choice. However, given the extraordinary diversity in the quality of translations published in Canada, we must never forget that our reading of them is always, in some sense, an act of blind faith — faith in the translator, the editor, and often the reviewer on whom we depend to alert us to problems in the “transfusion” process. This dependence is still more acute, and the faith itself absolute, for unilingual Canadian readers who wish to be knowledgeable about literary concerns and achievements beyond their own native language.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS a variety of observations on my experience in the area of literary translation. Like many anglophone Canadians, I first encountered French-Canadian literature — *The Tin Flute*, as it happens — in translation in high school, where I happily accepted Hannah Josephson's version of what Gabrielle Roy had to say. Since that time, I have gradually built up a knowledge of French grammar and vocabulary through courses in the Modern Language and Literature program at the University of Toronto and the Master's program in Comparative Canadian Literature at the Université de Sherbrooke. There, in 1970-1971, I was taught to be far more skeptical about the accuracy and reliability of Canadian translations. Since that time I have been able to observe firsthand and participate in translation activity in Canada in the following ways: evaluating manuscripts dealing with translation for the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and samples of translation for which a grant is sought from the Canada Council Translation Grants Programme; editing the third edition of the translation *Bibliography* originally published by the Humanities Research Council of Canada; working as both

member and chairman of CFH's Translation Committee and the Canada Council's Translation Jury; writing individual reviews of translations for *Canadian Literature*; editing and introducing John Glassco's translation of Jean-Charles Harvey's *Les Demi-civilisés* as *Fear's Folly* in the Carleton Library Series; and finally, compiling the first six annual reviews of Canadian translations for the "Letters in Canada" issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly*. (The last of these tasks always seemed to me a "write of spring" that was at once both exhaustive and exhausting in its demands on academic time and energy at the very point in the university year when both were rapidly dwindling.) In the following comments, I want to concentrate on observations arising from these varied experiences, with particular attention to the roles played by translator, editor, and reviewer in the production of translations in Canada.

In the evaluation of texts for publication I support existing procedures for judging the merits of scholarly studies, and agree that a sample of a proposed translation must be assessed to determine its quality *when the translator's work is unknown*. However, it seems to me ridiculous to spend all-too-limited arts-council funds to determine the merits of a translation proposed by a translator whose past work has been of consistently excellent quality — for example, Philip Stratford, D. G. Jones, Ray Ellenwood, Sheila Fischman, or Larry Shouldice, among others. Such approval procedures cause annoying delays for a publisher who wishes to offer contemporary texts to a larger readership while they still retain their currency. An evaluation system providing rapid approval of the proposals made by demonstrably first-rate translators would undoubtedly encourage others to strive for a higher standard. I have long felt, too, that our best translators deserve a higher rate of remuneration for their labour, which might prove to be a still more effective incentive to those still seeking to master the exacting art of translation. By contrast, I cannot countenance the recurrent funding of individuals and publishing houses who consistently present to Canadian readers work that is carelessly done and decidedly substandard and ought to be embarrassing to any self-respecting editor. In these cases sound funding policy demands that financial support be withheld until such translators clearly demonstrate a change of art.

My duties as editor of the third edition of the translation *Bibliography* resemble the task of evaluating manuscripts in the sense that the work is also demanding and tiring, often quite tedious but undeniably a necessary preliminary labour for academic research. I am now totally convinced that a true bibliographer is a very peculiar animal indeed, and regularly doubt that I belong to the species. The reality of such a project soon becomes apparent in the constant need to have an alert mind and an unwavering eye for detail. For these reasons I am particularly fortunate to be able to build upon the work of Philip Stratford in the second edition. My own challenges in compiling recent entries no doubt conform to habitual difficulties faced by all bibliographers: lamenting the lack of convenient

access to comprehensive information about current Canadian translations in reliable bibliographies; pursuing books announced but never published; tracking down copies to supplement details provided in other publications or to resolve the contradictions between conflicting references; restraining my annoyance at translators and publishers who ignore requests for information or who provide very cryptic responses to questions they alone can answer. On the other hand, many individuals have been remarkably generous in helping me in this way — among others, editors at Anansi and Guernica, Irène Aubrey at the National Library, and the staff of the *Index translationum* project at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Such assistance is the more welcome and encouraging for its rarity, and undeniably expedites the completion of large projects.

While bibliographical endeavours are often a solitary activity, membership on translation committees and juries permits contact with a wider fellowship. My work with the Translation Committee of CFH coincided with a brief tenure on the Board of Directors as the result of a mistaken reading of the Constitution. A return to the status of standing-committee chairman increased my feeling of marginalization. It was also frustrating to have so few funds to work with and to see most of them required to defray travel and meal expenses for a small but geographically scattered membership. Some very capable and knowledgeable individuals declined invitations to serve on the committee. Very early in our deliberations we were compelled to acknowledge the many obstacles to improving the system for the evaluation and funding of translations in Canada, and saw how little action was taken in response to the circulation of a list of central Canadian texts not yet translated. Throughout the time of my involvement with this committee, the CFH staff were very supportive and helpful, always willing to provide whatever assistance they could to expedite our work. I concede that my feelings of frustration with this committee may well be an admission of personal inadequacy, and not a sign of institutional breakdown; but a growing sense of futility soon made it impossible for me to accept the offer of an additional term as chairman. I simply could not ignore a growing conviction that the committee's budget would give far better value if assigned instead to the publication of a few more excellent translations.

On the other hand, my experience as a member for three years of the Canada Council Translation Jury was an entirely different matter. My fellow jurors gave excellent value for their modest stipend, and officials at the Council were always very helpful and accommodating to us. At the end of the three years, I left this jury with some regret. On the basis of my own tenure there, I can assure all Canadian translators that their works are given very careful scrutiny indeed. The Council's initiative in establishing two generous awards for Canadian translations demonstrates its responsible leadership in the promotion of an activity so vital to the intellectual life of a bilingual country.

The three years I spent on this jury coincided with the last three years in which I wrote the long annual review of Canadian translations for the "Letters in Canada" issue. In a very real sense the work of a juror is a task of close reading, of *re-viewing* what has been seen by the translator and observed by the editor looking at the views and vision of the original author. By way of some observations on the work of Canadian translators and editors, I would like to turn now to several reflections on my experience as a reviewer of their collaborative efforts.

IN HIS PREFACE TO *Poems of French Canada* (1977), F. R. Scott notes that a translation may be said to resemble the original text upon which it is based because neither is ever finished. His comment echoes views expressed earlier, in *Dialogue sur la traduction à propos du "Tombeau des rois"*, in which he argues that "the original poem is itself a translation into a chosen language of that inner stirring of emotion and thought which started the poet on the act of creation." Furthermore, he adds, "In one sense even the reading of a poem is a form of translation."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, whatever the number of "translation" steps between the conception of the source and the reading of the target text, none of the "go-betweens" must make Owen's mistake of losing sight of the meaning and value of the original and believing that such a loss is entirely unavoidable. Thus, in his introductory remarks to the Hébert-Scott dialogue, Frye takes issue with Frost's (and by extension with Shelley's) view that it is the poetry itself that is lost in the translation. Rather, states Frye, "a translation, when thorough enough, may be a critical elucidation of its original as well as a translation."<sup>4</sup> Here Frye implicitly defines the ideal effect of all translations: to lead the reader back to the original. For this reason, first-rate translators are always careful to provide full bibliographical information about the source text and ensure that the edition upon which their translation is based is authoritative. Regrettably, however, there have been cases in Canada in which translators have selected expurgated editions of works of interest to us primarily because of the "scandalous" nature of the original work — e.g., *Marie Calumet* (Harvest House). Other translators (Lukin Barette in *Sackcloth for Banner*, for instance) so radically bowdlerize the original as to give an entirely new meaning to the concept of "free translation." And who can forget the infamous example of Hannah Josephson's *The Tin Flute*, so justly condemned for its manifest failings as a reliable and idiomatic English equivalent of Roy's novel? Moreover, very few readers of her translation know that it appeared at the very moment that Roy published a major revision of *Bonheur d'occasion* (the second edition, published in 1947). As a result, the Josephson translation was not only gravely flawed and inadequate; it was also instantly obsolete. Obviously there is much to be done, and redone; but unfortunately, as we know, retranslation is not, in and

of itself, a guarantee of reliability. In the end, it all comes down to the question of how respectful the translator has been of the original voice and vision.

In addition to this respect, a translator must not only possess a wide knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar, and cultural context of the original, but also be tenacious and consistent. So often I have seen works in which the translator has been slow to find his stride in the first half of the work, or has allowed his attention to detail to flag as the translation draws to a close, with a consequent decline in quality. On the other hand, there are translators who adhere scrupulously to the original word-order as though convinced that only such an approach will ensure that every detail is transposed. But since versions that are too literal are usually clumsy and unidiomatic, the translator thereby inappropriately casts the annoying shadow of the original language like a pall over the translation. With cavalier disregard for the exacting responsibilities of the craft, other translators offer free-wheeling "tradaptations" (Michel Garneau's term), gratuitously adding and deleting details in a way that falsifies the substance and spirit of the original and makes "carefree" synonymous with "careless." Such intervention in the text may not be treason, but it is a kind of theft, as Andrew Marvell reminds us: "He is translation's thief that addeth more, / As much as he that taketh from the store / Of the first author."<sup>5</sup> When these "thieves" move with such stealth through the source text, so inattentive to its subtleties and peculiarities, the inevitable consequence is a pared-down style, a blurring of the nuances conveyed by context, and a loss in tone and shading. We have only to consider the problem of capturing satisfactorily the particular style of V.-L. Beaulieu or Blais, Aquin or Maillet to realize how central these concerns are to the question of excellence in translation.

Added to these difficulties are a number of recurrent problems that confront the reader of a careless translation — for example, the distortions caused by overlooking negatives or bypassing parts of the source text when they are enclosed within a repeated word or phrase. We should not minimize the great and constant challenges faced by all translators: how best to deal with colloquialisms, puns, titles, cursing, the *vous/tu* distinction in French, and the use of the target language in the source text, among others. Our best translators, it seems to me, have never forgotten that they are more archer than fletcher, and that a defective aim will inevitably result in a target missed. They remember that their role is creative to a certain point but always in a secondary or subservient capacity. This I take to be Scott's central point about the complexity of the translator's work: "He writes, as it were, to order, yet must create while obeying the order. He is unfree and yet free at the same time."<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising, then, that some of our best translators, Scott among them, have also been writers, respectfully attuned to the inspirations of others and ever mindful of the encoded meanings in *their* words. Thus, a skilled translation will always be something more than a work of Coleridgean fancy, something less than a product of imagination, though always striving to achieve that quality. Indeed, the

relationship between the original and the translated text may be seen as akin to the connection Coleridge describes between the primary and secondary imagination, since the nature of the latter is essentially that of every excellent translation: "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*."<sup>7</sup>

Between the author of the original and the reader of the translation, however, the translator does not stand alone, for the editor/publisher is an important collaborator in the enterprise. It is difficult to say where to draw the line of responsibility between these two intermediary figures. Who, for instance, can be held to account for the following blunders in translation: *rumeurs*/wounds, *tristesse*/madness, *menace*/treat, *plage*/page, *moralement*/orally, *lune*/noon, *comment*/now, *canons*/cannons, *nouveau*/now? If we are familiar with the original language, we can recognize the typographical errors here and identify the approximations by considering what the translations *should* be — sounds, sadness, *threat*, etc. Close, perhaps, but certainly no cigar for either translator or editor here. Regrettably this kind of inexactness is all too commonplace in Canadian translations, and must prompt headshaking confusion in their readers. What, too, can we say when *tough* is transformed into "touch," *funambule* into "sleepwalker," and *consternation* into "concentration"? Clearly, in the midst of such carelessness, the translator and editor are the sleepwalkers, their concentration lost, out of touch with the text, and the consternation will be the reader's.

In a similar way, those who know the source language well can double as detectives and therefore discern the missing link in the following pairs: *palais*/broom, *pommes de terre*/apples, *ravoir*/to see again, *oreiller*/ear, *compagne*/natural world, *épouvantail*/fan, *fournis*/plants, *pleurs*/fears, *mot*/world, *salivation*/salvation, *sortit*/smiled, *Qui*/yes, *mensonges*/dreams, *plainte funèbre*/dark plant, rooks/*rochers*. But what are readers without a firm grounding in the original language to think when, by a muddled metamorphosis, a palace unaccountably turns into a broom (*balai*), a scarecrow into a fan (*évantail*), lies into dreams (*songes*), etc.? Oversights by even the most diligent and careful translator are inevitable, which makes the editor's role in the preparation of a translation a central one. Yet many editors would appear to have a very scanty knowledge of the source language and must therefore accept on faith whatever the translator offers, despite its often quite limited degree of credibility. Consider, for example, this comment by a Canadian translator: "No one reads French in Toronto publishing and they're so mystified, they'll take anyone's word for it. My last literary translations were never read in-house; they were part of a package deal."<sup>8</sup> Obviously these remarks are an exaggeration and thus subject to qualification; but they contain an important element of truth. It cannot be denied that standards must rise considerably at many publishing houses, and editors skilled in handling texts in two languages must be

engaged if the translations they offer are to be respected and trusted. It is not at all unreasonable to expect that good dictionaries will be used repeatedly throughout the project to ensure textual accuracy and contextual precision. Otherwise, it is certain that we will continue to see *sensibilité* (sensitivity) translated as “sensibility,” *déception* (disappointment) as “deception,” *luxure* (lust) as “luxury,” and *chair* (flesh) as “chair” — which, in the last case, means that *empâté dans une chair jaunâtre et flasque* was once translated into English as “ensconced in a big yellow armchair”! Such a comedy of errors provides amusement for bilingual readers, it is true; but in such cases it is the translator and editor who are the “false friends” of both the author and the reader.

Moreover, editorial negligence in the vetting of Canadian translations is not confined to single words and phrases. Obviously, a knowledge of the meanings of individual words alone is insufficient to detect the subtle complexities of idiom, which a first-rate editor simply must have if the following mistranslations are to be avoided: *J't'en veux pas* as “I don't want you”; *Je te voyais venir* as “I saw you coming”; “go out on a monumental toot” as *m'en aller en poussant d'épouvantables hurlements*; and “He's been fucking up for the last few years” as *il était en amour depuis deux ans*. The editor must share the responsibility with the translator to eliminate such gaffes and *faux pas*, and demonstrate a deeper concern for both the well-made book and the well-done translation. Nevertheless, although it is now sixteen years since the Translation Grants Programme was established by the Canada Council and at least a decade since reviewers began calling for such editorial expertise,<sup>9</sup> many (most?) Canadian translations are still not receiving an adequate editorial scrutiny prior to publication. Until they do, readers will remain confused and perplexed by what they encounter in the text. Ironically, in the light of Frye's comment about the ideal effect of excellent work, it is often a *bad* translation that drives them back to the original.

**G**OOD OR BAD, every translation should certainly send its reviewer back to the source text. As yet another intermediary figure between author and reader, the reviewer, too, has an exacting responsibility, particularly in view of the laxity with which many editors perform their duties. Because unilingual readers must put their complete trust in the translator, the reviewer's *caveats* are essential and his responsibility substantial. For these reasons a comprehensive scrutiny of the translation is mandatory if the review is to be of any service to readers. This obligation notwithstanding, until quite recently Canadian readers very rarely found any reviews that were a close reading and critical examination of the translation. Even at the present time, most reviews of translations are little more than a very cursory and superficial evaluation of the actual quality of the translation



itself. It is not at all unusual to find only one or two vague sentences on the quality of the translation, which suggests an unwillingness or inability on the reviewer's part to consult the original text in a more than cursory and superficial fashion. A passing acquaintance with the original text, or none at all (some reviewers, apparently unashamedly, go so far as to admit this), can only be seen as a complete abnegation of responsibility. To my mind, a complete juxtaposition of the original and the translation is the *sine qua non* of the reviewer's task. Only a close scrutiny of both in a concurrent reading allows the reviewer to be authoritative and comprehensive in his assessment of the translation's reliability. Only in this way can he detect the careless omission of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and whole pages as well as the gratuitous additions of which so many translators are so fond. True, a detailed examination of this kind is quite tedious and exhausting, but why review the *translation* at all if not in this way? Furthermore, the reviewer must be very familiar with both the source language and its cultural context, not only to determine how correctly the voice of the original is echoed in the translation, but also to identify the original text's subtle allusions — for example, to a poem by Nelligan or a song by Leclerc. Ideally, these encoded cultural references would be recognized and identified by the translator himself, or by an astute editor. When they fail to do so, these tasks necessarily revert to the vigilant reviewer. With few exceptions, he or she is likely to be a native speaker of the target language. It was this conviction that led me, reluctantly, to abandon the English-to-French section of the annual "Letters in Canada" reviews, though I continue to believe that such translations also stand in need of detailed scrutiny.

Another challenge in the world of Canadian translation is that of impartiality. If the world of Canadian literature is small, that of Canadian literary translation is smaller still, and a few years' labour in the field soon gives the worker an acute awareness of the fences that surround it.<sup>10</sup> After a half-dozen years writing the annual "Letters in Canada" reviews, I realized that I had talked to or met or sat on committees with a large number of the translators whose work I was asked to evaluate in manuscript or in published form on a regular basis. More problematic still was the requirement to evaluate the work of former teachers, or colleagues, or friends. We all know that an offer to review such texts is often refused when a glance at the book reveals that a positive response cannot honestly be made. At times mutual friends have reported to me the anger of old acquaintances at an unflattering review. In one extreme case I was informed by an editor that a certain publisher's anger and frustration at my sharp criticisms of his books were so great that he refused to send future publications for review *and*, furthermore, fully intended to punch me in the face if he ever got the chance. (I am happy to report that I have, to date, avoided this unpromising encounter.) All this may be quite normal in the daily round of a book reviewer's professional life, but it is also quite disconcerting, and indicative, as Layton might say, that such a publisher's devotion

to literature is not perfect. But I must also add that I have on occasion received letters from both translators and publishers expressing gratitude that their work was being taken seriously and closely scrutinized.

NO ONE COULD READ and review translations for over a decade in Canada without reaching some general conclusions on both the current state of this difficult art and its future needs and prospects. Throughout this period the journal *ellipse* has continued to provide a forum for both the translation of Canadian poetry and a critical inquiry into the very nature of the activity of translation itself,<sup>11</sup> a discussion that has been supplemented by the many fine insights offered by participants in the University of Ottawa translation symposium — in particular the outstanding contribution by Philip Stratford.<sup>12</sup> In *ellipse* we find the ideal of bilingual translation, which immediately achieves the primary objective of leading readers to the original text. While such a format is not economically feasible for all literary texts, the requirements for a good translation of poetry do apply to other forms as well. In all cases, a first-rate translation is not a précis or a paraphrase. It must never be subjected to the “treason” or “theft” of a translator for whom it serves merely as a pretext for freewheeling amplifications, approximations, and gratuitous interventions. In every case an excellent translation is both reliable in content and graceful in style, neither too loose nor too literal in its interpretations. Ideally, it is an authentic counterpart of the source text, providing the reader with one work in two languages, not with two fully independent works. While their appearance can never be identical, the twinning of texts must at least be fraternal, with very strong family resemblances. When the ensuing translation seems flawed, the reviewer must at times acknowledge that its limitations are those of the target language itself, that there will always be, as Scott suggests to Hébert, an “*élément intraduisible*”<sup>13</sup> in the original.

At the present time the major needs for translation in Canada are fourfold: increased funding to arts organizations to permit the translation of central cultural documents in both official languages (a quite reasonable, but as yet unrealized, policy for a bilingual country); an unwavering commitment by publishing houses large and small to increasing very substantially the number of translations produced in Canada; speedier publication of translated versions, to give unilingual readers a sense of what is current in the other language; and, finally, translations of much higher quality and lower price. It must be very distressing to hardworking translators to see how often, and how quickly, their work is remaindered, only to sit unsold even at much-reduced prices. Because translations that are neither bought nor read make a mockery of the bureaucracy instituted to promote them, it is time to adopt as a standard policy the publication of some translations in paperback

only, if that is what is required to achieve solvency in the business. Too often, it seems to me, translators/editors/publishers have lost sight of the primary objective — to produce first-rate translations that will be *read*. What, finally, is the point of translating or retranslating a text for sale in an expensive slipcased edition if the quality of the work itself is as low as the price is high? Ironically, in such instances the cost of the book appears to be a useful if unwitting discouragement to the reading of an inferior translation. But good or bad, if the translation cannot be sold at an affordable price, increasing numbers of translators will be forced to close their dictionaries and turn their minds to other pursuits.

In conclusion, we might recall Shelley's indictment of the "vain" endeavour of translation in terms of a crucible that conceals the colour and odour of violets. We must acknowledge that, in the contents/container relationship of original text and translated version, there are many such "crucibles" among Canadian translations. It is all the more disturbing to encounter such indifference to the necessity of excellent translations in an officially bilingual country like ours, because the whole is always diminished by any downgrading of its parts. In a respectful exchange of visions, no cultural appropriation need be feared. Brian Friel's *Translations* offers us a translator's ideal response by contrasting the "traitor-translator" Owen to Yolland, the young British soldier humbly struggling to "decode" the Irish language in an honest search for "perfect equation" and "perfect congruence": "I can only say that I feel — I feel very foolish to — to — to be working here and not to speak your language."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps something like this kind of foolish feeling is the catalyst required to bring English- and French-speaking Canadians into a closer congruence. In literature a comparable paralleling of languages and cultures is made possible by the translator's central position and role — call it mediator, midwife, archer, bridge-builder, lens, threshold. Through a careful echoing of the original voice he makes us believe, as Friel does in *Translations*, that we are hearing not an echo but the voice itself, speaking directly to us. When this happens, the "crucible" of the translation no longer impedes our sense of direct contact with the colour and odour of the "violets," and the efforts of the translator cannot be described as "vain." When this happens, too, the tragic bloodletting of Friel's play is avoided and, with a minimum loss of vitality, the translation preserves the life-blood of the original vision in this process Shelley so insightfully likens to a transfusion.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "A Defence of Poetry," in Carl R. Woodring, ed., *Prose of the Romantic Period* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 492.

<sup>2</sup> *Translations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> "Third Version — Note explicative par Frank Scott," in Anne Hébert et Frank Scott, *Dialogue sur la traduction à propos du "Tombeau des rois"* (Montréal: HMH, 1970), pp. 94, 95.

- <sup>4</sup> "Foreword," *Dialogue sur la traduction*, pp. 13-14.
- <sup>5</sup> "To His Worthy Friend Doctor Witty upon His Translation of the 'Popular Errors,'" in Elizabeth Story Donno, ed., *Andrew Marvell: The Complete Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 62.
- <sup>6</sup> Undated letter to Anne Hébert, quoted in *Dialogue sur la traduction*, p. 56.
- <sup>7</sup> "Biographia Literaria: or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions," in Donald A. Stauffer, ed., *Selected Poetry and Prose of Coleridge* (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 263.
- <sup>8</sup> Quoted in Ray Ellenwood, "Some Actualities of Canadian Literary Translation," in Camille R. La Bossière, ed., *Translation in Canadian Literature: Symposium 1982* (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1983), p. 69.
- <sup>9</sup> See, for example, Christina Roberts-Van Oordt, untitled review, *Queen's Quarterly*, 82, no. 2 (Summer 1975), 294-95, and I. M. Owen, "Bridge of Tongues," *Books in Canada*, 5, no. 12 (December 1976), 5-6.
- <sup>10</sup> For a witty and revealing discussion of this question see Larry Shouldice, "On the Politics of Literary Translation in Canada," in La Bossière, ed., *Translation in Canadian Literature*, pp. 73-82.
- <sup>11</sup> See especially *ellipse*, 21 (1977), *ellipse*, 29/30 (1982), and *ellipse*, 36 (1986).
- <sup>12</sup> "The Anatomy of a Translation: *Pélagie-la-Charrette*," in La Bossière, ed., *Translation in Canadian Literature*, pp. 121-30.
- <sup>13</sup> *Dialogue sur la traduction*, p. 54.
- <sup>14</sup> *Translations*, pp. 45, 32.

## IN FOUR ACRES

*Robert Beum*

The skipping stone sunfish flash morning stays —  
too long for time to know, and the kildeer  
skimming the riffles cry nothing it hears:

summer stands still, the elders will be held  
spangled with finches, musky draws will wave  
ochre and gold where one boy stops the hours.